



# St Thomas More's School Belgrave

## 2021 Annual Report to the School Community



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## Contact Details

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## Minimum Standards Attestation

I, Declan McDermott (Acting Principal), 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 2021 school year under the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)* and the *Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)*
- The Child Safe Standards prescribed in Ministerial Order No.870 - Child Safe Standards, Managing Risk of Child Abuse in Schools.

18/03/2022

**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

2021 has been a momentous year for Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, with Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) assuming governance and operations of 290 schools which previously operated under unincorporated structures.

MACS was established to ensure these schools continue the mission of Catholic education to proclaim the Good News while equipping our young people with the education, knowledge, skills and hope to live meaningful lives and enrich the world around them.

Our schools were again asked this year to respond to the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. Although asked to implement many measures to keep our staff and students safe, our schools were able to continue delivering a high-quality Catholic education through the resilience and dedication of our principals, school leaders and teachers.

Alongside this important work, we were also able to deliver a new policy suite for schools to ensure our students are safe and which enhance the consistency and transparency of school decision-making, while preserving school autonomy and respecting the local context of our schools.

School Advisory Councils have been established to actively support the principal and embed the life of the local Church in the life of each school. It has been wonderful to see so many parents and members of the wider parish community engaged in these critical forums.

Thank you for the support you have given our schools in 2021. We look forward to continuing to work with you as we strive to provide the young people of the Archdiocese of Melbourne with the best kind of education possible, one that fosters a formation of the whole person that is deeply and enduringly humanising.

Yours sincerely

Jim Miles

Executive Director

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd

## Our School Vision

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

## School Overview

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 75 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.

The focus for the 2021 year was centred on the following intended outcomes as identified in our School Improvement Plan:

- To strengthen and reflect the school's Catholic Culture in its vision, pedagogy and contemporary practice
- To enable all students to achieve success in an environment of high expectations and continuous improvement.
- To enable all students to achieve success in a safe and supportive environment.
- To create and sustain a culture where learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom.
- To strengthen and sustain a performance and development culture in the school.

## Principal's Report

2021 was a year like no other. Our whole school community should be commended for their tireless efforts to ensure that the learning continued for our students despite the interruptions. Our teaching staff and Learning support officers worked very hard to ensure all student needs were met in our online learning environment. Teachers were asked to step out of their comfort zone as we moved into Live Lesson teaching, this allowed teachers to teach in real time and allowed our students to access the curriculum and ask questions of the teachers and LSO staff.

When we were on-site our students were very settled, and we had very little disruption to learning. Our students showed resilience and perseverance through some very difficult times, and they should be very proud of their efforts. Despite the challenges our school enrolments also began to grow. This is a fantastic turning point for our school as we begin to grow and share our talents, faith, vision and mission with more families in our community.

I hope you find the 2021 Annual Report to the School Community a very reflective tool reporting on a very challenging but successful year.

Kind regards

Declan McDermott

Acting Principal

# Education in Faith

## Goals & Intended Outcomes

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

## Achievements

This year's Religious Education lessons have covered lots of different topics from wellbeing, Mary our Mother, Easter, The Stations of the Cross, forgiveness, all three Sacraments, stewardship, creation and Advent. Prior to lockdown we even achieved a whole school Mass for the Commissioning of Staff at St Thomas More. Sadly, that was our only whole school or even Class Mass this year. We are grateful for being able to provide opportunities for the Sacrament of Confirmation (with Bishop Tomlinson), First Reconciliation and First Eucharist Sacraments this term too. We feel blessed to have managed through several reschedules. St Thomas More partnered with 3 other local Catholic Schools to form a collective. We were only able to gather in person for one of these meetings but the others continued online. The purpose of the collective is to support all of us to better understand, through increased knowledge and skill, how to deliver religious education lessons (and Professional Development for staff) with an improved Catholic lens in a dialogical approach. We have been led by the Eastern Region Office Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) staff and provided a small grant to assist with resources etc.

