



2025

Annual Report to the School Community



St Mary's School

Moore Street, ARARAT 3377

Principal: Roxanne Leed

Web: www.smararat.catholic.edu.au

Registration: 594, E Number: E2028

Principal's Attestation

I, Roxanne Leed, attest that St Mary's School is compliant with:

- The minimum standards and other requirements for school registration and school boarding premises (if applicable) as specified in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic).
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2025 school year under the Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth) and the Australian Education Regulations 2023 (Cth).
- The Child Safe Standards as prescribed in Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises.

Attested on 27 Mar 2026

About this report

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

Governing Authority Report

From the Murray to the Sea, DOBCEL aims to realise a vision of the 'fullness of life for all' for more than 18,600 students across a community of 63 Catholic primary and secondary schools.

We began 2025 with an uplifting Mass led by Bishop Paul in a packed St Patrick's Cathedral. In his homily, Bishop Paul highlighted our mission as Catholic educators to pursue the fullness of life for every child in our care, reminding us to keep students, staff and mission at the centre of our work.

The January 2025 publication of the DOBCEL Strategy 2035 represents a pivotal moment for the DOBCEL community and marks an important phase in our ongoing development.

The main purpose of this 10-year strategy is to inspire the whole system to commit to and move towards a high performing system of Catholic schools. The system is strong and well-performing, but we can do better.

Underpinned by our Catholic Identity, the strategy identifies five strategic pillars that reflect primary areas of focus.

- Collaborative Cultures
- Engagement and Belonging
- School as Community
- Rich Pedagogical practices for Deeper Learning and Wellbeing
- Sustainable Stewardship

The strategy was co-designed with teachers, school leaders, non-teaching staff, students, parents and those working in Catholic Education Ballarat offices.

I had the great privilege of participating in these co-design sessions, which showcased the professionalism and passion of all those in our system that devote their working lives to provide a great education for our children and young people.

Therefore, it is only fitting that I record my sincere thanks to all of you. These are exciting times of opportunity for our community of schools, but it is only possible because of your extraordinary work and dedication.

Tom Sexton
Executive Director DOBCEL

Vision and Mission

ST MARY'S PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL VISION STATEMENT

St Mary's is a Catholic school community inspired by the Gospel, and in the spirit of the Brigidine tradition, we are committed to learning for all, fairness for all and compassion for all.

ST MARY'S PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENTS

Catholic School Culture

- We are inspired by Christ and our Catholic faith tradition to respond to the challenges of the Gospel in our world today.
- We are called to be the presence of Christ for one another and act for social justice with strength and gentleness.

Community Engagement

- We welcome all people in the Brigidine tradition of inclusiveness and belonging.
- We engage in meaningful and collaborative relationships with all members of our community to ensure the best outcomes for all.

Leadership and Stewardship

- We empower all to contribute positively to our world and be stewards of all God's creation.
- We embed a culture of collaboration with purpose and clarity to ensure high levels of learning for all.

Learning and Teaching

- We cultivate a passion for learning by inspiring and challenging each other.
- We engage and support learners at their point of need to ensure that all learners can reach their full potential.

Wellbeing

- We create a safe, inclusive environment that celebrates effort and achievement and promotes dignity and fullness of life for all.
- We identify, respect and celebrate the unique gifts of all people to nurture their wellbeing.

School Overview

St Mary's Parish Primary School is a Catholic co-educational school in the rural town of Ararat in the Western District of Victoria. The school is an integral part of the St Mary's Parish community and enjoys a close relationship with Marian College as our local Catholic secondary school, a school to which most students transfer once they have completed their primary education.

The origins of the school date from 1863 and from 1889 when the school was led by the Brigidine Sisters. The current school, on the Moore Street site, was opened in 1963 and major additions took place in the 1990s as a result of the Commonwealth Government Building Education Revolution (BER) grant in 2011. In 2025, the school completed a 3-million-dollar upgrade to its Administration Wing and learning facilities. Presently the school has 121 students from 82 families. The majority of the students live in the Ararat town area itself, though approximately a quarter of the student population live in the rural areas surrounding Ararat. Less than 3% of our student population are Indigenous to Australia. A high proportion of the student population was born in Australia and come from homes where the primary language spoken at home is English. 14% of the school population speak a language other than English at home. The school has high proportion of families from the lower socio-economic strata, with the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value at 1038.

