



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

2023

Annual Report to the School Community



**St Columba's
Primary School**

St Columba's School

24 Glenhuntly Road, ELWOOD 3184

Principal: Daniella Maddalena

Web: www.stcolumbasprimary.org

Registration: 1070, E Number: E1093

Principal's Attestation

I, Daniella Maddalena, attest that St Columba'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 25 May 2024

About this report

St Columba'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](#).

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 Values

Our motto, 'The little school with a big heart' represents St Columba's unique culture of care, empathy and respect for diversity. This emanates from parish life and our unique association with Sacred Heart Mission, which embody these core values as their central tenets.

Our Mission

As a Catholic school, we are called to act with compassion and empathy, to respect and care for our world and for the most vulnerable and to promote inclusion and provide community. It is the village feel that captures the hearts of those who choose to enrol their children into St Columba's. The warmth and genuine nurturing environment that they see and feel as they enter permeates throughout the school and well into our community.

Our Vision

Now as we enter this next chapter of our school's history, we see ourselves as a school for the future:

A school that has a rich, relevant, and engaging approach to learning and teaching while maintaining its tradition of care and well-being.

A school where children truly flourish both academically and socially emotionally.

A school that works together with its community as partners in education.

A school where the 21st century is seen as an exciting new frontier where opportunities abound for each child in our care.

A school that leads the way with sustainable practices and actions.

A school that keeps at its heart the foundational tenets that it and the parish has been built upon respect, community, inclusion, care for our world and for the most vulnerable.

A school that clearly sets its sights on providing learning that is engaging, rigorous, purposeful and meets the needs of learning for the future.

A school that understands its place within the bigger global context and acknowledges and accepts the responsibility and challenges that come with this.

Our history is very much a part of who we are today and as we move forward, we will strive to honour our past whilst embracing the challenge and excitement that St Columba's- a school for the future, promises our community.

School Overview

St Columba's, Elwood, was established under the direction of the Presentation Sisters in 1918. When it first opened on the corner of Glenhuntly Road and Normandy Avenue, it comprised only two classrooms with an enrolment of 48 students. Enrolment numbers have fluctuated over the years as demographic trends in the local area change. However, enrolments have stabilised as the local area has become more attractive to families wishing to live closer to their place of work. 2023 saw 158 students in eight class groupings - Prep, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5, Year 5, Year 6

The school facilities have grown and been updated regularly over the past ten years to create a very contemporary learning environment. With seven home-room spaces upstairs, one classroom downstairs and two large common learning spaces, which includes the library, there is room for children and teachers to undertake a wide range of different learning and teaching activities. Furnishings are a mix of fixed and flexible with provision for rich and varied ICT & STEM learning. All classrooms and learning spaces are equipped with interactive TVs. There are enough ICT devices (laptops, Chromebooks and iPads) to facilitate a one-one program throughout the school. Downstairs learning spaces include a hall, parish centre, shared Performing Arts and Before and After School Care Centre. There is also a separate art room. The playground has been upgraded to include a synthetic grass athletics track, two multipurpose courts, climbing structure, cubby house, adventure play equipment, designed by the children, and green spaces including a vertical garden, a nature play area, a kitchen garden and pergola. The playground provides good areas for sport, physical education and for play.

Our School Improvement Plan 2022-2025 has brought a focus to renewing our school vision and mission, focused on developing students who are more confident, motivated and engaged as learners and empowering staff to be high quality teachers whilst improving student learning outcomes. At St Columba's we provide students with a caring, supportive and safe environment, which aims to maximise their engagement, sense of belonging and connectedness to school. We actively promote a family-friendly environment and build strong community partnerships by welcoming and encouraging a wide variety of participation in the life of the school. We acknowledge that the family is the most significant influence upon an individual, and therefore, learning is seen as an ongoing partnership between home and school. Our belief is that when parents and the community are involved in school, the outcomes for our students are enhanced.

We are an authorised International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program World School.

The programs of, and teaching at St. Columba's school, support and promote the principles and practice of Australian Democracy including a commitment to elected government, the

rule of law, equal rights of all before the law, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and association, and the values of openness and tolerance.

Principal's Report

This year, our school reached great heights, marked by many unforgettable milestones. Thinking back, numerous moments stand out—the resounding success of our school musical, "Shrek Junior," our outstanding achievements in sports—especially in netball, basketball, and athletics—and the sheer talent showcased in the Year 6 Exhibition. Throughout these experiences, our children have epitomized the vision of our school, proudly representing us at various events, excursions, and within our local community. Witnessing their growth and accomplishments has been truly heartening.

Our community's collaborative efforts have resulted in the creation of the St. Columba's Primary Strategic Plan 2024-2027, embodying our shared vision for the school's future. This milestone reflects the collective insights gathered through consultations with our teachers, staff, parents, students from Years 3-6, and alumni. Your invaluable input has been pivotal in shaping this plan, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your contributions.

