

2024

Annual Report to the School Community



St Mary's School

15-33 Bridlington Ave, ECHUCA 3564

Principal: Jasmine Ryan

Web: www.smechuca.catholic.edu.au

Registration: 584, E Number: E3016

Principal's Attestation

I, Jasmine Ryan, 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 31 Mar 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

The Catholic Education Week theme for 2024, “Behold I Make all Things New,” invited us to reimagine possibilities to enliven our ministry in Catholic education in innovative and creative ways. The theme challenged us to ensure our educational enterprises were clearly focussed on every student, every teacher, every school, every day.

In 2024, the recognition that Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CESL) is a multi-school system found expression in our commitment to streamlined governance responsibilities and enhanced support for our learning centres. This approach allows for unified policies, consistent standards, and centralised support, while still catering to the unique needs of each individual learning centre.

To align the work of Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd with the CESL Strategic Plan 2023-2027, three “Guiding Lights” have been identified that will shape the work of the organization for the next three years:

- **Authentically Sandhurst Catholic Education**
Recognizing our rich diocesan relationships and commitment to spiritual formation, Sandhurst Catholic Education is living the missionary call to respond to the needs of our young people and our world with an ongoing and Gospel infused process of encounter, deep listening, discernment and courageous action.
- **Outstanding Learner Growth**
Together, across the system, we will invest in educational and allied staff capabilities so that irrespective of personal circumstances, every young person in every school will have access to an equitable, sound, engaging and responsive learning program.
- **Solidarity and Subsidiarity**
Through our commitment to solidarity, in each of our learning centres, our young people have the same opportunity to flourish and grow. Our collective strength will be used for the benefit and growth of all parts of the organisation.

At the same time, subsidiarity allows entities to bloom and thrive under clear parameters, knowing in which circumstances decisions are to be made at the lowest level possible, or the highest level necessary.

In line with these three Guiding Lights and the recognition that CESL is both an evangelizing and educative entity, 2024 saw the groundwork established for Magnify Sandhurst, a transformative learning and teaching program to be rolled out to our 51 Catholic schools across the Sandhurst Diocese. This new learning and teaching program aims to significantly

enhance the learning experience for students and provide teachers with the tools they need to deliver an evidence-based curriculum that boosts student outcomes.

With the support of world-class educational partners such as Steplab, Knowledge Society, MultiLit, and Ochre Education, Magnify Sandhurst is an investment in the future of every child in all 51 schools. With the mantra, 'Every student, every teacher, every school, every day', the program is designed to create a learning environment that challenges and supports students, helping them reach their full potential.

I am extremely grateful for the commitment and professionalism that is clearly identified by the efforts throughout 2024 of our school staff and Catholic Education Sandhurst Office personnel; they continue to work tirelessly for the students and families in our schools and are true bearers of the Mission to which they have been called.

Kate Fogarty

Executive Director, Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited

Vision and Mission

St Mary's Identity Statement:

A **Faith** Community,
Learning together,
Spreading the Good News of Jesus through Positive relationships,
Trust and **Love**.

St Mary's Vision:

RESPECT others, self and the environment.

COURAGE to stand up and be strong even when it is hard.

Be **INCLUSIVE** of all, value differences.

Strive to **ACHIEVE** and be our best.

SERVE others with Jesus as our model.

CELEBRATE faith, achievements, all that life gives us.

School Overview

In 2009, St. Mary's School was relocated to West Echuca from central Echuca, boasting an enrolment of 350 students. The purpose-built buildings were designed to offer students innovative and contemporary learning opportunities. Enrolments have remained robust, particularly for Foundation students, with current enrolment figures at 603 students and 74 staff members as of 2024.

As a faith-based community, we gather for weekly liturgical celebrations including Year-Level, Community, and whole-school Masses. The Sacramental program was offered to learners in Years 3-6 from the Parish-based program, as well as for special occasions and assemblies. The strong sense of community is demonstrated through active parental involvement at various levels. Our Religious Education program aligns with the Diocesan "Source of Life," Core document and Religious Education Curriculum. Professional Learning Communities and Teams are fostered to encourage collaborative learning among teachers and the development of essential skills and knowledge for providing engaging educational experiences.

The school remains committed to enhancing the capabilities of all teachers through professional development opportunities and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Leadership is encouraged at all levels, with ongoing support for staff development. An Investigative Inquiry approach to learning is promoted school-wide to encourage student engagement. Data-driven practices are implemented to maintain high academic standards.