**VALUE ADDED**

- MACS led Professional Development
- Hills Collective Professional Learning
- Sacramental Program



## Learning & Teaching

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

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

### Achievements

Remote learning may have impacted the depth of engagement and content taught across the curriculum again this year. In Term 1, students had a strong focus on their own safety. They learnt about Rights, Responsibilities and Respectful Relationships and the importance of staying safe online. Two separate parent and child sessions were offered for students and their parents in Years 3-6. We engaged an external professional to deliver these sessions which encompassed the human body and the changes it goes through during puberty and a child friendly explanation of how babies are created. These sessions were the perfect accompaniment to the cybersafety learning for our middles and seniors.

Over the next two terms, the students learnt how laws are made, the 3 levels of government and the difference between needs and wants across the junior levels. Special Places in Australia and around the world helped students to appreciate the wonderful world in which we live. The Religious Education connection taught the students the importance of respecting and caring for the environment gifted us by God.

Chemical Science was a real hit in Term 4. Supreme Incursions visit whetted the students' appetite for science, change, chemical reactions and more.

STM began our Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) journey to build and support our teachers' capacity in evidenced based Literacy practices.

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

NAPLAN showed very good growth from 2019-2021 (all areas apart from Spelling)

Internal data showed positive results from our tutor program. This program helped students who required extra assistance in Maths.

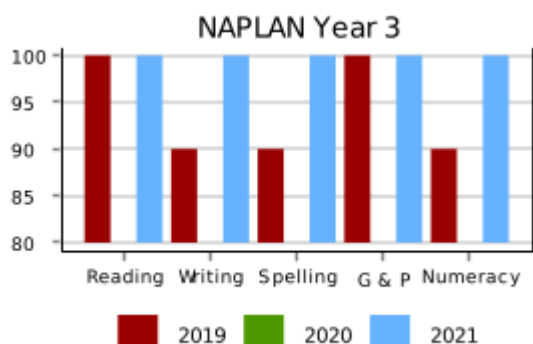
Internal data showed Intervention for Reading and Phonics was also a success.

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS MEETING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS					
NAPLAN TESTS	2019 %	2020 *	2019 – 2020 Changes *	2021 %	2020 – 2021 Changes *
YR 03 Grammar & Punctuation	100.0	-	-	100.0	-
YR 03 Numeracy	90.0	-	-	100.0	-
YR 03 Reading	100.0	-	-	100.0	-
YR 03 Spelling	90.0	-	-	100.0	-
YR 03 Writing	90.0	-	-	100.0	-
YR 05 Grammar & Punctuation	96.0	-	-	100.0	-
YR 05 Numeracy	100.0	-	-	100.0	-
YR 05 Reading	100.0	-	-	100.0	-
YR 05 Spelling	96.0	-	-	87.5	-
YR 05 Writing	96.0	-	-	100.0	-

\* 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

Fortuitously, in Term 1, facilitators from 'Shine - Mind, Body, Spirit' provided four wellbeing sessions for our Year 4/5/6 students. There was a strong focus on 'self' across five pillars of wellbeing: connection, being active, keep learning, self-awareness and contribution.

Another new initiative this year, thanks to Amy Gillett's creativity, is the STM Kindness Tree. 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 2021. 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. During lockdown and remote learning, Friday Themes were introduced, Family Kahootz and other activities including Virtual Excursions helped students to engage in fun learning opportunities. Providing live lessons was also an improvement in how students and teachers accessed lessons. Students were able to ask questions 'live' rather than emailing a question to the teacher and waiting for a response.

**VALUE ADDED**

- Mind/Body/Spirit workshops
- Family engagement activities (Such as Kahoots)
- Virtual excursions (zoo and museum)

**STUDENT SATISFACTION**

Our student MACSSIS data showed some of the following results:

- 78% of students felt a sense of belonging
- 75% of students felt extremely safe at school (up from 63% in 2019)
- 79% of students said they had positive Student / Teacher relationships

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

Due to COVID-19, student attendance requirements were modified for students learning remotely. Attendance was still recorded through Google Meets and students who were not in attendance were followed up by administration staff. Student attendance days were recording on the End of Year reports.

