



St Mary's School Castlemaine

2020

Annual Report to the School Community



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Contact Details

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Minimum Standards Attestation

I, Ben Shields, attest that St Mary'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 2020 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 School.

22/04/2021

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

Our School Vision

Our School Vision

We are an empowered and sustainable learning community, centred in faith and united in our respect and responsibility for all of creation; we strive for excellence; actively living, learning, caring and growing together.

Our School Mission

- We gather in a faithful, supportive and inclusive community to build partnerships and a sense of belonging.
- We listen to God, others and ourselves to develop positive relationships.
- We share responsibility for our learning and guiding the learning of others.
- We act with faith, kindness and resilience working collaboratively and as empowered people to make a positive difference in our world.

St. Mary's Primary School see learning as an adventure and a journey of endless possibilities, where students are energised to seek meaning and explore questions about the world around them. In partnership with our parents, parish and broader community we contribute to a life-foundation for students that is centred in Jesus Christ and grounded in truth, beauty and love. At the very heart of our school is a desire for each student to excel, across spiritual, physical, cognitive, emotional and social domains.

As a learning community we tap into children's natural curiosity and motivation to learn and create opportunity for deep and rich learning experiences through a process of purposeful, project based and open-ended experiences where the children learn through the process of problem-solving, creating and collaboration.

We support students to grow in virtue and to embrace a view of themselves and the world that leads to peace, justice, and the prospering of the whole of creation.

We are a community of learners who:

- honour the sacred dignity of each person.
- embrace difference and diversity.
- build a culture of learning together.
- honour equitable access and opportunity for all.
- search for truth.
- engage with the deep questions of life.
- commit to achieving the best in ourselves.
- make a difference in the world.

We strive to work together, fostering respect for all and developing the whole child in a challenging, positive and caring environment actively referring to the following dispositions with our students:

As learners we:

- wonder
- persevere
- believe
- create

Acting with:

- respect
- responsibility
- resilience.

School Overview

St Mary's is situated close to the centre of Castlemaine. It is 130 kilometres north west of Melbourne and 39 kilometres from Bendigo. The school participates in many activities within the local community. St Mary's has a proud heritage in the Castlemaine region having been established as a gold rush school in 1854.

In 2020 there was a substantial growth in the student population from the 2019 enrolment of 74 children to 87 in the February census. Consequently, many new families were welcomed into the St Mary's school community. Some transferred from other local schools whilst others moved to Castlemaine because of local employment in the surrounding town or district.

In 2020 we had four learning groups to support and cater for our student's learning needs. We welcomed graduate teacher, Ms. Danielle Crane. Danielle was a co-teacher with Mrs. Therese Watts who also continued in her role as literacy support/deputy principal. Mrs. Karen White taught the Year 2/3 class and Mrs. Alison Condliffe taught the Yr 4/5 class. In 2020 we also welcomed Mr Paul Johns to the teaching team as a co-teacher in the Yr 6 class. Mark O'Sullivan taught Yr 6 each Friday whilst also facilitating Physical Education and Sustainability across the school and trialling a newly devised role of Wellbeing leader. Mrs. Nicole Byrne taught Performing Arts, Music, Visual Arts and Indonesian. Mrs. Barb Burchett and Mr. Robert Wolff were our Education Support Officers. There is a strong commitment and support from our Parish Priest Rev Fr. Wahid Riad, the school staff as well as from our supportive parent body. This is witnessed by their work ethic, an active Parent's & Friends group, a Parish & School Advisory Council,

At the conclusion of term one, our principal, Ms Bronwyn Phillips announced that she was leaving St Mary's. The community of St Mary's thanks Bronwyn for her tireless efforts in inspiring and nurturing our community. The growth at St Mary's has been exponential as a result of her focussed leadership. Community engagement, sustainability and a genuine child-centred approach have been key features of Bronwyn's time at St Mary's. We wish her all the very best in her future leadership endeavours.

The Mercy Wing commenced a major renovation from the end of term one. St Mary's worked alongside Anthony Quigley from Architecture Matters and Raysett Building to transform the tired facilities into a bright, contemporary learning environment. Although students and teachers were displaced from their regular routine spaces, the benefits to the project have greatly enhanced the capabilities of students to engage in modern learning practices. The space now includes flexible classrooms with large scale sliding doors and furniture that meets the demands of new educational paradigms for learning. There have been many downsides as a result of the pandemic. It was a positive experience to have the bulk of the building works completed whilst students were working remotely. This minimised the impact of noise and duration spent in unfamiliar classroom spaces.

The obvious challenges of COVID-19 were experienced by our entire school community. The agility and adaptability to the ongoing changes associated with restrictions is a credit to our enduring school culture. St Mary's school staff would like to extend their sincere thanks and gratitude to the students and families who worked so cohesively to ensure continuity of learning and positive wellbeing support for all.

Principal's Report

The 2020 school year at St Mary's (and the world in general) was one like no other; an understatement if ever there was. There were successes and failures, highlights and sadness; this is the hallmark of learning. 2020 was a year of recontextualising our approach to education out of necessity. The educational paradigms of the industrial revolution, a system that we are still inextricably entrenched in, was genuinely challenged. The byproduct has been phenomenal. Creativity has returned to teaching and our students and teachers have been inspired to experiment with innovate ideas and strategies. The journey, whilst challenging, has yielded many positives that I am grateful for as an educator and leader.

As mentioned in the overview, there were many changes 2020: leadership, staff, buildings and a pandemic. I would like to acknowledge the dedication and inspiration that Ms. Bronwyn Phillips has instilled at St Mary's. She has brought a calm and welcoming feel to St Mary's that has focused on the wellbeing of all members of the community. I would also like to express my thanks to the school community for welcoming me to St Mary's in such a challenging time. It must have been difficult to have faith in a new principal in the midst of a pandemic. The relational aspects of life are easy to underestimate. Your understanding is a testament to the positive culture of the St Mary's school community. I look forward to working with you for many years to come.

