



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

2023

Annual Report to the School Community



St Thomas the Apostle School

251 Diamond Creek Road, GREENSBOROUGH NORTH 3088

Principal: Joanne Nolen

Web: www.stgreensboroughnth.catholic.edu.au

Registration: 1781, E Number: E1305

Principal's Attestation

I, Joanne Nolen, attest that St Thomas the Apostle 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 23 May 2024

About this report

St Thomas the Apostle 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

Vision

Guided by the Spirit, we empower a community of excellence and life-long learners, who are inspired to make a positive difference to our world.

Mission

We believe that:

The true message of the Gospel should be modelled by all members of the school community and therefore become a lived reality.

The Catholic traditions, ideals, values and attitudes should be fostered through a comprehensive Religious Education Program which includes rich experiences in Scripture and Liturgy.

Through the use of a variety of structures and teaching strategies all children will be encouraged to reach their full potential.

The curriculum should be challenging and relevant to the needs of individual students. It should be sequential, encourage independence and support the learning continuum of life.

The skills and talents of all staff are recognised and valued and through peer support and professional development opportunities, staff are assisted both personally and professionally to achieve excellence.

Through positive relationships we create an environment where there is a sense of belonging, acceptance, respect, growth and support for each other within our community.

Enrichment and Care

School Overview

St Thomas the Apostle has an enrolment of 267 students and maintained steady enrolment patterns over the past few years. Our suburb is in a green belt area and there are recreational spaces and sporting facilities for students in the area. Further developments in our school have improved the school yard and has seen the introduction of more play areas around the school. We have large play areas including a full size basketball stadium that is closely linked with St Thomas Basketball Club. An additional outdoor basketball court has been laid to meet the demand in the playground and outdoor seating has been introduced in the Senior wing of the school to enable outdoor learning experiences and a quiet space for children to sit and have lunch. Ipad hubs exist in each building to support the learning of Prep and Junior students. Middle students use Chromebooks and are introduced to the Google Suite. Senior students have their own Ipad to further support their access to applications that enhance learning.

We have 13 classes with a maximum of 25 in each class. The year 5 & 6 and 3 & 4 classes are in a composite structure, the remaining classes are straight classes. These classes are located in four different buildings and each building is set up with equipment and appropriate resources for the age group. Covered walkways connect the buildings. Our Discovery Centre boasts resources and equipment to facilitate a comprehensive Library, Visual Arts and Cooking program.

As a sustainable school our organic garden is used by middle school students across the week. Students also work in the domestic kitchen which supports the Stephanie Alexander program.

Results for literacy and numeracy are derived from NAPLAN and our own internal testing regime which occurs throughout the term. We have also focused on building in several special needs support programs which are to support students more at risk. This also includes providing extension programs for the students who show aptitude in numeracy. Various parenting nights and professional learning opportunities are offered to families throughout the year.

Restorative practice has been reintroduced to staff at St Thomas, who undertook Professional Development in this area of building positive relationships. This has been shared with the Parent community and drives interactions between teachers and students. School rules and class rules all link to our whole school vision, as well as our various supportive programs such as the Resilience Project, which focus on promoting positive relationships and resilience in our students through explicitly teaching gratitude, empathy and mindfulness.

As a school we are very aware that we work in close partnership with families. Parents are invited into many aspects of school life and we are blessed with very successful parents associations supporting the school in a variety of ways. We know that parents are keen to be active members of our school and opportunities are provided for families to participate in the many and varied school activities throughout the year.

Our School Improvement Plan drives our work annually and is developed after reflecting on all school data. The learning and teaching component of our Annual Action Plan has many aspects to consider. Primarily it is about ongoing improvement in key areas of learning and teaching. Professional development for staff is also driven from the annual action plan as staff need to keep abreast of contemporary teaching styles and current thinking about best teaching practice.