**AVERAGE STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE BY YEAR LEVEL**

Y01	96.7%
Y02	96.9%
Y03	95.1%
Y04	96.2%
Y05	95.5%
Y06	94.6%
Overall average attendance	95.8%

## Child Safe Standards

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

In 2021, we continued to embed our Child Safe Standards at St Thomas More. Our staff were looking for the best ways to keep our families engaged with school work throughout the lockdowns. St Thomas More Parish School has enrolled to begin work with the Respectful Relationships Initiative, this program will staff better cater for families struggling with Domestic Violence and up-skill staff in their ability to manage any disclosures of abuse. This work will be ongoing in 2022.

### Achievements

The embedding of new MACS Child Safe policies into our school

Beginning our Respectful Relationships Program

Further Professional Learning to help students with diverse needs

# Leadership & Management

## Goals & Intended Outcomes

This year, with a new Deputy Principal, Declan McDermott on our leadership team, we have developed a very clear plan around improving our literacy outcomes. Of course, numeracy outcomes have also been addressed with a school closure day dedicated to staff Professional Development (PD) in open ended learning with Rob Vingerhoets. Further resources were purchased to support Maths teaching and staff were provided with school based PD as well.

The Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) method for the teaching of reading and spelling has become a major focus for staff PD this year. By the beginning of the 2022 School 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. STM has formed a collective with 3 other local Catholic schools including St Paul's in Monbulk to further support staff and student knowledge in how to deepen our dialogical approach to the teaching of religious education.

## Achievements

- Engagement in SILC (School Improvement) allowed leaders to further build their capacity lead.
- Implemented a new whole school phonics program.
- Worked with neighbouring schools to form a RE collective.
- Create conditions for teachers to experience rapid Professional Development.

EXPENDITURE AND TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
Description of Professional Learning undertaken in 2021
Classroom teachers were provided with opportunities to attend a 5 day intensive course. The course aligned with our new Evidenced Base Approach to Reading.
Staff were also provided with professional readings to build knowledge and understanding.
Other Professional Learning Included:
Writing Moderation
Numeracy sessions with Robert Vingerhoets
MACS led Religious Education Professional Development
Literacy Community of Practise sessions (MACS)

Maths Networks	
School Improvement and Learning Collaborative	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2021	10
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$1000

**TEACHER SATISFACTION**

Our MACSSIS survey results show:

- 88% of Teaching staff were happy with the Professional Learning they received.
- 70% of staff were satisfied with how well their team worked.
- 95% of staff believed they were capable of positive impacts on students

Areas for improvement include:

- Instructional Leadership 40% replied positively
- Feedback provided to staff 25% replied positively

**TEACHING STAFF ATTENDANCE RATE**

Teaching Staff Attendance Rate	71.6%
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**ALL STAFF RETENTION RATE**

Staff Retention Rate	78.3%
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<b>TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS</b>	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	22.2%
Graduate	11.1%
Graduate Certificate	11.1%
Bachelor Degree	77.8%
Advanced Diploma	22.2%
No Qualifications Listed	22.2%

<b>STAFF COMPOSITION</b>	
Principal Class (Headcount)	3.0
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	17.0
Teaching Staff (FTE)	11.4
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	12.0
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	9.0
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0.0



## School Community

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

To enhance student learning by fostering effective relationships and engagement with families and the wider community.

### Achievements

We began the year with our 2021 Bush Dance, this was a huge success. Our Parents and Friends Committee also organised our end of year celebration, which was also well attended and enjoyed by many. While in lockdown, staff and leadership tried to connect with families through different forms including: Kahoots, Wellbeing Wednesday and an online version of Write a Book in a Day.

#### PARENT SATISFACTION

Our MACSSIS data showed:

80% answered they believed St Thomas More was a good fit for their children.

77% answered they believed St Thomas More had a positive learning climate.

84% answered they were satisfied with Student Safety aspect of St Thomas More.

## Future Directions

In 2022 St Thomas More will undergo a School VRQA check and School Improvement Cyclical review. This means the school will be audited for compliance and will be assisted in the process of developing a new School Improvement Plan for the next four years.