



# St Thomas More's School Belgrave

2022

## Annual Report to the School Community



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## Minimum Standards Attestation

I, Declan McDermott, attest that St Thomas More's School is compliant with:

- All of the requirements for the minimum standards and other requirements for the registration of schools as specified in *the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)* and the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)*, except where the school has been granted an exemption from any of these requirements by the VRQA
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2022 school year under the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)* and the *Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)*
- The Child Safe Standards as prescribed in both Ministerial Orders in effect in 2022:
  - Ministerial Order No.870 - Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools, in Semester 1, 2022;
  - Ministerial Order No.1359 - Implementing the Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises, in Semester 2, 2022.

21/03/2023

**NOTE:** The School's financial performance information has 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](http://www.acnc.gov.au)

## Governing Authority Report

In 2022, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) delivered its inaugural strategic plan, *MACS 2030: Forming lives to enrich the world*.

At the heart of this bold and ambitious strategic plan is a common purpose - "Forming lives of faith, hope and love in the light of Jesus Christ" - that gives MACS and its network of schools a common direction.

This new purpose speaks to the role of our schools as a place for students and their families to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth.

The strategic plan also establishes a common vision, "Every student is inspired and enabled to flourish and enrich the world", and outlines the initiatives that will make our purpose and vision real across four pillars:

- Inspired by faith
- Flourishing learners
- Enabled leaders
- Enriched communities

These four pillars are foundational to the distinctive educational experiences we offer. Our common purpose and vision will guide and sustain the high-quality Catholic education our 16,000 dedicated staff continue to provide to the 113,000 young people in our care.

Alongside the strategic plan, School Advisory Councils are now in place to engage parents, communities and parishes in the life of the school and provide support to principals on school matters. Combined with a strong focus on Working Together in Mission with our Parish Priests, this will ensure that we unite around our common purpose.

Enrolments continue to increase in the growth areas of Melbourne's north and west where MACS opened two new primary schools. MACS was also excited to welcome a well-established combined level primary/secondary school in Malvern into our organisation.

We are very grateful for the support we have received from some 300 school communities throughout 2022. 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

Edward Simons

Acting Executive Director

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd

## Vision and Mission

### Our Vision

Our faith in Jesus Christ  
nurtures and empowers us to become a  
just and dynamic learning community.

### Our Mission

We at St Thomas More Primary School – believe in Jesus Christ  
and so strive to provide a learning community where  
the whole person's journey is recognised.

## School Overview

Welcome to St Thomas More Catholic Primary School Website. My name is Declan McDermott and I am currently the Principal of our wonderful school community. I look forward to working in partnership with you to support your child on their educational journey.

St Thomas More Primary School is situated in Belgrave in the Shire of Yarra Ranges bordered by Sherbrooke Forest. It attracts enrolments from a wide geographical area throughout the southern part of the Dandenong Ranges and serves the communities of Belgrave, Tecoma, Upwey, Selby, Menzies Creek, Clematis, Emerald, Avonsleigh and Cockatoo. The community reflects a combination of urban and rural lifestyles influenced by the surrounding environment of forest and hills.

St Thomas More school is a small, caring school of approximately 90 students. It is a community of faith based on belief in Jesus Christ and his mission to build a better world. The school community expresses Christian values and a desire to bear witness to the faith they share and nurture. Enlivening the motto 'We Are One', the staff, parents and students work together to develop an environment, which is conducive to producing excellence in educational outcomes. St Thomas More school is part of the Belgrave Parish, which has mass centres at Monbulk, Belgrave, Emerald and Gembrook. Two schools comprise the parish - St Paul's in Monbulk and St Thomas More in Belgrave.

St Thomas More has a strong emphasis on learning, both for our staff and students. Our collaborative approach to learning focuses on the opportunity for all students to flourish and to reach their full potential.

## Principal's Report

It has been such a busy year at STM, our first full school year free from lock downs in 3 years. We had the wonderful opportunity to undertake VRQA and the school review process, one in which we were able to reflect on our current position and make goals to guide us moving forward. A big part of this review was updating policies and procedures around compliance and Child Safety. The SAC listened and provided feedback on what was happening in our school and together we mapped ways in which we could improve.

Our enrolments continue to grow, at the beginning of 2021 we dropped to 63 students, I am now proud to say that due to the hard work of many people in our community, this number has risen. We currently are forecast to start 2023 in the mid 80's. An incredible achievement by all involved. The hard work does not stop here as we continue to be a thriving and flourishing school.

Our staff have continued to work on enhancing the school's Catholic identity, we have worked with MACS staff members to unpack our current ECSI data and once again found areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Next year we will continue to build staff capacity in the space of teaching RE. Marcia Janky (REL) has organised some wonderful professional learning experiences which will assist staff in using scripture more effectively. I would like to acknowledge the support of Father Cruz and Michael Watt, as we continue to navigate the roads of new governance. All three of us have a magnificent amount of respect for each other and approach this journey with empathy, trust and patience.