St Thomas ensures that our support for students in wellbeing is at the forefront of our work. We appreciate that social and emotional support will enrich all aspects of the learning and that children need to feel safe and experience a trusting relationship with their teacher. Our staff are very capable in focusing on ensuring the wellbeing of students and are quick to address any matters that impact on learning. We have a very successful orientation program which gives new families a clear understanding of how children are guided and supported in their early transitional period starting school.

St Thomas is about supporting the student, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and socially. The strategies we use are linked into our vision which focuses clearly on Gospel Values.

Principal's Report

2023 was a great year for St Thomas the Apostle as we welcomed our new preps into the school and we embarked on new initiatives throughout the year.

The staff had a two day conference later in the year where we spent a day with Kristy Elliot where we all received professional learning in the area of Restorative Practices. The second day we engaged in prayer practices to support staff faith formation.

The school entered its second year of a Literacy Intensive project where the Learning and Teacher leader along with the Junior and Senior Literacy leaders met to create a strategic plan to help improve student outcomes in Literacy. All staff received training in how to analyze PAT data and our Prep and Junior staff also received training to administer the English Online Interview. To further support data driven instructional practices, the school used the Elastik online platform to triangulate datasets and identify the gaps in student learning.

The curriculum team met and reviewed the Inquiry cycle and to present a scope and sequence for instruction to ensure the breadth of the curriculum has been addressed.

The Mother's and Father's Day breakfasts continue to be highly successful social events on the calendar as were other events like the Colour Fun Run, sports carnival and the disco.

The Parent and Friends Association (PFA) continued to fund raise for the benefit of the children and money was spent on the purchase and installation of outdoor furniture for the Patrick Wing middle area.

The Sacramental Program saw our year 3 students make their Eucharist across the month of May at the parish weekend masses. In August our Year 5&6 children made their Confirmation together at St Thomas the Apostle church presided by Bishop Terry Curtain. In November our Yr 2 children received the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The official opening of the school refurbishment of 2020, took place presided by the Members of Parliament and other distinguished guests.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To continue to develop educators' efficacy to maximise learning.

- That powerful teaching will lead to improved student learning outcomes To develop leadership capacity through research-based practices to ensure that every learner is engaged, challenged and learning successfully.
- That instructional leadership is modelled and embedded in daily practice. To further develop and maintain a strong learning culture that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and promotes intellectual rigour.
- That all stakeholders will impact positively on educational excellence Achievements

Achievements

Throughout 2023, we continued to work towards achieving our goals. Using the Pedagogy of Encounter to facilitate the learning process staff delivered rich learning experiences. School staff participated in professional learning on meditation, scripture, the sacraments and delivering authentic units of work connected with their integrated inquiry learning.

When planning, a particular focus was placed on providing opportunities for students to engage with others and explore other's opinions on a given provocation. Students engaged in many social justice initiatives throughout the year of learning. Our mission of Christian service continued to drive our strong involvement in a wide range of social justice initiatives including Caritas Australia's Project Compassion, the St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal and the St Vincent De Paul Christmas Appeal. These actions supported students' awareness of their responsibilities in the local community, and linked with the Religious Education Curriculum as lived actions within the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

Opportunities for daily prayer continued to be offered with Christian mediation at the start of the day. Liturgies for events such as Reconciliation week, Anzac day and Remembrance day were opportunities for our community to gather in prayer. Celebration of the Sacraments of Eucharist, Confirmation and Reconciliation took place at St Thomas the Apostle church.

We also collected baseline data using the Pedagogy Reflection tool with both teachers and students.

While MACSIS data from students indicated a slight drop in Catholic Identity between 2022 and 2023 of 1% and just below the MACS average, Catholic Identity of staff is up by 3% and 5% higher than the MACS average.

This demonstrates the need to continue to raise the profile of Religious Education across our school.