St. Mary's School is well-equipped with modern facilities and technologies to create a comprehensive learning environment for all students. Emphasising learner wellbeing, the school prioritises Positive Behaviour in Schools (PBIS) and Restorative Teaching practices. Specialised support for students with additional needs is provided by a Leader of Learning Diversity, speech pathologist, social worker and occupational therapist to ensure the safety and emotional intelligence of all learners.

Parental involvement is highly valued, with open communication between school and home promoted. Parents are encouraged to participate in their child's educational journey. The curriculum includes specialist subjects such as Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Physical Education, Wellbeing & Mindfulness, Digital Technology, and Indonesian and Auslan languages.

Decisions at all levels are informed by the school's School Improvement Plan and the 2024 Annual Action Plan. St. Mary's School is dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of its learners and adhering to best practices in Learning and Teaching, with steadfast support from the Catholic Education Office, Sandhurst.

Principal's Report

2024 was yet another sensational year at St Mary's!

We remained committed to our School Improvement Plan, ensuring our goals and directions were closely aligned with the needs of our school community. Throughout the year, we saw growth across key areas, driven by a continued focus on data-informed practices that provided clarity, purpose, and targeted support.

The year was filled with memorable events, celebrations, and meaningful learning opportunities. We proudly showcased our talents in our biannual production, 'Already Home,' and maintained a strong presence in the wider community through participation in the annual Reconciliation Walk, ANZAC Day march, Meals on Wheels, visits to aged care residents, and regular Mass with our parish.

Our learning journey was well supported by a strong leadership team. In 2024, the St Mary's Leadership Team included six leaders across key curriculum areas:

Rebecca Lloyd, Deputy Principal – Learning & Teaching

Brent Anstee, Deputy Principal – Community Wellness

Adelia Muldoon, LOP – Literacy

Clare Pentreath, LOP – Numeracy

Holly Morris, LOP – Catholic Identity

Liz Chapman, LOP – Learning Diversity & Inclusion

Our learners remained at the heart of all we do, with an emphasis on social-emotional wellbeing, explicit instruction, and the use of valid assessments to monitor progress and achievement. This year, we engaged consultant Steven Russell to deeply explore our school's data story. Key findings highlighted growth in mathematics, our service to 30% of the Echuca/Moama region, and our unique demographic balance—50% advantaged and 50% disadvantaged—while continuing to drive positive trends in learner outcomes.

To further support wellbeing, we expanded programs and resources, collaborating with local organisations such as Boys to the Bush, Headspace, and Courage and Crowns.

One key initiative in 2024 was SME TV, a video segment delivered by school leaders to reinforce consistent behaviours and expectations across the school. Our commitment to learning in action was evident through our inquiry-based approach, enhanced by engagement with internal and external experts. Learners frequently ventured into the community, where experiences enriched their understanding and made learning more authentic.

Staff engaged in targeted professional learning aligned to whole-school goals. Focus areas included explicit instruction, cognitive load theory, wellness strategies, and action-based inquiry. In the latter half of the year, following the CESL Magnify announcement, the leadership team undertook “leading change” training to prepare for and support diocesan-wide initiatives.

As this marked my third year as Principal of St Mary’s, I undertook a formative appraisal. The process was both affirming and forward-looking. The report acknowledged the significant changes led in a short time and recognised the leadership team’s credibility, respectfulness, and inclusiveness. It also identified opportunities to build stronger connections with the wider community, which I am excited to pursue.

In line with our Master Plan, we reengaged with a new architect to revisit long-term infrastructure goals. Peter Byrne from B3 Architects was contracted to advocate on our behalf with Campaspe Council, with a continued focus on expanding car park facilities and developing a safe and efficient thoroughfare for drop-off and pick-up.

Recognising the importance of visibility and engagement, we formed a Marketing Team in 2024. All members completed professional branding training to ensure our presence remains modern and appealing. Our social media platforms are now highly consistent and impressive. We also partnered with School Presence to create a promotional film that captures the essence of who we are and what we offer prospective families.

In this reflective year, St Mary’s had much to celebrate. We remain deeply focused on learner impact, teacher engagement and wellbeing, and building a connected school community. This commitment was reflected in positive data across academic, social, and emotional domains—as well as strong staff retention and encouraging family perception surveys.

St Mary’s is well-positioned for the future and ready to embrace the next chapter under the direction of CESL Magnify.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Faith Community - To honour St Mary's school founders, the Brigidine Order. Through words

and actions our stakeholders display characteristics of our graduate outcomes, which underpin where we have come from and who we are.

- **Leaders and staff:** to enliven and strengthen our Catholic traditions through celebrations, experiences of spirituality for key stakeholders, partnering with our Parish and St. Joseph's College.
- **Community members:** to celebrate our rich history and unique values, fostering faith, connectedness, and responsibility to uphold Catholic traditions.