Our parent community's support has been a cornerstone of our success this year. On behalf of the staff and students, I extend heartfelt gratitude for your time, expertise, and relentless efforts. Special thanks to the 2023 School Advisory Committee and the Parents and Friends Association for their remarkable contributions, tirelessly striving to enhance our children's learning environments and opportunities here at St. Columba's.

A substantial amount of effort goes into laying robust foundations during the primary years. It's our commitment to ensure that the children at our school evolve into lifelong learners, equipped to engage actively in the present and future, adept at navigating challenges and shouldering responsibilities.

As we draw 2023 to a close, we are immensely grateful for the enriching learning experiences our students have shared. This year, we've witnessed tremendous growth across all year levels, particularly in reading and maths.

As an IB world school, both our students and teachers have continued to refine the learner profile and approaches to learning. Our educators have embraced responsive teaching—setting clear goals, tailoring learning based on individual needs, and keenly observing students' understanding levels—crucial in navigating the aftermath of the disjointed COVID years. This approach has allowed us to scaffold, challenge, and inspire students to be inquisitive learners. This commitment to responsive teaching resonated profoundly during the Year 6 Exhibition. Here, we witnessed the culmination of their holistic development, seamlessly integrating learning across diverse disciplines—literacy, numeracy, digital technologies, and the arts. This showcased their depth of understanding and their ability to synthesize knowledge across various domains, a testament to their growth as versatile and accomplished learners.

Our 2024 staff have dedicated substantial time to plan and craft units of work that will optimize learning opportunities for our children. Their readiness to transition seamlessly into the new school year reflects their commitment to building upon our progress. In 2024, our focus will centre on further professional development for teachers in mathematics, writing, and reading, emphasizing high-quality instruction. We aim to empower our students through amplifying their voice, agency, and feedback, propelling their learning journey forward.

Exciting prospects await us in 2024—a debut Art Show in term 3, amplifying both visual and performing arts, along with an intensified focus on STEM. Our extracurricular offerings for 2024 will encompass lunchtime clubs, instrumental music lessons, school choir, Lego and chess clubs, alongside STEM and basketball and tennis sessions after school.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals:

To provide the knowledge, skills, dispositions and understandings that will support students to participate in a contemporary world

Intended outcomes:

That students' understanding of their Catholic identity informs their actions.

Achievements

During 2023, the priorities undertaken in enhancing Catholic Identity at our school were multifaceted, aiming to foster deeper engagement and understanding among students, staff, and the wider community. A primary focus was to provide more opportunities and greater awareness for parents to actively participate in the Catholic life of the school. This initiative aimed to create a stronger sense of community and shared faith among families.

We continued to nurture and expand our parish partnerships, which are essential for maintaining a vibrant and connected Catholic community. Promoting greater involvement of students, families, and staff in the life of the school was also a key priority. This included efforts to develop both teacher and student understanding of church traditions, rituals, and the structure of the Mass through authentic links to the Units of Inquiry, ensuring that religious education was integrated seamlessly into everyday learning.

The introduction of the Religious Education Curriculum Framework, the Pedagogy of Encounter, and Catholic Social Justice Teachings was a significant step. These frameworks helped make explicit the connections between Catholic identity and Catholic traditions for children, both in and beyond the classroom. By embedding these elements into the curriculum, we aimed to deepen the spiritual and moral development of our students.

Re-establishing our connection with Sacred Heart Mission Aged Care was another priority. This relationship, along with our ongoing support for St. Vincent de Paul, Brigidine Asylum Seekers, and CARITAS, was aligned with our Religious Education and Inquiry learning. These connections highlighted our commitment to Catholic Social Teachings and our call to Faith in Action, encouraging students to live out their faith through service and social justice initiatives.

Throughout the year, our staff collaborated to develop units of inquiry and learning experiences that were not only relevant and engaging but also encouraged students to reflect deeply on their world through the lens of Catholic faith and traditions. This was supported by providing professional learning opportunities and fostering meaningful dialogue among staff, helping them to integrate Catholic identity into their teaching practices effectively.

Our commitment to social justice was consistently evident in the data collected from staff, parents, and students, indicating a strong communal dedication to connection, belonging, and action. To bring families together and celebrate our shared faith, we organized and celebrated liturgies at special events such as Mother's Day, Grandparents Day, school masses, and sacraments. These events helped maintain and strengthen our traditions.

Moreover, we worked to rebuild and acknowledge our connections with community organizations such as Sacred Heart Mission Aged Care, St. Vincent de Paul, and other local entities. These organizations played a central role in our community action work throughout the year, alongside initiatives like Caritas, Socktober, sustainable events, and other significant appeals. Through these efforts, we aimed to instill a sense of responsibility and compassion in our students, aligning with the broader goals of Catholic education.