Value Added

- REL supported teachers in planning and delivery of Religious Education Curriculum through the Pedagogy of Encounter.
- Maintained Social Justice initiatives - Project Compassion, St Vincent De Paul.
- Increasing student participation at school masses and liturgies
- Ongoing Faith Development Team Meetings
- Strong student participation in all Sacraments - Confirmation, Reconciliation and First Eucharist.
- Intellectual rigour supported by strong professional learning opportunities

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To continue to develop educators' efficacy to maximise learning.

- That powerful teaching will lead to improved student learning outcomes To develop leadership capacity through research-based practices to ensure that every learner is engaged, challenged and learning successfully.
- That instructional leadership is modelled and embedded in daily practice. To further develop and maintain a strong learning culture that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and promotes intellectual rigour.
- That all stakeholders will impact positively on educational excellence

Achievements

St Thomas' staff continued to work towards creating a rigorous and contemporary learning environment for our students. Our strategic professional learning schedule provided support to staff in delivering the curriculum and targeting student needs during. The curriculum leaders conducted twice-weekly professional learning meetings to continue developing staff capacity..

Literacy remained a foundation of our school-wide initiatives. A comprehensive literacy framework across the school was developed, ensuring an uninterrupted block of time, and combined with a deliberate focus during whole-class instruction. This also allowed for consolidation in reading skills in our reading groups. Small teacher-led groups were focal to this time, allowing for differentiated instruction and individualised attention to our students' needs. The SMART Spelling program was also a major focus, ensuring continuity throughout the school. Teachers embarked on exploring Grammar in context, supported by professional development in this domain. Teacher expertise played a pivotal role in advancing these initiatives.

In Mathematics, our primary focus was on continuously using data to inform our teaching. Our staff engaged in regular professional learning sessions in their respective teams with the Literacy Leader to develop their skills and efficacy. Formal and informal assessments of students were used to monitor and cater for students' needs. The ongoing analysis of this data provided information regarding both individual and school performance. We continued to implement and refine a rigorous assessment schedule throughout the year. Online ACER

Testing remained a cornerstone of our assessment schedule and was supported by additional assessment tasks, such as pre- and post-testing to inform teaching.

We continued to invest in new ways to engage our learners through the use of technology. The eLearning leader played a critical role in providing professional learning and support to ensure that we incorporated digital technologies across all areas of the curriculum. Our Prep - Year 2 and Year 5 - 6 students have iPads to support their learning in digital technologies, and we have maintained a 1:1 Chromebook program in Years 3 - 4. The use of additional resources, such as 'Spheros' and 'Lego Mindstorms - programmable robots', was a highlight of STEM this year supporting the implementation of digital technologies across the classrooms.

We continued our Teachers As Co-learners journey in Italian, with classroom teachers committing 15 minutes of their daily schedule to conversing in the language. Teachers utilised daily slides and videos to inform their ongoing journey as co-learners. This effort was reinforced by consistent professional development sessions during our staff meetings. As a result, our students made significant gains in their proficiency over the year, emerging as confident and capable learners of the language

Student Learning Outcomes

NAPLAN was undertaken in 2023. Again, St Thomas' students in both Years 3 and 5 completed this testing on-line with 99% participation. Appropriate adjustments were made for students who qualified. 2023 saw the introduction of Proficiency standards; Exceeding, Strong, Developing and Needing additional assistance, thus comparisons to previous year's performance not possible.

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards			
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	426	68%
	Year 5	486	61%
Numeracy	Year 3	417	82%
	Year 5	473	70%
Reading	Year 3	420	79%
	Year 5	491	72%
Spelling	Year 3	407	62%
	Year 5	480	68%
Writing	Year 3	440	91%
	Year 5	492	81%

*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

- That instructional leadership is modelled and embedded in daily practice. To further develop and maintain a strong learning culture that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and promotes intellectual rigour.
- That all stakeholders will impact positively on educational excellence

Achievements

At St. Thomas the Apostle School, we focus on building positive relationships built upon respect with a strong focus on wellbeing. The students' passions, skills and interests are acknowledged and fostered. Our staff are highly committed to the education of the whole person - they are dedicated, motivated and caring. Social and Emotional skills are explicitly taught in each classroom using The Resilience Project with our lessons taking place on Monday afternoons but the program is also designed to be embedded in our classroom and community practice. Activities and information is also shared with our parent community in regards to The Resilience Project through our newsletter and online forums.

