



2024

Annual Report to the School Community



St Mary's School

131 Powells Road, CLARKES HILL 3352

Principal: Clare Scanlon

Web: www.smclarkeshill.catholic.edu.au

Registration: 1480, E Number: E2048

Principal's Attestation

I, Clare Scanlon, 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 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 12 May 2025

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

Reflecting on 2024, we have much to be proud of, with DOBCEL demonstrating our dedication to ensuring the highest quality student outcomes in a safe, affordable, faith-based and nurturing environment. There was significant ongoing investment in new learning facilities and refurbishments through the Australian and state Government Capital Grants Program and school community funding continued across our schools, enhancing learning spaces and amenities for the benefit of students and staff.

In 2024, I visited all our Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) schools from the Murray to the Sea. DOBCEL governs 51 primary schools, one F-8 school, and five secondary colleges, educating approximately 13,500 students and employing over 2,200 teachers and staff across the diocese. These visits highlighted the spirit of harmony and sense of community, along with the cultures of care for students and staff.

During 2024, I had the privilege of meeting with all Principals along with leadership colleagues and staff. Demands on schools continue to grow, as the communities they service undergo change and face challenges such as devastating bushfires and cost of living challenges.

During the year DOBCEL commenced the development of its future DOBCEL Strategy 2035. Our strategy is focused on ensuring fullness of life for all in our school communities and particularly our students. With our Catholic Identity foundational to our mission our focus will be on

- Collaborative Cultures
- Engagement & Belonging
- School as Community
- Rich Pedagogical practices for deeper learning and wellbeing
- Sustainable Stewardship

I recognise the extraordinary work, exceptional dedication and professionalism of staff in our schools and offices in providing education services to the families and communities they serve. I particularly acknowledge the commitment of our school leadership teams and their staff in nurturing and empowering the students in our care, as together we work to bring to life our vision: As partners in Catholic Education and open to God's presence, we pursue the fullness of life for all.

Tom Sexton

Executive Director DOBCEL

Vision and Mission

VISION

As a community, we are inspired by Christ, to pursue, provide and promote fullness of life for all.

MISSION

To live the Christian message of love by -

- building positive relationships
- ensuring a safe, supportive and inclusive environment that promotes high outcomes and celebrates achievements
- providing relevant and purposeful opportunities for growth
- working in collaborative partnerships to provide high quality, stimulating and evidence informed learning
- empowering all to be responsible citizens of our world through caring for our common home.

Our BRICKS for living a Christian Life are to be Respectful, Inclusive, Courageous and Kind.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13: 34

School Overview

St Mary's Primary School in Clarkes Hill is a small rural school located approximately 16 kilometres North East of Ballarat. Clarkes Hill is situated in a farming area with much of the surrounding land being used to grow crops such as potatoes. St. Mary's is steeped in tradition, with some of our children part of families that had their grandparents attend the school. This community involvement continues today and success of the school and Catholic Education depends largely on the partnership between the community and the teaching staff. St. Mary's is part of the Parish of Bungaree. Rev Dr O'Collins, Bishop of Ballarat, officially opened St Mary's Clarkes Hill on Sunday, 14th April 1946. The local Prendergast family donated the land. Sr Chantal of the Presentation Order was in charge of 23 children. In 1957, the Presentation sisters withdrew from the Clarkes Hill School but, after approaches made to the Sisters of Mercy in Ballarat East by local community members, Sr Agatha Madden was appointed to the Clarkes Hill School. After the religious orders were no longer able to support the school directly, the first lay principal, Miss Patricia Leonard, was appointed to Clarkes Hill in 1974. Since then, there has been a succession of lay principals who have been in charge of the school. In 1981, the community concentrated their efforts to provide a tennis court adjacent to the school for school and community use. Once again, this land was donated. In 2002, the school was able to secure funding for a major redevelopment of the school building where a new administration area was developed. In 2009 and into 2010, the school had two new classrooms and kitchen facilities installed, as well as a major upgrade to the playground facilities. Since that time, there have been building works completed to refurbish the older part of the school, including the Office/Reception area, Principal's Office, staff toilets and student toilets. The play areas have also been updated, including the tennis courts and artificial grass area. The entrance and covered area was refurbished to create a more connected and welcoming environment. In 2024, St. Mary's consisted of two learning units: the Junior Room comprising Foundation to Year Two and the Senior Room, Years Three to Six. There were 16 children comprising 11 families. Traditionally, our students came from the local district; however, over the past few years, we have had more families travel from outside the area to attend St. Mary's, in order to be part of a small country school experience.