As a school we will continue to focus on delivering high impact and evidence based teaching approaches including MSL and a new and improved Conceptual Based Learning approach to Inquiry.

Finally I would like to thank the members of the School Advisory Council. Their support for me this year has been unwavering support and I appreciate that whole heartedly.

I wish all of you the best and once again thank you for your support.

God bless

Declan McDermott  
Principal



## School Advisory Council Report

What a year 2022 has been! Having a full year onsite without the interruption of COVID has been a

wonderful blessing and has helped to rejuvenate our lovely community. I would like to thank Jo, Nicola, Catherine, Declan and Father Cruz for their ongoing support and contributions to the SAC,

your commitment to the school is fabulous. I would also like to say farewell to Jo and Nicola as their

time at this school comes to an end, you have both been amazing advocates for this school and will

be missed.

This year the school has had a heavy focus on compliance, especially in VRQA. There was also a

School Review process conducted by Judi Gurvich. Students, teachers and parents were invited to

contribute to the school review process ensuring that a large section of the community were able to

have their views and ideas heard. Once the information was compiled Judi passed on her recommendations to the school which were shared with the SAC. This review and the

recommendations that followed showed the real passion and love the school community has for St

Thomas More, which is wonderful to see.

School enrolments and promotion was once again one of the main focuses for this year. Many school tours have been conducted, taster days attended and phonecalls taken about our school.

Enrolments throughout the year have been steadily increasing and our Prep class for next year is

bigger than it has been for some time. There is still work to be done, but the signs of growth are letting us know that what has been done to date has been effective in promoting our school.

A growth in student numbers can only help the school's financial situation. With the help of MACS

business manager we have a good understanding of the financial situation of the school. The SAC is

continually updated on the finances as well as any measures that need to be taken to improve the

situation and any improvements that need to be made.

We started the school year with the premier of our production which screened at the Cameo Theatre. Students past and present and their families attended, and a great night was had by all.

There have been many other fun activities throughout the year including school camps, excursions,

school sports and special school days. The students even got to go on a Zoo excursion and to Train

like a Vixen for free, courtesy of the Covid Positive Starts program. After a couple of years of restricted access to these onsite activities it has been great to see the students, and teachers, having

some fun with their learning and teaching.

The Parents and Friends committee were able to run their Mother's and Father's day stalls, Easter

events and some hot lunches again. Additionally, as there were two elections this year they ran two

BBQ's at the school hall, cooking up a storm of democracy sausages. It was good to see them back in

action and their enthusiasm and dedication to the community is something I am very proud of.

In great news for our school Mr Declan McDermott went from being our Acting Principal to our Actual Principal following the retirement of Caroline Quentin. The SAC thanks Caroline for her tireless work for the school, she was a caring and thoughtful principal who will be missed by staff,

students and parents. We would also like to congratulate Declan on his role and offer any and all

support we can give.

One of the reasons I enrolled my children into this school was because of the sense of community. I

know that that community feeling comes from the hard work and dedication of staff, students and

parents alike. While we have not been able to be together much over the past few years we have

maintained our sense of togetherness, which is something to be admired.

## Catholic Identity and Mission

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

To strengthen our Catholic Identity within the context of our contemporary world.

### Achievements

- Reintroduction of school masses (post covid)
- Confirmation was celebrated
- Staff continued to work on developing new and inovative ways to teach scriputre to students.
- Staff professional development day - Helena Goldsmith. Focus on prayer.
- ECSI data review with MACS staff

### VALUE ADDED

- Professional Development
- School review reflection tools

## Learning and Teaching

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

To build capacity of staff and students to be effective and motivated learners and to achieve success.

### Achievements

In 2022, our school continued to focus on consolidating our whole school approach to Phonics, Reading and Spelling. Staff engaged students in structured phonics sessions using a Multi Sensory Structured Language approach. More staff were formally trained in the use of MSL and also the appointment of an in house Literacy Leader with expertise in this area allowed for more meaningful and purposeful Professional Development for staff. We also offered MSL intervention for students who needed extra support with reading and spelling.

Staff continued with a strong focus on place value and counting in maths, engaging the student in many meaningful experiences. A data wall was created using student assessment from the PAT testing cycle, this allowed teachers to view how are students were tracking over time.

Our Inquiry focuses for 2022 were:

- Cultural Diversity
- Needs of living things
- Earth and Space Sciences
- Local and National History (including Indigenous study)

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

School NAPLAN results showed steady improvement in most curriculum areas. This included an increase in students in the top two bands in both Reading and Numeracy in the Year 3 and Year 5 test from 2021 to 2022. We also saw a reduction in students in the bottom two bands in Reading from 2021 to 2022. This data informs us that the work we are doing supporting students with MSL instruction in the classroom but also in intervention spaces is working. Our mean scores in numeracy were comparable with 2021, but we saw mean growth in both our Year 3 and Year 5 reading tests.

The school will continue to use data informed approaches to identify students at risk. This includes the use of a school data plan and assessment tracker.