Value Added

Our school has strengthened its Catholic Identity through a series of deliberate actions and initiatives that underscore our commitment to faith-based education and community engagement. To enhance our religious education (RE) curriculum, we supported our teachers by acquiring new RE resources, including indigenous and world religions. These resources are now easily accessible through a dedicated folder on the share drive and in the library, ensuring that our educators have the tools they need to deliver comprehensive religious instruction.

Recognizing the importance of observing and celebrating key religious events, we have established clear school norms for activities during Lent, Pentecost, Confirmation, and other significant dates in the Church calendar. Classrooms and assembly areas reflect the Church seasons with appropriately themed prayer spaces. Additionally, explicit instruction on prayer and Church seasons is a staple in all classes, and every student has learned the School Prayer, reinforcing a uniform foundation in our spiritual teachings.

Collaborative efforts have also been a hallmark of our approach. We've established a productive partnership with an RE consultant who provides ongoing professional development and assists with integrating RE across various units of inquiry. This partnership not only enriches our curriculum but also ensures that our teaching methods are current and effective.

Our community involvement is exemplified by numerous events that encourage participation from both parents and the wider community. We host significant masses, such as the Opening of the School Mass and Ash Wednesday, which are well-attended by parents, enhancing the communal feel of our celebrations. We've also engaged in social justice projects, such as Shrove Tuesday activities to support international relief efforts and local initiatives like food collections for Vinnies during significant liturgical celebrations, all led by our Year 6 Social Justice Leaders.

Inclusion of our families in the sacramental life of the school is another area of focus. We encourage parent participation in sacraments through take-home books, which provide education on the sacraments not just for the students but also for their families, deepening their communal and familial engagement.

Through these efforts, our school not only fosters a robust Catholic identity but also cultivates a vibrant community spirit that supports faith development, social justice, and the holistic education of our students.

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals:

To develop the capacity for all stakeholders to critically reflect on practice.

To enable the learning community to support agency and foster self – efficacy.

To provide the knowledge, skills, dispositions and understandings that will support students to participate in a contemporary world.

Intended Outcomes:

That there is a shared understanding & consistency of pedagogical approaches across the school.

That transdisciplinary learning is reflected across the school.

That there is a shared understanding of transdisciplinary learning amongst all stakeholders.

Achievements

During 2023, the priorities in learning and teaching were multi-faceted and comprehensive, beginning with a strong focus on professional learning for staff. The first two days of the school year were dedicated to professional learning, with Day 1 focusing on learning environments led by Shaz Bailey and Day 2 utilizing the insights gained for planning and induction. To reinforce these concepts, a follow-up session with Shaz Bailey was conducted in Week 7, allowing teachers to share and reflect on their experiments, inquiries, and learning.

A significant emphasis was placed on literacy and reading, with the implementation of a consistent approach to teaching reading across the school through the SWIF – Literacy Focus. The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) Professional Development Plans (PDPs) for 2023 highlighted the importance of early years play and inquiry, as well as maintaining a consistent approach to reading. Professional learning sessions were organized to involve staff as learners, including the Daily 5 professional learning in Term 1 and the CAFE professional learning in Term 2, which also involved Learning Support Officers (LSOs).

Supporting teachers in the classroom was another priority, with efforts to model and encourage practices that inspire both teachers and students. This included providing maths support for Prep, Year 2, Year 5, and Year 6, supporting the EcoWarriors program in Year 4, and facilitating the collaborative exhibition launch and preparation for Year 6. Additionally, professional learning sessions led by our RE consultant aimed to help staff understand the connection between units of inquiry and the religious education (RE) curriculum.

In terms of curriculum and planning, staff were involved in writing unit of inquiry progress indicators for reports in both semesters, highlighting the transdisciplinarity between RE, the Units of Inquiry (UoI), the Victorian Curriculum, and Approaches to Learning. Transdisciplinarity was a focal point in all planning sessions, and staff were encouraged to use PYP planning documentation that best suited their needs. Collaborative planning was scheduled into meeting times to include support from our RE Consultant and Shaz Bailey (Learning Spaces), and to allow specialists to contribute to planning units of inquiry. Weekly collaborative planning sessions with the Primary Years Programme Coordinator (PYPC) involved reflection on practice to support and enhance future planning, with teachers encouraged to use reflective strategies with students. End-of-term full-day planning sessions were held with classroom teachers, the team, and PYPC to develop and embed assessment, reflection, and feedback opportunities.

New resources were added to support these initiatives, including Indigenous and bilingual/mother tongue books. Discussions on data collection and the types of data gathered were also undertaken to enhance understanding and application of data in teaching. Teacher agency was another area of focus, with the PYPC reflecting with each team to ensure that teachers felt they had the right balance of agency and support in planning and classroom implementation. The Year 1 and Year 2 teams engaged in a PhD project on Teacher Agency with Montia Sen, an IB Educator, which involved filming and interviews to explore agency for teachers and students.