Principal's Report

Introduction

In 2024, I commenced as Principal of St Mary's School, Clarkes Hill. St Mary's Primary School continued to uphold its mission of providing a nurturing, faith-based education grounded in Catholic values. Our small rural school, located 15 minutes from Ballarat, remains committed to fostering academic excellence, wellbeing, and community partnerships, ensuring every child thrives in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Catholic School Culture

Faith formation remained central to our daily practices, with regular Masses, liturgical celebrations, and classroom-based religious education reinforcing our commitment to compassion, respect, and service. Students actively participated in outreach initiatives, deepening their understanding of social justice and empathy.

Learning and Teaching

Academic focus centred on personalised learning, with staff employing data-driven strategies to address individual student needs. Professional development prioritised literacy and numeracy, with teachers engaging in workshops on evidence-based pedagogies and collaborative planning, particularly in the area of Structured Literacy and implementing the FLARE Framework with the assistance of personnel from the Catholic Education Office. Small class sizes enabled tailored support, ensuring all students progressed in core competencies. Technology integration enhanced learning experiences, while maintaining our emphasis on hands-on, inquiry-based activities.

Wellbeing and Inclusion

Student wellbeing was underpinned by our BRICKs values (Being Respectful, Inclusive, Courageous and Kind), explicitly taught through the Respectful Relationships program and reinforced in daily interactions. A dedicated pastoral care worker provided targeted support, while student leadership initiatives empowered children to voice ideas and contribute to school decision-making. Regular combined activities with nearby Catholic schools fostered social connections and peer collaboration.

Community Engagement

Families remained integral to our community, with strong attendance at school events. Our newsletter highlighted student achievements, including notable successes in regional sports

competitions. Affordable fee structures and financial assistance ensured accessibility for all families.

Leadership and Stewardship

2024 saw continued investment in staff development, resources, and facilities to align with evolving educational standards. Collaborative leadership between staff, the School Advisory Council, and DOBCEL ensured strategic decision-making focused on long-term sustainability. Child safety protocols were rigorously maintained, with regular audits and staff training to uphold the highest safeguarding standards.

Conclusion

St Mary's Primary School celebrated another year of growth, guided by our vision to nurture resilient, compassionate learners. I extend my gratitude to staff, families, and the wider community for their unwavering support. Together, we remain dedicated to empowering students to achieve their fullest potential in a faith-filled, caring environment.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To strengthen the links between the Catholic story and tradition with the lived experience and context of the school community.

Achievements

During 2024, St Mary's' School community: staff, students and parents worked to strengthen the links between the Catholic story and tradition with the lived experience and context of the school community through:

- teachers working collaboratively with Catholic Education Office (CEO) staff to implement quality teaching and learning programs in Religious Education lessons
- Catholic Social Teachings (CST) were linked to fundraising for Project Compassion
- conversations with students re BRICKS and CST
- connecting social behaviours on SIMON to BRICKS
- regular interactions with our Parish Priest
- involvement in the Little Steps, Big Footprints program for Year 6 students
- school representation at community and parish celebrations and events
- regular liturgies were planned and celebrated for special events throughout the church year
- beginning of year and end of Year Mass, as well as Graduation, was an opportunity for the parish community to come together in prayer
- Religious Education Leader attended Coordinator Professional Development days throughout the year
- collaboratively planning with CEO staff to teach about social justice in an explicit manner
- the Student Leadership Team chose a Catholic Mission and a local focus to help
- explicit links between Inquiry units of work, social justice action and the Religious Education Program were prioritised
- RE News was included in the newsletter explaining and highlighting significant times of the Church Year
- the students made a significant financial contribution to Catholic Missions and Caritas through the organisation of Fundraising events
- staff continued to deepen their understanding of the ECSI data and plan religious education lessons with a contemporary Catholic approach.

Value Added

- School liturgies and Masses were held to highlight liturgical seasons and significant events.
- Teacher professional development to improve teacher knowledge and to assist staff to focus on the development of rich assessment tasks to assess and evaluate student achievement and progress.
- REL modelling how to re-contextualise prayer for staff.
- Collective agreement on prayer practices in the classroom.
- Parents and the wider community were invited to special liturgies and Masses.
- Staff planned RE units each term with DOBCEL staff.
- RE leader attended termly meetings with other RE leaders and Office staff.
- PLT (Professional Learning Time) had a RE focus at least once a term and was led by Office staff or school RE leader.

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To improve student outcomes by engaging and empowering a community of learners.