Principal's Report

Throughout the year, our teachers have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to strengthening the Catholic identity of our school. By embracing the model of the Catholic Dialogue School, teachers have created inclusive spaces where faith, culture, and dialogue intersect meaningfully. They have worked diligently to nurture a living Catholic tradition that is both deeply rooted and open to the questions and experiences of today's students. Through reflective practices, rich liturgical celebrations, and curriculum integration, our staff continue to foster an environment where the Gospel message is authentically lived, promoting a faith identity that is dynamic, invitational, and responsive to the broader world.

This year we have continued to make gains in our school culture, fostering an environment where collaboration, innovation, and trust are at the forefront. Staff have embraced new opportunities to work together across teams, confidently taking professional risks to enhance teaching practices. This positive shift has continued to have direct impact on student outcomes, with noticeable growth across key learning areas. Our students are benefiting from more dynamic, engaging, and differentiated learning experiences, which are strengthening their skills, confidence, and love of learning. This cultural transformation has not only empowered our educators but also created a more vibrant, supportive, and successful learning community for all.

Our focus for 2025 involved attention to the following priorities:

- Enhancing our unique Catholic identity and strengthen links between Faith and life
- Refining and improving learning through purposeful, engaging and school-wide pedagogy, that maximises success for all
- Promoting wellbeing

To achieve these goals, the following strategies were identified and focused on throughout the year

- Purposeful use of school-wide, research-based, collaborative pedagogical practices
- Promote our unique Catholic identity to enhance a re-contextualised understanding of the Catholic faith tradition
- Build staff theological knowledge and capability, in order to implement rich learning and teaching experiences
- Refine formative and summative assessment practices
- Embed School Wide Positive behaviours
- Promote practices that enhance and enrich wellbeing including evidenced-based strategies from the Resilience Project
- Further develop staff capabilities to support learners with diverse needs.

Most notably this year, St Mary's has undergone a significant renovation. The \$3,000,000 project which includes a \$2,000,000 Capital Grant through the 2019 – 2023 Victorian Government Capital Funding Program which has enabled us to complete Stage 1 of our Master Plan. The key insights for our project include;

- Establishing spaces for student-centred pedagogies that develop agency and learner expertise
- Increasing opportunity for collaboration for students and staff
- Supporting family engagement and visitor experience through welcoming environments and meaningful connections
- Generating a sense of identity drawing on Catholic traditions and rituals including our Brigidine charism
- Providing learning spaces that support collaborative practices
- Increasing connections between St Mary's, Marian College and the Parish
- Improving opportunities for active play and outdoor learning.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Exploring, shaping and articulating our evolving identity as a Catholic School Community.

Achievements

In 2025, St Mary's made significant progress towards enhancing our unique Catholic identity and strengthening the links between Faith and life. All staff engaged in focused Professional Learning through the program "Our Unique Catholic Identity: understanding what makes us who we are", fostering a deeper collective understanding of our Catholic tradition and its relevance to contemporary life. This initiative encouraged rich dialogue and reflection on how our faith shapes daily practice and community life. Additionally, we continued to refine Whole School Prayer, critically examining how we can better recontextualise the Gospel for today's world. This process led to renewed prayer practices that honour tradition while making Gospel messages more accessible and meaningful for our students, ensuring faith remains a living, dynamic presence in our school community. This was supported through staff professional learning 'Prayer in a Contemporary Catholic Dialogue School'.

We also began our Laudato Si' Action Plan, as encouraged by Pope Francis. Using a structured process designed to integrate ecological awareness and spiritual renewal we engaged in learning guided by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. We began our process with reflection and prayer, grounding our community in the call to care for creation. We will continue this work next year and set clear, measurable goals focused on sustainability, justice, and stewardship.

Value Added

Critical examination and review of the liturgical practices of our school

Enhancing our Catholic identity through recontextualised practices in prayer and Religious Education lessons

Professional learning sessions related to the liturgical aspects of prayer within the Catholic tradition and how to unpack the Gospel message with students

Continued focus on Prayer Life at St Mary's with agreed liturgical practices and commitments from F-6

Regular Whole School Prayer (student-led)

Regular Masses to celebrate significant events for example beginning of School Year, Ash Wednesday, Catholic Education Week

Learning Community Masses School Community actively supporting Caritas - Project Compassion Mission Week (led by Senior students)

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Strengthen, refine and improve learning through purposeful, engaging and school-wide pedagogy, that maximises success for all.

Achievements

In 2025, we continued to make significant strides in improving whole school pedagogical practices, with a strong focus on maximising success for all students. Central to this improvement was the embedding of a structured approach to the teaching of Literacy across all year levels. Using evidence-based strategies, the school adopted consistent, systematic methods aligned with the Science of Reading to ensure all students had equitable access to high-quality instruction. Staff engaged in targeted professional learning to build collective efficacy, allowing for shared language, practice, and assessment methods. Regular data cycles, collaborative planning sessions, and a focus on early intervention strengthened our capacity to respond to student needs promptly and effectively, resulting in notable growth in literacy outcomes across the school.