Cybersafety has been a focus for all students with the classes taking part in the Inform and Empower program to educate students on how to navigate safely online.

Our students and staff continue to benefit from having two provisionally registered psychologists on site two days per week. Learning Support Officers also provide constant care for students in a variety of capacities both inside and outside the classroom. A 'social skills' program centred around resilience is also delivered in grades, three, four, five and six via one of our Learning Support Officers.

Value Added

- Promotion of 'student voice' through: Student Leadership Team, Student Representative Council, Fire Carriers and Mini Vinnies
- Resilience Project sessions every Monday to develop Social Emotional Learning
- Staff educated in Restorative Practices approach to building relationships and managing behaviour
- Year 5/6 Prep Buddies sessions each fortnight

- Parent Information Evenings
- Assemblies to celebrate and showcase learning
- Provisional psychologists on site twice per week
- Colour Fun Run
- Tennis program
- Interschool Sports Program
- Lunchtime clubs
- Intervention and Extension to support a variety of education needs
- Cybersafety lessons and parent information sessions

Student Satisfaction

The MACSIS student data for 2023 indicates that our students are attentive and invested in our school. Our students feel that their teachers hold them to high expectations of their effort, understanding, persistence and performance. These rigorous expectations are again above the MACS average.

The strength of the social connection between teachers and students within and beyond the school is again a strength and can be seen as a factor in building connection to school and learning. Students feel a sense of belonging to the school on the whole with above the MACS average for feeling that they are valued members of the school community.

Student Attendance

Whole-school strategies and clear understandings of processes are important for promoting attendance. Principals and all school staff play an important role in developing and reinforcing clear understandings of the shared expectations for attendance amongst schools, students and parents.

Principals are responsible for communicating these expectations to parents and students when they enrol at the school, and for regularly communicating with all parents about attendance issues. Schools can promote and maintain high levels of student attendance and participation through developing whole school strategies.

A clear whole-school strategy should: Articulate high expectations to all members of the school community by:

- Regularly communicating with parents about expectations for attendance

- Promoting awareness that absence results in quantifiable lost learning time and opportunities
- Modelling punctuality across the whole school. Create safe, supportive learning environments where all students experience success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning by:
 - Developing collaborative and empowering relationships between teachers, students and parents
 - Implementing effective and supportive transition programs, including student transitions between different learning areas and levels within the school, and pathways and careers support programs
 - Developing class and home group structures and environments that enable opportunities for increased connectedness to individual teachers and peers encouraging parents to get involved in the life of the school
 - Immediately following-up any problems identified by students and parents transparently. Adopt consistent, rigorous procedures to monitor and record student absence by:
 1. Immediately following-up individual student absences
 2. Correctly using student attendance data management systems Compass
 3. Compass sends a notification to parents if a reason for non-attendance hasn't been communicated.
 4. Requesting a doctor's certificate if the child is away through illness for more than three consecutive days.
 5. Delegating responsibilities to all staff, with a key member of staff leading attendance improvement initiatives.

Implement data-driven attendance improvement strategies, for example:

- Monitoring and analysing school attendance records regularly and using tools for early identification of students at risk of poor attendance (such as the Student Mapping Tool)
- Regularly discussing student attendance records in staff meetings and in the staff performance and development review process.
- Attendance Normally: The Roll is marked twice a day on Compass and reasons for absence or lateness is recorded.

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	90.3%
Y02	88.2%
Y03	87.4%
Y04	88.5%
Y05	89.4%
Y06	87.6%
Overall average attendance	88.6%

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To develop leadership capacity through research-based practices to ensure that every learner is engaged, challenged and learning successfully.