Additional professional learning and support were provided throughout the year. Our Learning Diversity leader attended an LDL seminar on assessing and intervening in Maths, and both Amerall Blom and Shaz Bailey continued to support staff in understanding the connections between units of inquiry, the RE curriculum, and learning spaces for Term 3 units of inquiry. The Year 5 students began the eSmart Digital Licence program with support from the PYP Leader, and planning sessions aimed at deepening the understanding of transdisciplinarity and its connection to all aspects of the curriculum. Literacy, reading, writing, and spelling were planned using the Daily 5 and CAFE frameworks, embedding content directly related to units of inquiry.

Teachers also identified areas where maths concepts could connect to units of inquiry and worked on understanding how Approaches to Learning (ATLs) could be integrated across all curriculum areas. Specialist teachers linked specific units of inquiry to their subjects, documenting these connections on PYP planners. Opportunities for student agency were

provided through engaging learning experiences that aligned with current units of inquiry, allowing students to co-construct and direct their learning.

A focus on sustainability and stewardship was evident through activities such as the Year 4 attendance at the Sustainable School Festival and the Eco Warriors program, where students took action in their 'organization' by making weekly sales and fundraising initiatives. Year 5's "Sharing the Planet" unit emphasized stewardship and its connection to faith, culminating in a Term 4 formation. The Year 6 Exhibition held on November 16 showcased student learning and inquiry. Additionally, Year 4 hosted a mini expo on Forces, further demonstrating the diverse and dynamic learning experiences provided throughout the year.

Student Learning Outcomes

The directions for the school in 2023 were based on data such as: NAPLAN 2021, Literacy (Early Years, PAT, Fountas & Pinnell) and Numeracy (Numeracy tracker, PAT). We have also drawn on direct feedback from staff and students to assist with developing actions that would address the areas we felt were key in moving our school forward in 2023.

In 2023, after extensive consultations with staff, parents, and students, our school transitioned to straight classes. This significant milestone was based on our observations that, following COVID, our students required focused attention. The change allows for greater differentiation and personalization of programs, enabling us to target children deemed at risk more effectively by increasing their interactions with staff in smaller settings. As a result, our data indicates continued growth in reading, writing, spelling, and math across the school from Prep to Year 6.

In NAPLAN the school continues to perform well in English, in particular reading, writing and spelling. We are also showing further gains in Mathematics as a school. Our Year 3 cohort made significant gains across the board. Growth in reading and writing for Year 3, places our children well above the state. In year 3 reading we have 100% of our children in the strong and or exceeding proficiencies. Our year 5 data for 2023 shows we are well above the state mean for writing and spelling. In reading we have 100% of our children in the strong and or exceeding proficiencies. We have made considerable gains in numeracy with 76% of our children in the strong and or exceeding proficiencies. Due to the way in which NAPLAN is reported we are unable to see the growth from Year 3 – 5 which is an area we traditionally do particularly well in.

Our MACSSIS data in 2023, confirms the upward trend that we have seen over the past few years for student learning. This is very pleasing, as we have worked hard to continue to grow particularly in areas of school engagement, agency and belonging.

Our new School Improvement Plan focuses on three priority areas. A culture of growth, Agency for engagement and Transdisciplinarity. And we have taken the areas of student engagement, learning dispositions, belonging and student voice to be key areas to monitor

moving forward. As such they have played a significant role each year in our Annual Action Plan for 2023 and have formed the basis of Professional Learning for staff. Creating learning environments where students will become resilient and self-managing learners who are motivated and embrace challenge is of particular importance. The MACSSIS data from our Year 3-6 children indicates our students feel connected to school, are motivated to learn, have confidence in their ability to learn and are connected to their peers. In our 2023 AAP, we have focused on engagement, student voice and student safety. These priorities also reflect in our commitment as an International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) World School, with learner agency central to IB philosophy. The survey reinforces and upholds the emphasis we place on social/ emotional learning and engagement in learning within the school.

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards			
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	432	72%
	Year 5	511	78%
Numeracy	Year 3	420	84%
	Year 5	491	76%
Reading	Year 3	451	100%
	Year 5	510	94%
Spelling	Year 3	418	61%
	Year 5	512	97%
Writing	Year 3	448	94%
	Year 5	525	93%

*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2023 due to participation not meeting these criteria or no students were assessed. Participants include students who were assessed, including non-attempt, or those exempted from the test.

Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals:

To enable the learning community to support agency and foster self-efficacy.

To provide the knowledge, skills, dispositions and understandings that will support students to participate in a contemporary world.

Intended Outcomes:

That students and staff are more confident, motivated and engaged learners who experience success.

That all stakeholders have voice, choice and ownership.

Achievements

During 2023, our focus has been on building connectedness among peers and the school community. We believe that academic achievement is strongly linked with a rigorous Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) education program. To ensure that SEL is embedded across the school, we have integrated it closely with our Learning and Teaching goals, the PYP Approaches to Learning, and the PYP Learner Profile. At St. Columba's, in line with our goal of critically reflecting on the current needs of our students and identifying best practices, we introduced The Resilience Project for Prep-6. This initiative ensures the delivery of consistent, evidence-based pedagogical wellbeing practices across the school.