Achievements

During 2024 St Mary's' School community: staff, students and parents worked to improve student outcomes by engaging and empowering a community of learners through:

- identifying students through assessment who would require an individual learning plan
- data collected by staff demonstrated improvement in literacy and numeracy skills
- regular professional development was undertaken by staff in the areas of Numeracy, Literacy, Religious Education, Positive Behaviour Supports and ReLATE (Reframing Learning and Teaching Environments)
- staff working with the CEO Education Officers throughout the year on curriculum areas and learning diversity
- Wellbeing, Learning Diversity, Religious Education and Learning and Teaching Leaders supporting colleagues and leading PLTs responding to the needs of students and teachers
- teachers working collegially to plan units of inquiry that would include rich learning and assessment tasks and continue to develop better links between staff and children
- the development of common understandings, language used, progression of skills taught and a planning pro-forma used by all teachers
- the engagement of staff in professional discussion, collaboration and networking with other schools in relation to Positive Behaviour Supports
- the staff continuing to implement a comprehensive assessment schedule to record student data in a collaborative space to examine current performance and inform future direction
- regular communication to parents of Learning Intentions and student progress through the online platform of digital portfolios on SeeSaw
- the implementation of Structured Literacy using the FLARE Framework
- the students commenced learning Auslan and the staff working as Teachers as Co-Learners
- the establishment of horizontal maths groupings which changed regularly, depending on the needs of the students
- the DIBELS assessments which was completed on all students. Staff then used this data to inform their planning and teaching.

Student Learning Outcomes

NAPLAN data cannot be reported for this year as the number of students that sat the test was below 5 and the data has been suppressed for privacy reasons in accordance with the ACARA NAPLAN data reporting provisions.

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards			
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
Numeracy	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
Reading	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
Spelling	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
Writing	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*

*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2024 due to participation not meeting these criteria or no students were assessed. Participants include students who were assessed, including non-attempt, or those exempted from the test.

Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To develop children's capacity to become positive, resilient and independent in all aspects of their learning and behaviour.

Achievements

During 2024 St Mary's' School community: staff, students and parents worked to develop children's capacity to become positive, resilient and independent in all aspects of their learning and behaviour through:

- surveying students regarding Student Wellbeing and Safe Learning Environments.
- explicitly teaching the school values to be Respectful, Inclusive, Courageous and Kind. The BRICK Matrix outlines expected behaviours for students under these four values.
- the Student Voice is included in the school newsletter. Children were able to highlight their learning and other special events.
- regular meetings between the Student Leadership group and the Principal.
- regular discussions and class meetings were held with the students and lead by the teachers to aid the children in developing further problem solving skills.
- teachers and parents had excellent relationships and made regular contact with each other throughout the year.
- Learning Diversity/Wellbeing Personnel from the CEO were used to help identify needs of children with specific learning needs.
- opportunities were made for students to work with students from other schools to establish relationships with a wider cross-section of children.
- students in Year Six took part in Transition days to aid in their move to secondary schooling.
- our Pastoral Care worker worked with children, staff and parents on a part-time basis throughout the year.
- a transition program was conducted to initiate children into school life prior to the commencement of school.
- utilisation of current and emerging technologies to build student engagement and assist students to develop their overall knowledge and skills in using ICT.
- the children have opportunities to engage in personal learning on a daily basis.
- Camp Program for the Year 3,4,5 and 6 students was held with St Michael's Daylesford.
- major and minor breaches of the expected behaviours continue to be referred to and used as needed.

- a behaviour tracking document and Live Diaries were used to collect data and monitor children's behaviours and wellbeing over time.
- all children have a Buddy for support and to work with at specific times.
- all new parents received a buddy parent to help them settle in.

Value Added

- Pastoral Care worker maintained contact with vulnerable children and families.
- Mindfulness activities were included as part of weekly tasks
- Reviewed the Major and Minor behaviour document to make it more user friendly and succinct.
- Little Feet Big Footprints, a young leaders initiative for Year 6 students continued with St Michael's Daylesford, St Augustine's Creswick, St Patrick's Gordon and St Brigid's Ballan.

Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction in our school is gauged through participating in school events and by their willingness to engage in activities, which lead them beyond the classroom learning environment. Our students indicate a genuine willingness to involve themselves in community events and to represent our school in a variety of different circumstances. Our students maintain a high interest in our school with a positive attitude to learning. Students have opportunities to develop leadership skills through the buddy program, peer tutoring, leadership and classroom meetings.

The 2022 Insight SRC data shows that Student Wellbeing remains high with an actual score of 83.29 as compared to 2017 which was at 77.8. St. Mary's score for Student Wellbeing is in the top 68% of Australian schools. The Student Behaviour Aggregate Indicator has risen from 78.4 to 83.9

Student Attendance

If a child arrives late to school, they must report to the office and receive a late pass which is given to the class teacher so that the roll can be completed accordingly. If the office is unattended, the children come straight to class and report to their class teacher. Parents of absent students are required to notify the school of the absence and reasons for the absence either by phone, email, or via SIMON. If a notification has not been received by 9:30am, the parent is contacted via a text. Staff members are to bring to the attention of the Principal any student/s whose attendance is irregular or whose absences appear unwarranted. The

Principal will, after consulting with the class teacher, contact parents to discuss. If support is needed, strategies will be implemented to assist the family so attendance can resume.