Achievements

- Charism curriculum taught annually across the school
- Collaborative and collegial mass with St Joseph's
- Lent: Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday
- Northern Plains collaborative Spirituality Conference
- Hub Student Leadership Day (8 Northern Plain Schools)
- Community Connection: Meals on Wheels, Care meals for families, St Vinnie's support
- Retirement Celebration SME past educators - Gail Rule, Angela Finn & Gabe Phelan - last Friday we consecutively celebrated 3 amazing women who have given a total of 107 years to Catholic education

Value Added

All stakeholders embrace and know our unique Charism, story, rituals, symbols, and Catholic traditions, shaping who we are, how we learn and celebrate.

St Mary's successfully completed a Catholic Identity Review in 2025: Some great commendations and recommendations for the school to enact.

Strengths

The majority of standards are 'Achieved'.

All stakeholders show that we are in a Catholic Community.

Inclusive and Safe, Positive Relationships were 'Outstanding'.

Life Giving and Hope Filled increased to all 'Outstanding'.

Evidence shows that we are connected with our community in a wide variety of ways.

Our CI is central to who we are as a collective.

Growth Areas:

A deeper understanding of the standards and how we can adhere to these and work toward Achieved and Outstanding.

Understanding of key elements of our charism needs to be further embedded.

Induction of staff

Employment of a Catholic Identity Leader

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

St Mary's staff will teach the curriculum through explicit instruction and agreed data informed pedagogical practice.

Achievements

Literacy Achievements

Victorian Curriculum – English 2.0

In preparation for the implementation of the Victorian Curriculum 2.0 in 2025, teachers embarked on the journey of familiarising themselves with the updated framework. This process has provided staff with the opportunity to identify key changes and deepen their understanding of the curriculum's concepts and structure.

Literacy Programs: Flying Start

Foundation staff and learners began the Flying Start program. This evidence based synthetic phonics program provided learners with the foundational skills to reading and writing. Foundation learners' data indicated great development in the areas of phonemic awareness as well as decoding and encoding skills.

Literacy Programs: Heggerty

The introduction of the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program to support learners in developing essential literacy skills was introduced in 2024. By focusing on phonemic awareness through daily, engaging lessons, this helped learners build a strong foundation for reading and writing.

Data Champions

We were excited to introduce the Data Champion Award, a new initiative at St Mary's Echuca, to recognise learners who have shown exceptional academic growth over two terms. One learner from each year group was presented with an award for most growth in Reading and Mathematics.

Numeracy Achievements

Improving PAT Maths Results at St Mary's

Our Learners have made progress on PAT Maths assessments in 2024. In 2023, 55% of St Mary's students achieved scores in the At/Above Standard range, which was slightly below the Australian benchmark and schools with similar socio-educational profiles.

In 2024, however, our learners showed remarkable improvement, with 69% now achieving At/Above Standard scores—a significant leap of 14%. This progress was evident across all

year levels. For example, in 2023, only 34% of Year Two students were performing at or above standard, but by 2024, this had risen to an impressive 69%.

Instructional model - Mathematics _ explicit teaching

An instructional coaching model in Mathematics was successfully implemented this year, focusing on explicit instruction. As a result, there has been notable improvement in the quality of explicit teaching in mathematics across classrooms.

Learning intentions and success criteria are consistently shared during lessons, providing students with clear goals for their learning and an understanding of how they are being assessed.

This initiative was carried out in collaboration with other leaders of pedagogy, with professional learning sessions emphasizing the importance of using learning intentions and success criteria to enhance lesson focus and student outcomes.

Initiative: Celebrating Growth Through Data Champions and ICAS Assessments

The "Data Champions" award was introduced this year to celebrate growth in Mathematics and Reading. PAT scale scores were compared between assessments, and learners with the most significant growth were recognized and celebrated. This initiative has fostered a culture where staff engage more actively with data and discuss it with learners, helping to develop more assessment-capable learners.

Additionally, learners from Years 2–6 were selected to compete in the ICAS assessments for Reading and Mathematics, with selection based on PAT scale scores. The top 10 learners in each year level were invited to participate, achieving the following results:

Mathematics ICAS

3 Distinctions

11 Credits

7 Merits

30 Participation

English ICAS

4 Distinctions

14 Credits

7 Merits

21 Participation

Participation and Achievement in the Australian Mathematics Competition

Learners in Years 3–6 participated in the Australian Mathematics Competition, with 157 entrants this year, an increase from 118 in 2023.