In 2023, we transitioned from multi-age classes to straight classes. Each term begins with Wellbeing Week. This year, the focus has been on our school theme of 'HOPE,' which emphasizes developing relationships and building a strong sense of connectedness and community spirit. At St. Columba's, we place great emphasis on the development of children's social and emotional skills. Our Wellbeing Weeks are specifically designed to reinforce skills of resilience, empathy, relationships, positive emotions, mindfulness, and gratitude. These skills are further reinforced throughout the term during explicit SEL lessons and as lines of inquiry in Units of Inquiry. These skills are foundational and underpin the key building blocks of the learning process for each child. We know that when children are settled and happy, they have the confidence and courage to pursue learning.

In addition, we established the St. Columba's Kids peer support program in 2018. This program has continued to evolve and is now firmly embedded in our school's philosophy and ethos. It is a powerful way of helping all students feel they belong, ensuring they have connections across all year levels and with multiple staff members. Research shows that the success of any school-based program relies on home-school partnerships. Therefore, it is vital that these skills are modelled and reinforced at home. We have actively sought and encouraged parents to re-engage in their child's learning at school both within and beyond the classroom. This has been facilitated through multiple platforms, including traditional settings such as assemblies, classroom helpers, open learning mornings focussing on literacy and numeracy and volunteering, as well as specifically online through Seesaw.

Value Added

St. Columba's School has implemented a comprehensive strategy to enhance the wellbeing and connectedness of our students. Regular intervention meetings between teachers, the Diversity Leader, Wellbeing Leader, and Principal ensure that each child's needs are addressed promptly and effectively. These meetings are complemented by regular Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and staff professional learning sessions, all with a strong focus on student wellbeing.

Student voice and leadership are also prioritized through regular Student Representative Council (SRC) meetings and the ASPIRE Year 6 leadership day. A new Year 6 leadership structure has been introduced to provide more opportunities for student engagement and responsibility. Each term concludes with a wellbeing day designed by the students, such as the Friendship Fair, Tabloid Sports Day, and Footy & Pie Day, which fosters a sense of community and connectedness; facilitated by the children for the children.

The Wellbeing Leader works with small groups of children across different year levels, addressing specific Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) needs each week. Programs like mindfulness meditation and the Peaceful Kids program support small groups in managing stress and building resilience. Additionally, participation in Walk/Ride to School Days, Sporting Schools programs, and yoga and PMP for Prep, Years 1 and 2 promote physical wellbeing.

To ensure a safe and supportive environment, we continuously review and implement Child Safety standards and participate in national events like the National Day of Action against Bullying. Transitional activities, such as the Year 2 Fun Afternoon and camps for Years 3-6, help students feel more comfortable and connected. Interrelate sessions for Years 3-6 and their parents address crucial developmental and social topics.

Our curriculum and extracurricular activities further enrich the student experience. Students share their work with parents via Seesaw, fostering home-school engagement. Lunchtime activities like Lego Club, Chess and board games, soccer, and beach games provide diverse opportunities for social interaction. Whole school events, including the School Musical Shrek Junior, Harmony Week, and the National Clean Up Day, reinforce our community values.

The introduction of the Sweet Spot initiative, where classrooms are set up with activities focusing on fine motor skills and oral language development before the school day begins, has greatly improved morning transitions. Our emphasis on learning environments supports both academic and emotional growth. Regular local class walks utilize the community as an extended classroom, enriching the students' learning experiences.

For younger students, the P-2 Play Development Program (PDP), which is part of the IB Program Development Plan with a focus on play, highlights the benefits of play in early education. Inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach and IB Early Years principles, P-2 classrooms are designed to encourage play as a crucial part of learning. This approach serves both as a means to consolidate learning and as a stimulus for new discoveries. The benefits of play include enhancing creativity, fostering social skills, promoting problem-solving abilities, and supporting cognitive development, all of which are integral to the holistic development of young learners.

Professional learning for staff, particularly through the Resilience Project, ensures that our educators are well-equipped to support the wellbeing and resilience of our students. This holistic approach ensures that St. Columba's is a place where children can thrive both academically and emotionally.

Student Satisfaction

Our student data from the MACSSIS surveys shows overall general satisfaction. This year, the survey included Year 4 to 6 students, and the data reveals variations based on area, year level, and gender. The feedback from our Year 4-6 students indicates that they feel very connected to school, are motivated to learn, are connected to their peers, feel safe, are engaged, and believe they have a voice.

The data suggests that students consider themselves resilient and well-connected to their peers and the school. Anecdotally, our students are consistently engaged in all aspects of school life and continue to thrive with the opportunities provided. As a school, we have maintained a focus on strengthening supportive and effective learning environments and enhancing teaching practices. This commitment is reflected in our students' overall school climate, sense of belonging, teacher-student relationships, learning dispositions, and feelings of safety.