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS MEETING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS					
NAPLAN TESTS	2020	2021	2020 – 2021 Changes	2022	2021 – 2022 Changes
	%			%	
	*		*		
YR 03 Grammar & Punctuation	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0
YR 03 Numeracy	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0
YR 03 Reading	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0
YR 03 Spelling	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0
YR 03 Writing	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0
YR 05 Grammar & Punctuation	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0
YR 05 Numeracy	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0
YR 05 Reading	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0
YR 05 Spelling	-	87.5	-	100.0	12.5
YR 05 Writing	-	100.0	-	100.0	0.0

\* There are no NAPLAN results to report in 2020 as the Australian Government decided that due to the COVID-19 pandemic NAPLAN Assessments would not take place.

\*\* 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.

\*\*\* No students sat the NAPLAN tests in this year level and in one or both of the relevant years.



# Student Wellbeing

## Goals & Intended Outcomes

To ensure all students experience a positive sense of wellbeing and engagement within a safe and supportive environment.

## Achievements

Our tree has been 'sprouting' leaves from all the good and kind deeds of our students. Leaves have students' names so that we can celebrate these acts of kindness. We have also increased Lunchtime Clubs in 2022. Each day a different Lunchtime Club is available for our students to attend. 'Play Is The Way' (PITW) has also been a great support to build resilience, acceptance, tolerance, confidence etc. in the students. PITW games are specifically designed to teach wellbeing skills in a fun and inclusive way.

### VALUE ADDED

- Student Representative Council
- Onsite activities with families and local community
- Introduction of Respectful Relationships program
- Fortnightly Circle time

### STUDENT SATISFACTION

78% of students felt a sense of belonging  
74% of students felt a strong sense of safety at school  
64% of students felt they had a voice at school, this was up from 46% in 2021

### STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Each day the rolls are marked at 9:00am and 2:00pm. Any student with a unexplained absence is sent a text message through Operoo.  
Our Attendance rate in 2022 was 87%

AVERAGE STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE BY YEAR LEVEL	
Y01	91.2%
Y02	86.6%
Y03	91.8%
Y04	82.8%
Y05	88.3%
Y06	87.5%
Overall average attendance	88.0%

## Child Safe Standards

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

In 2022, St Thomas More had a school review and VRQA year. This means that our school was audited in many areas including our Child Safety Policies and Procedures.

### Achievements

- Staff actively engaged in the review of Child Safety documents.
- Staff undertook mandatory reporting modules
- Staff undertook training in the Respectu Relationships Program
- Staff also attended training around managing disclosures of Sexual Abuses and Domestic Violence.

# Leadership

## Goals & Intended Outcomes

This year, with a Acting Principal, Declan McDermot, we have developed a very clear plan around improving our learning outcomes. The Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) method for the teaching of reading and spelling has become a major focus for staff PD this year. All classroom teachers will have begun their MSL journey (this is at least a 12-18 month learning program for teachers). STM has invested heavily in MSL as it has a strong evidence base for all students' literacy learning but is particularly supportive of students with dyslexia. Referring to our School Improvement Plan and Annual Action Plan regularly at Leadership Meetings has kept our focus towards the outlined goals in each sphere; Education in Faith, Learning and Teaching, Student Wellbeing, Leadership and Management and School Community.

## Achievements

- Undertook School Review process
- Undertook and successfully complete VRQA process
- Leadership worked in the SILC network with other school in the Eastern Region

### EXPENDITURE AND TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

#### Description of Professional Learning undertaken in 2022

- Respectful Relationships
- Mandetory Reporting
- Inquiry (A copnceptual Approach)
- School Review and VRQA process
- SIF closure days

Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2022	10
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$500

### TEACHER SATISFACTION

School Climate - 84% in 2022 up from 72% in 2021  
 Staff - Leadership Relationships - 92% in 2022 up from 69% in 2021

### TEACHING STAFF ATTENDANCE RATE

Teaching Staff Attendance Rate	77.8%
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<b>ALL STAFF RETENTION RATE</b>	
Staff Retention Rate	66.7%

<b>TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS</b>	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	0.0%
Graduate	0.0%
Graduate Certificate	0.0%
Bachelor Degree	100.0%
Advanced Diploma	33.3%
No Qualifications Listed	0.0%

<b>STAFF COMPOSITION</b>	
Principal Class (Headcount)	2.0
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	14.0
Teaching Staff (FTE)	9.6
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	13.0
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	11.4
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0.0

## Community Engagement

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

Our focus for 2022 was bringing the community back together after a few interrupted years with COVID.

### Achievements

- School end of year picnic
- Premier of Production
- St Thommies Market
- Confirmation
- School Disco
- Morning teas
- Father's Day and Mother's Day stall

### PARENT SATISFACTION

93% of families believe the school was a good fit for their child

An increase of 19% in the family engagement element of the MACCSIS survey

91% of families beleived the school had a positive learning environment

## Future Directions

Goal 1: To build a culture of Feedback

Goal 2: To further enhance our school's Catholic Identity

Goal 3: To embed consistent teaching practice and rigorous curriculum enactment