Results included:

Best in School: 1 Distinction

6 Credit

43 Proficiency

51 Participation

This demonstrates both increased engagement and a strong commitment to extending

mathematical thinking across the school.

Student Engagement in Mathematics at St Mary's: Insights and Action Plans

This year, all learners from Foundation to Year 6 participated in a survey focused on their behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement in Mathematics. The results were analyzed by staff and discussed in Professional Learning Communities using the SLEENSA FISK data protocol to further explore the findings.

F-2 Student Engagement

The data from Foundation to Year 2 is overwhelmingly positive. However, there are concerns about whether it accurately reflects true engagement. While 60% of learners indicated they continue working when faced with difficult questions, 40% reported stopping when it gets hard. This discrepancy suggests a need for further investigation to ensure we have an accurate understanding of student engagement.

Year 3-4 Student Engagement

Year 3-4 learners generally follow instructions and actively engage in discussions. However, some struggle with perseverance, home consolidation, and distractions during lessons. To address this, strategies will focus on increasing opportunities for the Launch, Explore, Summarise approach, building resilience through challenges, and modeling how to break down complex problems into manageable steps.

Year 5-6 Student Engagement

Year 5-6 students are motivated to achieve good grades and actively participate in class. However, only 50% find math fun and connect it to real life, and 65% of students skip difficult questions. To improve, we will focus on Success Criteria as the goal for each lesson, ensuring students reflect on their learning using exit tickets. This will help foster greater focus, persistence, and a deeper understanding of mathematics.

These insights guide our ongoing efforts to improve engagement and create a supportive, focused learning environment for all students.

Inquiry

- Cognitive Load Theory at St Mary's Echuca
- Continued our learning with consultant Kate Korber from 'The Inquiry Project'
- Using staff and parent voice to revamp our Semester Reports.
- Data Champions – participating in professional development which resulted in a greater focus on data and using this to inform our teaching.
- Peer coaching and observations

Student Learning Outcomes

Literacy

Victorian Curriculum – English 2.0

Teachers engaged in a range of professional development activities designed to enhance their comprehension of the updated curriculum. These activities have included whole staff meetings and collaborative planning sessions. By actively participating in these initiatives, teachers have been able to compare the previous curriculum with the revised version, ensuring a smooth transition for both staff and learners.

Flying Start

The structured approach of the program allowed learners to build confidence in recognizing letter-sound relationships and blending sounds to form words. Regular assessments demonstrated steady progress enabling learners to begin 2025 with confidence.

Heggerty

Its implementation has led to great achievements, with learners demonstrating significant growth in their ability to decode words, improve fluency, and enhance overall reading comprehension.

Data Champions

The Data Champion Award encourages continuous learning and excellence, celebrating learners' significant strides in their academic journey.

| NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Domain | Year level | Mean Scale score | Proficient |
| Grammar & Punctuation | Year 3 | 353 | 33% |
| | Year 5 | 470 | 58% |
| Numeracy | Year 3 | 387 | 60% |
| | Year 5 | 487 | 65% |
| Reading | Year 3 | 371 | 58% |
| | Year 5 | 488 | 69% |
| Spelling | Year 3 | 369 | 44% |
| | Year 5 | 475 | 58% |
| Writing | Year 3 | 410 | 79% |
| | Year 5 | 482 | 66% |

*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

For educators to have the knowledge, skills, and strategies to provide differentiated teaching to ensure the progression of all learners. This includes the development of tailored learning experiences that cater to the unique strengths and challenges of each student, ensuring that all students can access and engage with the curriculum in meaningful ways.

Achievements

St. Mary's educators have successfully integrated differentiated teaching strategies into their classroom practices such as flexible grouping, scaffolding, and the use of varied resources to address diverse learning needs. These include visual cues, alternative seating, adaptive technologies, and sensory-friendly supports. As a result, we have seen significant improvements in student engagement and achievement, particularly for students who previously were challenged with traditional teaching methods. Our renewed Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) processes have resulted in a greater amount of funding to support our neurodiverse cohort, enabling us to implement targeted interventions and provide additional resources to support these learners effectively. We have also moved to a paperless model for our Program Support Group (PSG) meetings that allows for electronic signatures and ensures that no documentation gets misplaced.

Value Added

Our documentation of Personalised Learning Plans has become more streamlined and collaborative which incorporates both parent and learner voice throughout. This has allowed for our learners to take more responsibility and accountability for achieving their SMART goals each term.

Student Satisfaction

Student perception data from Pivot highlights strengths in classroom clarity and relationships, with impressive scores for both behaviour expectations and rule-setting, and for feeling respected by teachers. These results support progress in engagement and classroom climate throughout our school.