Supporting this work, St Mary's engaged closely with the FLARE (Focused Learning and Review for Excellence) initiative through DOBCEL. FLARE provided a structured framework for continuous improvement, helping the school identify high-impact teaching strategies and focus areas for development. Leaders and teachers used FLARE tools to reflect on classroom practice, monitor the impact of interventions, and refine pedagogical approaches based on student data and evidence. Through a culture of collaboration, feedback, and reflective practice fostered by FLARE, St Mary's enhanced instructional consistency and strengthened a whole-school commitment to excellence in teaching and learning using low variance principles. These efforts collectively ensured that every student was supported to achieve their potential.

Student Learning Outcomes

According to the 2025 NAPLAN data scale a high percentage of students are achieving at high levels of competence in the key areas that NAPLAN assesses.

In Year 3 Reading 79% of students are achieving in the 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' categories

In Year 5 Reading 73.4% of students are achieving in the 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' categories

In Year 3 Writing 73.3% of students are achieving in the 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' categories

In Year 5 Writing 66.7% of students are achieving in the 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' categories

In Year 3 Numeracy 79% of students are achieving in the 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' categories

In Year 5 Numeracy 80% of students are achieving in the 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' categories

At St Mary's we not only celebrate student achievement, we also celebrate student growth. One of the ways that we track this is using John Hattie's Effect Size Research.

Educational researcher John Hattie popularized the idea that an effect size of 0.4 represents one year's worth of student growth in one year of schooling. This is often called the "hinge point". Data with an effect size above 0.4 are considered to have a greater-than-average impact on student achievement. Those below 0.4 may still be effective, but they produce less than a year's growth per year on average. The following data sets are examples of student cohort growth as evidence of success using a structured approach to literacy.

Letter Naming Fluency Effect Size

Foundation - 2.58

Year 1 - 1.62

Phoneme Segmentation Fluency

Foundation - 6.23

Year 1 - 1.57

Word Reading Fluency

Foundation - 1.71

Year 1 - 1.16

Year 2 - .6

Year 3 - .85

Oral Reading Fluency

Year 1 - 1.17

Year 2 - .66

Year 3 - 1.27

Year 4 - .85

Year 5 - 1.37

Year 6 - 1.37

Comprehension (MAZE)

Year 2 - .71

Year 3 - 1.38

Year 4 - .76

Year 5 - 1.97

Year 6 - 1.97

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards					
	2025 (current year)			2-Year Average	
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	435	63%	422	58%
	Year 5	522	93%	501	79%
Numeracy	Year 3	411	79%	401	63%
	Year 5	519	86%	496	74%
Reading	Year 3	394	79%	398	72%
	Year 5	508	79%	497	75%
Spelling	Year 3	397	63%	400	61%
	Year 5	498	64%	480	60%
Writing	Year 3	*	*	*	*
	Year 5	491	71%	482	68%

*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2025 due to participation not meeting these criteria or no students were assessed. Participants include students who were assessed, including non-attempt, or those exempted from the test.

Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Promote and enhance wellbeing.

Achievements

In 2025, our school continued to embed Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies as a cornerstone of our wellbeing practices. By clearly defining behavioural expectations, using consistent language across the school, and recognising positive behaviours, we fostered a safe and supportive learning environment. Weekly wellbeing focus areas and consistent classroom routines supported students in understanding and meeting behavioural expectations. Data-informed decision-making enabled timely and targeted interventions, contributing to a noticeable improvement in student engagement and a reduction in behavioural incidents. These efforts reflect our commitment to promoting practices that enhance and enrich the wellbeing of all members of our learning community.

Alongside these efforts, we invested in further developing staff capabilities to support learners with diverse needs. Professional learning sessions focused on inclusive practices, trauma-informed approaches, and differentiated instruction, equipping staff with the tools needed to respond to individual learning profiles. PBIS frameworks provided a structure for recognising and addressing barriers to learning, with staff collaborating to implement support plans and adjustments that uphold high expectations for all students.

Value Added

Continued refinement of positive behaviour support comprised of intervention practices and organisational systems for establishing the social culture, learning and teaching environment, and individual behaviour supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students

Use of the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) to continue to embed core features of School Wide Positive Behaviour Framework

Improved use of data collection and analysis of undesired behaviours using the Tiered Fidelity Framework

Continued use Behaviour Matrix and associated processes

Behaviour Matrix used as a reference for class norms and explicit skill-based teaching for Social-Emotional Learning

Active Involvement in Resilience Project, Ararat

SWPBS Celebration Days - recognising students who demonstrate desired behaviours as stated in our Matrix.