- That instructional leadership is modelled and embedded in daily practice.

Achievements

The leadership team meeting weekly ensured ongoing continuity for the school. The support given to the leadership team through professional coaching proved a helpful tool in personal development and a chance to reflect on restructuring of leadership team for the next year. Two members of the Leadership Team are undertaking further studies to increase their knowledge. A large screen in the staffroom has helped staff make daily connections to school activities. Also, conscious efforts were made to include aspects of leadership discussion into staff meeting to ensure everyone had access to important information.

To maintain commitment to the Annual Action of Plan of the St Thomas, each meeting explicitly starts by stating the goal being addressed in the presentation of learning. The main goals are:

- To continue to develop educators' efficacy to maximise learning.
- To develop leadership capacity through research-based practices to ensure that every learner is engaged, challenged and learning successfully.
- To further develop and maintain a strong learning culture that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and promotes intellectual rigour.

The intended outcomes are:

- That powerful teaching will lead to improved student learning outcomes
- That instructional leadership is modelled and embedded in daily practice.
- That all stakeholders will impact positively on educational excellence

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2023	
<p>The leadership continued its professional learning with the School Improvement Learning Collaborative work on Agile Leadership with Dr Simon Breakspear with focus on Feedback. Further teacher professional learning was undertaken in Numeracy enlisting the assistance of Michael Ymer who continued working with teaching teams in their planning for learning in mathematics and modelling of lessons.</p> <p>Further professional learning was also provided through the following -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ENA 2. PAT data analysis 3. Forming positive relationships 'The Resilience Project' 4. Introducing Restorative Practices 5. Running Record analysis 6. SMART Spelling 7. Dynamiq online Warden Training 8. OHS online training — 9. Mental Health and Wellbeing Course 10. Mandatory reporting and Child Safety 11. Elastik training 	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2023	25
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$765.00

Teacher Satisfaction

Overall the MACSIS 2023 staff survey results indicate that overall satisfaction in all indicators has increased significantly on the previous results. This reflects the effort, support and focus the leadership team have placed on school improvement since the last survey in across all 14 domains - student safety, school climate, staff-leadership relationships, instructional leadership, feedback, school leadership, staff safety, psychological safety, professional learning, collaboration, support for teams, collective efficacy and Catholic identity.

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	7.4%
Graduate	18.5%
Graduate Certificate	7.4%
Bachelor Degree	40.7%
Advanced Diploma	22.2%
No Qualifications Listed	3.7%

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	3
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	32
Teaching Staff (FTE)	23.3
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	14
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	12.0
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To further develop and maintain a strong learning culture that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and promotes intellectual rigour.

- That all stakeholders will impact positively on educational excellence

Achievements

- We were also pleased to be able to complete the year positively with our Year 5 & 6 students receiving their Sacrament of Confirmation with their families in attendance. The Year 6 graduation was also able to go ahead with the community engaged in this special celebration.
- Compass which enables us to correspond with parents solely through technology. This makes it easier for parents to work with administration.
- Parent Input is invited by asking families to join a range of committees such as the School Advisory Council, Parish Pastoral Council, and Parent and Friends Association. The Parents and Friends Association very successfully raises money and promotes community engagement through the organisation of activities such as the Colour Run, Mother's Day Stall, and student discos. The school engages with this active team to ensure ease and convenience for a very busy committee.

Parent Satisfaction

In 2023, family engagement dropped from 41% in 2022 to 36%. Student safety increased from 57% to 64%. Parent perception of student safety at St Thomas' also increased by 7 points on the previous results. Overall school positive endorsement has gone up 1% to 61%

Continue working The MACSIS results indicate that communication and Catholic Identity are areas of priority for future development. Unfortunately only a very small number of families completed the survey which makes further analysis quite difficult. Further encouragement will be provided in 2025 to increase engagement in this important data collecting process

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.stgreensboroughnth.catholic.edu.au