This year, we were determined to provide ample opportunities for students to build upon their connectedness to their peers, teachers, and the school. Based on the survey results, we believe we have successfully achieved this goal. Our 2024 Annual Action Plan (AAP) will focus on safety, engagement, student voice, and agency. The survey results reinforce the emphasis we place on social and emotional learning and engagement in learning within the school.

Student Attendance

Student non-attendance is managed through the student attendance roll. Parents phone, Operoo or email the school in the morning to report a child's absence. If there is no contact from home by 9:30am to explain a child's absence the parent/ guardian is called to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. Students leaving early or arriving late are signed in and/or out by their parent or guardian and the data is entered into the roll. Students with high levels of unexplained absences are followed up with parents. The days absent are included on the child's report.

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	92.4%
Y02	90.4%
Y03	91.2%
Y04	89.7%
Y05	90.5%
Y06	92.1%
Overall average attendance	91.0%

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals:

To develop the capacity for all stakeholders to critically reflect on practice.

To embed student and teacher goal setting & feedback practices in the school

To provide the knowledge, skills, dispositions and understandings that will support students to participate in a contemporary world.

Intended Outcomes:

That there is a shared understanding & consistency of pedagogical approaches across the school.

That teacher professional learning plans are aligned with the school improvement plan.

That the learning community supports agency and foster self – efficacy

That there is a shared understanding of transdisciplinary learning amongst all stakeholders

Achievements

Our school has accomplished numerous significant achievements over the past year, demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in education. The first two days of school were dedicated to staff professional learning, focusing on creating effective learning environments with educational consultant Shaz Bailey, followed by planning and induction activities. A follow-up session in week 7 allowed teachers to share and reflect on their experimentation and learning outcomes. We further underscored our dedication to professional development by actively seeking staff feedback through Google Forms on PSGs, Seesaw, and overall support. This process not only led to termly adjustments but also fostered greater voice, choice, and ownership among staff, ensuring our responses effectively catered to their needs and cultivated consistency across the school.

Our literacy focus through the SWIF initiative established a consistent approach to teaching reading across all year levels. This effort was further supported by the implementation of two IB Program Development Plans in 2023, which emphasized early years play, inquiry, and a

consistent reading strategy. These initiatives have contributed to a cohesive and effective literacy program throughout the school.

To further strengthen our educational framework, we implemented a new middle leadership model with team leaders for P-2 and 3-6. This structure has facilitated better support and guidance for staff, ensuring that educational goals are met more effectively. Additionally, the principal conducted Learning Walks throughout the year, providing insights and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Termly staff catch-up meetings with the principal were held to maintain ongoing communication and support, addressing any emerging needs promptly.

One of our innovative changes was the introduction of personal inquiries to replace traditional staff professional learning plans. This new approach aligns more closely with the AAP and SIP, allowing for more personalized and relevant professional development. We collaborated with our partner educational consultant, Kath Murdoch, who worked one-on-one with every staff member to help them accomplish their personal inquiries. Staff utilized their professional practice days to visit other schools, conduct research, and work collaboratively. This initiative culminated in an afternoon of celebration, where staff shared their inquiries, engaging in rich dialogue and mutual appreciation.

This year, our Year 6 students were organized into leadership groups, each mentored by staff members and covering key areas such as STEM, the Arts, Social Justice, Wellbeing, and Sports. These groups not only held regular meetings but also planned and executed various events, effectively fostering leadership skills and encouraging community engagement among the students.

Complementing this initiative, the Student Representative Council (SRC) played a pivotal role. Empowered to take ownership and demonstrate agency, as emphasized in our educational philosophy and SIP goals, the SRC was instrumental in shaping the school environment. They took a leading role in developing essential agreements for both their individual classes and the entire school, contributing significantly to the culture of the school playground. This involvement has been crucial in enhancing our learning community and giving students a meaningful voice in school affairs.

We enhanced staff support by fine-tuning meeting agendas to align more closely with AAP goals and providing dedicated days for report writing. We also organized collaborative planning sessions featuring experts such as Kath Murdoch and our Religious Education consultant. The introduction of a fourth specialist role, in response to the new EBA, granted staff with four hours of release time, the extra hour enabling greater opportunities for collaboration and planning.

The adjustment of the LSO timetable in response to needs further exemplify our adaptive approach. These adjustments ensured that resources were allocated efficiently and that student needs were met more effectively. Our commitment to innovation and adaptability has

enabled us to create a supportive and dynamic learning environment for both staff and students.

Additionally, we re-evaluated and adapted to the evolving needs of our staff, optimizing after-school meetings to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. Our leadership team, including the principal and school leaders, actively participated in various professional learning opportunities. These included the IB Global Conference in Adelaide, the South Central Principal Conference in Darwin, and the Victorian PYP Network Days, ensuring that our educational leadership remains innovative and informed by the latest developments in the field.