Student Satisfaction

Student Satisfaction data as recorded using INSIGHT SRC shows significant improvement in every area relating to social emotional experiences. Most significant growth was in Personal Development, Encouraging Learning, Desire to Learn, Eagerness to Learn, Classroom Behaviour and Student Motivation.

Student Attendance

Attendance roll marked twice daily (9.05am & 12.00pm) by all classroom teachers using SIMON.

Rolls collated twice daily onto SAS.

Summary absence data for the semester sent home with school reports.

Principal followed up with parents in relation to persistence unexplained absences.

Principal and teachers to create targeted plan in collaboration with parents to support students who have had significant absences.

Average Student Attendance By Year Level

Foundation - 89.95%

Year 1 - 85.61%

Year 2 - 90.70%

Year 3 - 89.40%

Year 4 - 88.28%

Year 5 - 86.30%

Year 6 - 89.20%

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	85.84
Y02	93.39
Y03	91.05
Y04	91.63
Y05	90.4
Y06	86.45
Overall average attendance	89.79

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Embed agreed collaborative practices.

Using Response to Intervention Framework to ensure point-of-need instruction for all students.

Achievements

Throughout the year, school leadership made significant strides in strengthening collaborative practices across all year levels. A key focus was fostering cohesive team planning, where teaching teams regularly met to design and align learning and teaching strategies. This was underpinned by the implementation of a structured literacy scope and sequence from Foundation to Year 6, ensuring consistency and continuity in literacy instruction across the school. Teachers collaborated to plan targeted learning experiences, share best practices, and maintain alignment with curriculum expectations. Leadership facilitated these sessions, providing clear direction and support to ensure that collaborative planning was purposeful and responsive to student needs.

In addition, leadership prioritised data-informed decision making to enhance student outcomes. Teachers were supported to engage in regular data analysis, using assessment results to identify student learning needs and adjust instruction accordingly. The school further embedded the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, guiding staff to identify students requiring additional support and implement timely, targeted interventions. Collaborative data discussions became a norm, encouraging shared ownership of student progress and fostering a culture of collective responsibility. These practices not only improved instructional alignment but also ensured that all students received the support they needed to thrive.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2025	
Epilepsy Training Trauma Informed Practice - Blossom Tree Psychology Standardised and Norm-referenced Assessments Cognitive Load Theory Structured Literacy - Phonology, Sound Symbol Relationships, Syllables, Morphology, Syntax, Symantics, Paired Fluency, Writing Revolution, No Nonsense, Phonics DIBELS Assessment Suite Data Analysis Recontextualising the Gospel Principal, Religious Education Leader, Learning Diversity Leader and Learning Community Leader Networks First Aid Training, Anaphylaxis and CPR Zart Art Religious Education and Pedagogy Accreditation Thriving Principals - Professional Supervision	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2025	12
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$545.00

Teacher Satisfaction

Teacher Satisfaction data as recorded using INSIGHT SRC shows significant improvement in every area. Most significant growth was in all aspects of Student Behaviour (classroom and school), all aspects of Teacher-Based Practice (Student Management, Pastoral Care, Curriculum Processes) and all aspects of Teaching and Learning (Student Motivation, Respect for Students, Teacher Confidence, Parent Partnerships, Quality Teaching and Engaging Practice).

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0
Masters	0
Graduate	1
Graduate Certificate	0
Bachelor Degree	8
Advanced Diploma	1
No Qualifications Listed	5

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	1
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	10
Teaching Staff (FTE)	7.67
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	11
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	7.01
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Increase collaborative partnerships with parents, carers, parish and the wider community to optimise learning and wellbeing.

Achievements

Increased attendance at weekly Whole School Prayer.

Termly Student Support Group meetings with Learning Diversity Leader, teachers and families for students on NCCD list.

Increased attendance at Parent/Teacher Interviews, Athletics Carnival, Bush Dance and other school events.

Collaboration with the School Advisory Council in the establishment and refinement of building project.

Supportive partnerships with Parish and Father Andrew, Parish Priest.

Organised joint fundraiser with schools in the area to support Pomonal Bushfire relief.

Parent Satisfaction

Parent Satisfaction data as recorded using INSIGHT SRC shows improvement in every area. Most significant growth was in Behaviour Management, Connectedness to School, Connectedness to Peers and Student Motivation.

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.smararat.catholic.edu.au