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	71.1
Y02	84.7
Y03	87.8
Y04	84.4
Y05	64.5
Y06	83.7
Overall average attendance	79.4

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To develop a visionary and strategic approach through shared leadership.

Achievements

During 2024 St Mary's' School community: staff, students and parents worked to develop a visionary and strategic approach through shared leadership through:

- participating in Professional Development in a variety of areas, including School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports, Wellbeing, Numeracy, Literacy, Religious Education and Learning Diversity
- increased capacity for teacher and leadership, particularly to adopt contemporary learning practices
- linking Professional Development with the Annual Action Plan and agreed staff roles
- providing opportunities for staff to share their new learning with fellow members of staff through PLTs
- School Advisory Council members participating in an Induction process
- staff participating in Annual Review Meetings with the principal
- meetings with Leaders were held regularly with the Principal
- deepened staff understanding of feedback as a powerful tool for learning and continued to embed a culture of feedback across the school
- all staff being considered leaders and having input into decisions made.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2024	
Structured Literacy	
ReLATE Days	
First Aid Training	
Warden Training and Fire Equipment Training	
Auslan - Teachers as Co-Learners	
Primary Leaders of Learning	
PhOrMEs Modelling	
MathsBites Sessions	
DIBELS Training	
Religious Education Leaders Network	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2024	5
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$1591.00

Teacher Satisfaction

Data from insight SRC indicated that the majority of St. Mary's school climate data is in the top 25% of schools across Victoria.

These results, along with good teacher retention rate and attendance, would indicate moderate to high teacher satisfaction at St. Mary's.

The Four Pillars of Culture (SIF Survey: Interpretive Report 2022) are as follows

- Empathy 92.2
- Clarity 51.4
- Engagement 73.2
- Learning 48.4

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0
Masters	0
Graduate	1
Graduate Certificate	0
Bachelor Degree	4
Advanced Diploma	1
No Qualifications Listed	0

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	1
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	3
Teaching Staff (FTE)	1.97
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	5
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	2.4
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

To work with parents in understanding their role as marketing drivers and influencers for the school.

To invite the students to participate in community events.

Achievements

During 2024 St Mary's' School community: staff, students and parents worked to participate in community events and for parents to understand their role as marketing drivers and influencers for the school through:

- students attended school performances at St Patrick's College and Loreto College
- active support for and participation in the activities organised by the Parents and Friends
- focusing on the newsletter as the main form of communication to the wider school community. All families now receive this via the Schoolzine app and as a hard copy
- copies of the school newsletter are placed in the Bungaree Store
- articles about the school are published in the Brown Hill Newsletter and the Our Diocesan Community
- the Schoolzine App enables immediate and better communication between home and school
- the school's Action Plan Goals were included in each report to the Advisory Council
- students continued their connections with other schools by combining for sporting events, special events, incursions, excursions, camps and learning opportunities
- school brochure and postcards were distributed to local kindergartens and childcare centres
- our Pastoral Care worker was involved in student lessons to help with strengthening relationships, Year Six transition program, one-on-one discussions and working with children referred by parents
- our pastoral Care worker consulted and worked with individual parents and families
- new families were supported by being part of the Buddy Family program and invited to an afternoon tea
- student led assemblies were held at least once termly. All children were given the opportunity to share their learning
- open days and tours of the school continued and were advertised in Term 1, then conducted according to individual appointments
- continuing to develop and update the school website, Facebook and Instagram page as promotional tools

- promotional postcards, photos, flyers and videos were used to market our school
- Little Feet Big Footprints continued this year. Year 6 children from St. Michael's Daylesford, St. Patrick's Gordon, St. Brigid's Ballan and St. Augustine's Creswick met on 6 occasions to develop leadership skills and make connections with others to assist with the transition to secondary school
- a community fair which was held on site to reignite partnerships with local businesses and the community.

Parent Satisfaction

- Regular attendance by parents at special events, liturgies and masses
- 100% attendance to Parent Teacher Child conferences
- Enthusiastic support for the Parents and Friends meetings and activities
- A high rate of involvement by Parents and Friends in school focused events
- Consistently high attendance at school assemblies
- High attendance to special events, not only of parents, but also of extended family members and the Clarkes Hill community.

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.smclarkeshill.catholic.edu.au