Student Attendance

Attendance has trended to above 90%, reflecting the impact of strengthened communication with students and families around the importance of regular attendance.

| Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level | |
|---|------|
| Y01 | 85.2 |
| Y02 | 88.0 |
| Y03 | 86.5 |
| Y04 | 86.5 |
| Y05 | 86.2 |
| Y06 | 84.6 |
| Overall average attendance | 86.2 |

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

St Mary's stakeholders have clarity on the school improvement agenda across key areas and can articulate an understanding of why, how and what within the change in process.

Achievements

Leading Change:

Introduction of Learning Leaders student group

All leaders take part in instructional coaching

Whole school data sets and analysis are presented each semester to key stakeholders.

- St Mary's SAC and wider community will be informed of the AAP key priorities in all areas via the newsletter, email and SAC meetings.
- Professional learning, resources and initiatives all support the explicit improvement agenda of the Principal & Pedagogy Leaders

Marketing & Branding

School Essence - Promotional film

Leading Change - The leadership team were prepared about the significant strategies needed to lead change

St Mary's Socials & Comms team formed and professional learning provided

Resources & Facilities

Contract rollover with Bounce: Emergency Management Training

Introduction of fortnightly budget, fees and HR with Lead Administration: Nicole Gillie

New screens for the Brigidine Centre

| Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning | |
|---|-----------|
| List Professional Learning undertaken in 2024 | |
| <p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal Appraisal • Leading Change Workshops & Planning: Jose Blackley • Community Wellness: A well-organisation (Amy Green) • Increased leadership team and capacity <p>Learning & Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Champions – Selena Fisk • Ochre - How to plan and differentiate for learner needs • Cognitive Load Theory – Andrea O'Connor • The Inquiry Project – Kate Korber <p>Inclusion & Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated instruction and inclusive teaching strategies to support neurodivergent learners • Collaboration and peer observations to share strategies for scaffolding learning, managing classroom diversity, and utilising technology to meet individual learner needs • Leadership in inclusive education. <p>Community Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation and peer coaching cycles to refine best practices in restorative teaching and learning • Leaders supported staff with tailored sessions led by experts (e.g., Kirsty Lush), offering individual coaching and practical classroom support. • Year Level Leaders as 'Restorative Champions' to help drive restorative practices throughout school. | |
| Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2024 | 75 |
| Average expenditure per teacher for PL | \$1510.00 |

Teacher Satisfaction

St Mary's ORIMA data displays a significant improvement in staff perception over the past year. St Mary's is above the CESL average in the majority of areas.

The data shows clear improvement and focus on: Student safety, school climate, staff-leadership relationships, Staff safety and psychological safety. It was a significant shift in staff perception and overall improvement.

| Teacher Qualifications | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Doctorate | 0 |
| Masters | 2 |
| Graduate | 1 |
| Graduate Certificate | 1 |
| Bachelor Degree | 21 |
| Advanced Diploma | 6 |
| No Qualifications Listed | 33 |

| Staff Composition | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Principal Class (Headcount) | 4 |
| Teaching Staff (Headcount) | 67 |
| Teaching Staff (FTE) | 56 |
| Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount) | 38 |
| Non-Teaching Staff (FTE) | 26.84 |
| Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount) | 1 |

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

St Mary's staff will continue restorative teaching and learning practices, embedding school wide pedagogy throughout the community.

- To compose a whole school wellbeing plan
- To build the wellbeing team to meet the needs of our school community

Achievements

- Delivered regular professional development sessions focused on restorative practices, supporting staff to align their teaching and management strategies with school-wide pedagogy.
- Strengthened staff capacity for restorative approaches by engaging in observation and peer coaching, developing collaboration and best practices.
- Supported staff with resources, coaching, and individualised assistance from experts such as Kirsty Lush, driving improved classroom management practices.
- Through the school newsletter, embedded a common language around restorative practices across the school and community to ensure consistency.
- Behaviour tracking data from Compass was regularly shared with leadership and staff to guide informed decision-making.
- Community engagement, while positive, presents an opportunity for further growth. Future efforts will focus on increasing participation in learning events.
- Communication updates (SME-TV, Daily Update, Newsletter) reinforced the importance of restorative language and practices, building continuity across the community.

Parent Satisfaction

St Mary's Parent perception data increased in most areas according to our Orima survey. Our parents identified significant improvement in;

- Family Engagement
- School Climate
- Communication

Our continued strength area, according to our families, is our Catholic Identity.

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.smechuca.catholic.edu.au