Strategic planning involved extensive consultation with the SAC and the community, leading to the development of new strategic directions focusing on facilities, academic excellence, Catholic Identity, staff retention, community engagement, student learning experience, and school growth. We submitted three grant applications, including the Victorian Government Capital Grant to fund our master plan, although we were unsuccessful in supplementary grant rounds.

Communication with the school community was enhanced through the principal's coffee and chat sessions, a move to monthly newsletters, and restructured parent-teacher interviews. We also updated our website with a Future Fit focus and reviewed policies using SafeSmart. Our commitment to professional growth was evident in the completion of first aid and CPR training, as well as Dynamiq warden training by staff.

Our MACSSIS data indicated significant improvement in staff surveys, particularly in professional learning, support for teams, collaboration for improvement, collective efficacy, and staff-leadership relationships. Student feedback from Year 4-6 was positive regarding their school experience and personal learning, while parent feedback showed significant improvement in school fit, student safety, and Catholic Identity domains.

In conclusion, our school has made remarkable progress in enhancing educational practices, supporting staff development, and engaging with the community, ensuring a well-rounded and forward-thinking educational environment.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning

List Professional Learning undertaken in 2023

In 2023, our staff participated in a robust program of professional learning aimed at enhancing our collective expertise across various areas of education, ensuring we stay at the forefront of pedagogical developments and safety protocols. During the year there was a focus on safety and compliance, with staff attending comprehensive training sessions in First Aid, CPR, and Anaphylaxis, critical for ensuring the health and safety of our community. Additionally, team members completed Dynamiq emergency management warden training through a combination of online modules and practical, face-to-face sessions.

Our commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment was evident through active participation in several educational networks. These included the SWIF Network, Learning Diversity Network, and Student Wellbeing Network, which provided forums for sharing best practices and collaborative problem-solving. Leadership capacity was further developed through engagement in the PYP Network, Principal Network, and Deputy Principal Network, enhancing our administrative strategies and school management practices.

Pedagogically, our faculty enriched their knowledge through specialized learning in diverse areas. The RE curriculum was deepened with focused sessions on scripture, sacraments, prayer, church rituals, and seasons, aligning with our commitment to spiritual development. Teachers engaged in Learning Walks, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and reflective practice. The PYP framework was a significant focus; staff undertook intensive learning through 'From Principals into Practice' and explored the complexities of the PYP Exhibition, enhancing our inquiry-based learning model and participated in the numerous teacher professional learning opportunities hosted by the Victorian PYP Network.

Innovation in teaching was supported by programs such as Mindset Maths and SMART Spelling, while digital competencies were bolstered through the use of platforms like Seesaw and eSMART, focusing on digital literacy. The integration of SEL through methods like Circle Time, and strategies for behavior management, underscored our holistic approach to student development.

Art and sustainability were also prominent themes, with educators attending workshops and collaborations with institutions like Zart Art, NGV, and CERES, enriching our arts and environmental curricula. Outdoor play and sustainability initiatives were particularly emphasized, reflecting our commitment to environmental stewardship and the health benefits of outdoor learning.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
<p>Leadership and administrative skills were sharpened through participation in significant events such as the IB Conference in Adelaide, the Darwin Principal Conference, and the PYP Conference for Principals and PYPC, all of which provided platforms for strategic dialogue and network expansion. Data-driven instruction was enhanced through NAPLAN training and Data Analysis workshops, improving our approach to personalized learning and academic achievement.</p> <p>Finally, our staff's ability to engage in reflective practice and personal growth was supported through programs like Personal Inquiry with Kath Murdoch, equipping our team with the skills to foster a culture of inquiry and improvement. Through these myriad professional development activities, our staff has significantly enhanced their expertise, directly impacting the quality of education and care provided to our students.</p>	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2023	18
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$1498.00

Teacher Satisfaction

This was the year two of our new School Improvement Plan. Over the past four years there has been a significant emphasis on ensuring we were creating high performing expert teams. This is a continued focus going forward which is embedded into our focus priorities of establishing: a Culture of Growth, Agency for engagement and Transdisciplinary learning.

Our MACSSIS data demonstrates that as a staff we are performing higher than the MACS positive response % average across all areas of the survey. This was especially evident in the areas of collaboration in teams, collective efficacy, staff -leadership relationships, staff safety, instructional leadership, and psychological safety with results between 65- 90% positive response rate. With our continuing work on feedback, the use of Learning Walks and personal inquires we hope to see further improvement in the areas of Catholic Identity and feedback which we hope will result in teachers feeling they can take more ownership and risks with their learning.

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	18.8%
Graduate	12.5%
Graduate Certificate	0.0%
Bachelor Degree	43.8%
Advanced Diploma	0.0%
No Qualifications Listed	25.0%

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	2
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	28
Teaching Staff (FTE)	23.0
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	15
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	11.5
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	1

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals

To enable the learning community to support agency and foster self-efficacy.

To provide the knowledge, skills, dispositions and understandings that will support students to participate in a contemporary world.

Intended Outcome:

That the learning community supports agency and foster self – efficacy.

That there is a shared understanding of transdisciplinary learning amongst all stakeholders.

Achievements

In 2023, St Columba's school community made significant strides in strengthening our collaborative relationships among parents, school, and parish. The year saw parents actively involved in numerous capacities—ranging from classroom support, coordinating Book Week, to participating in and managing after-school sports activities. The community's ongoing engagement in the Parents and Friends Association (PFA) and the School Advisory Council (SAC) proved invaluable. The PFA played a critical role in organizing social events and fundraising activities, enabling the purchase of essential resources for our students. The SAC, on the other hand, focused on reinforcing community bonds and assisting in achieving the school's improvement objectives. Their efforts were crucial in navigating the post-COVID environment, aiming to reinvigorate parental involvement to pre-pandemic levels.

Our commitment to community integration was further manifested through the successful hosting of various events and programs that united students, parents, and staff. Notably, the annual Marqt event, held just before Easter, celebrated community spirit and underscored the importance of family-school partnerships. Other activities throughout the year included Open Learning Mornings with focuses on numeracy and literacy, a well-attended Indigenous Smoking ceremony to start the year, and participation in Clean Up Australia Day, highlighting our dedication to environmental stewardship. The reintroduction of Eco Warriors by Year 4 students exemplified leadership in sustainability practices at our school.

The SAC was particularly proactive, inducting new members and working on strategic initiatives like the 'Future Fit' directions, and applying for funding through Smarty Grants for significant projects including the Masterplan and improvements to our sports courts. The cultural and celebratory life of the school thrived with events such as Harmony Week, Holi, St. Patrick's Day, and National Science Week, all of which fostered a rich, inclusive educational environment. The sports and arts programs flourished, with the introduction of new after-school activities including basketball and drama, and the combined Carols night and Art Auction drawing wide participation from the community.

A standout highlight for the year was the school production, a spectacular rendition of 'Shrek Junior'. This event was the culmination of months of dedicated preparation and truly showcased the multifaceted benefits of the arts—including fostering connections, engagement, collaboration, teamwork, confidence, pride, and joy. Behind the scenes, the atmosphere buzzed with excitement and mutual support among the students, a testament to the community spirit embedded in our school. This production, a labour of love involving students, teachers, and volunteers, not only entertained but also deeply enriched our school's culture.

2023 also saw enhanced communication and parental engagement through platforms like Seesaw, providing regular updates that kept families informed and involved. Special events, including Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations, along with Grandparents Day, saw robust participation from family members, contributing to the nurturing atmosphere at St Columba's. The year included community outreach efforts such as the Bunnings and Referendum BBQs, and the PFA organizing a special surprise for World Teacher's Day, all of which underscored the collaborative spirit of our school community.

Overall, St Columba's has fostered a thriving, engaged, and supportive community atmosphere that not only enhances student learning but also consolidates strong, lasting partnerships that contribute to the holistic development of our children and the broader community.

Parent Satisfaction

In 2023, our school continued to prioritize and strengthen the partnerships between schools and parents. Research consistently shows that effective communication and collaboration between these parties can significantly enhance student outcomes. According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), strong collaborative relationships between schools and families can lead to higher academic achievement, better attendance, and more positive attitudes toward school among students.

This year, our concerted efforts in this area have kept parent satisfaction robust, as evidenced by the feedback from 2022. This feedback was crucial in shaping our strategies, particularly in improving our communication processes. Our success in these areas is

corroborated by the MACSSIS data, where our school rates exceptionally well above the average in terms of communication, school climate, school fit, and student safety.

We have also maintained a strong commitment to fostering connections not only between families and the school but also extending to the parish and the broader community. By providing numerous opportunities for family involvement, we recognize the critical role that such engagement plays in enhancing educational experiences and outcomes for children.

Looking ahead to 2024, our goal is to restore and even exceed pre-COVID levels of family engagement. While our community traditionally exhibits high levels of family involvement, we aim to further elevate this by encouraging a deeper partnership in their children's educational journey. Recognizing the barriers that may prevent optimal family engagement is key, we plan to address these barriers through targeted initiatives that facilitate parental understanding and involvement in their children's learning processes.

Furthermore, we will emphasize the sense of belonging and community within our school. A strong sense of community not only supports academic success but also fosters personal growth among students. By bolstering this sense of belonging, we hope to inspire families to take advantage of the numerous avenues available for participating in their child's learning and the vibrant school life, both inside and beyond the classroom.

Through these initiatives, we anticipate not only sustaining but also enhancing the educational experience by nurturing an environment where parents feel valued and engaged, students are supported and challenged, and the entire school community thrives together.

Financial Performance

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

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at www.stcolumbasprimary.org