I would very much like to thank all of our staff for their professionalism, commitment, dedication and ongoing care for your children in exceedingly challenging times. The staff have never wavered from their desire to transfer best practice classroom teacher to the foreign setting of remote learning. St. Mary's has a staff with a diversity of skills and talents which is dedicated to the wellbeing and education of the children; an aspect of our school that was witnessed by all families throughout 2020.

St. Mary's is blessed with a very supportive and engaged group of parents. In particular, I would like to thank all the parents involved in the Parents and Friends Association and the Parish School Advisory Council. Parents give up many hours to make the school a better place for our children and this involvement is invaluable. Although this way re-imagined throughout the pandemic, the true value of the collaborative educational support for all students can never be underestimated. In whatever way, small or large, I acknowledge and thank you all for your support which makes St. Mary's function efficiently and happily as a productive learning environment.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to Fr. Wahid who is a wonderful support to me and to the school. His presence, advice and encouragement have been of enormous assistance throughout the year.

The remainder of this document will include reports against various government compliance requirements. These include our school's achievements relevant to our stated Annual Action Plan goals according to each area of the School Improvement Framework, student achievement data, staff information, parent/student/teacher satisfaction and a listing of activities undertaken which add value to the curriculum offered at St. Mary's.

Ben Shields
Principal

Education in Faith

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals

To build an authentic Catholic learning community where all members learn about, reflect on and engage in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church within the contemporary world.

Intended Outcomes

That all teachers implement contemporary pedagogies in the teaching and learning process in Religious Education That student understanding of the relationship between social justice actions and Catholic identity will deepen. That the community actively learns about and makes connections between the Catholic faith and their daily lives.

Achievements

- We have a strong commitment to enact serving others through social justice actions.
- We strengthen our Faith through meaningful, relevant, dynamic and engaging gatherings and we continued this this video conferencing in 2020.
- Our Religious Education Leader and REC consultant engage in professional development in Religious Education to support staff.
- Classes attended Mass on Friday when restrictions permitted. We take part as a school community in regular liturgies, prayer services and community Masses.
- We make strong and authentic links between sacred text and our commitment to sustainable living which occurred throughout the classroom program.
- We are proud of our faith in Jesus and celebrate our Catholic Identity.
- We make Indigenous Links.
- We enact the vision of the Horizons of Hope Document.

VALUE ADDED

- Ongoing support was a focal point for our community organisations to assist in challenging times. The school community was supportive of drives such as the St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal.
- Classes explored Sacred Stories and Sacred People (i.e. Saints) as well as important liturgical events throughout the year.
- Fr Wahid was instrumental in maintaining our community connection throughout 2020. He made extensive efforts to reach the school community and Parish through a variety of platforms; but most importantly, our return to celebrating together as a congregation at St Mary's Church.

- We look forward to joining in the celebration of Sacraments again in 2021. The students from St Mary's and the community that have missed the opportunity to celebrate this year will have the chance to do so in 2021.

Learning & Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals

To ensure that purposeful and authentic learning is Visible throughout St Mary's.

Intended Outcomes

That student learning will be stimulating, relevant and personalised. That outcomes for all students in Literacy and Numeracy will improve. That student engagement in all aspects across the curriculum will be enhanced to optimise student outcomes.

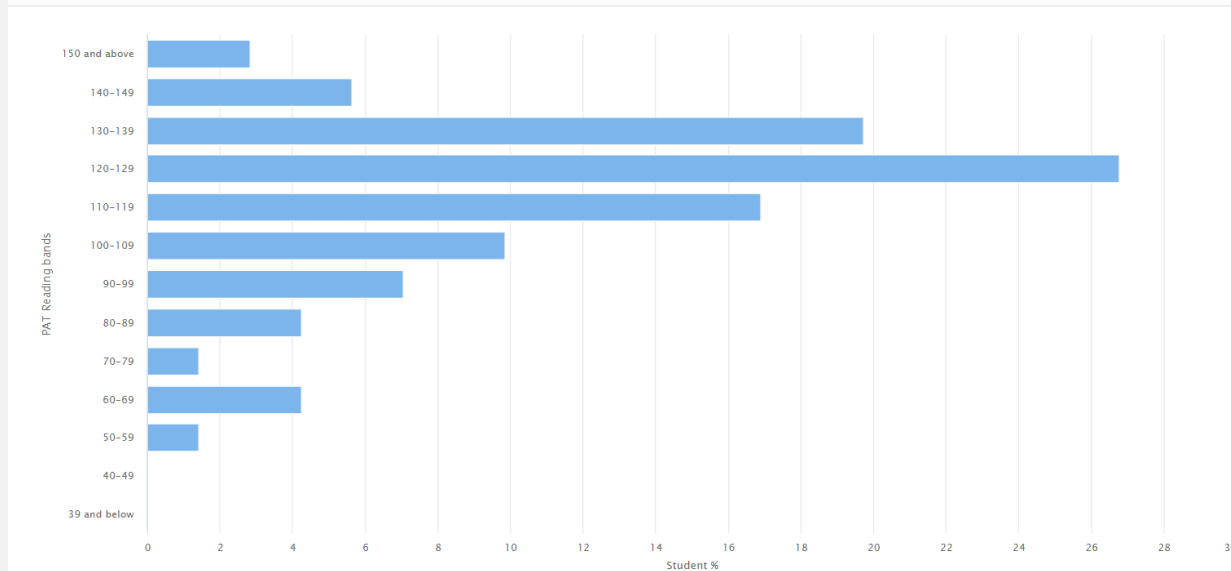
Achievements

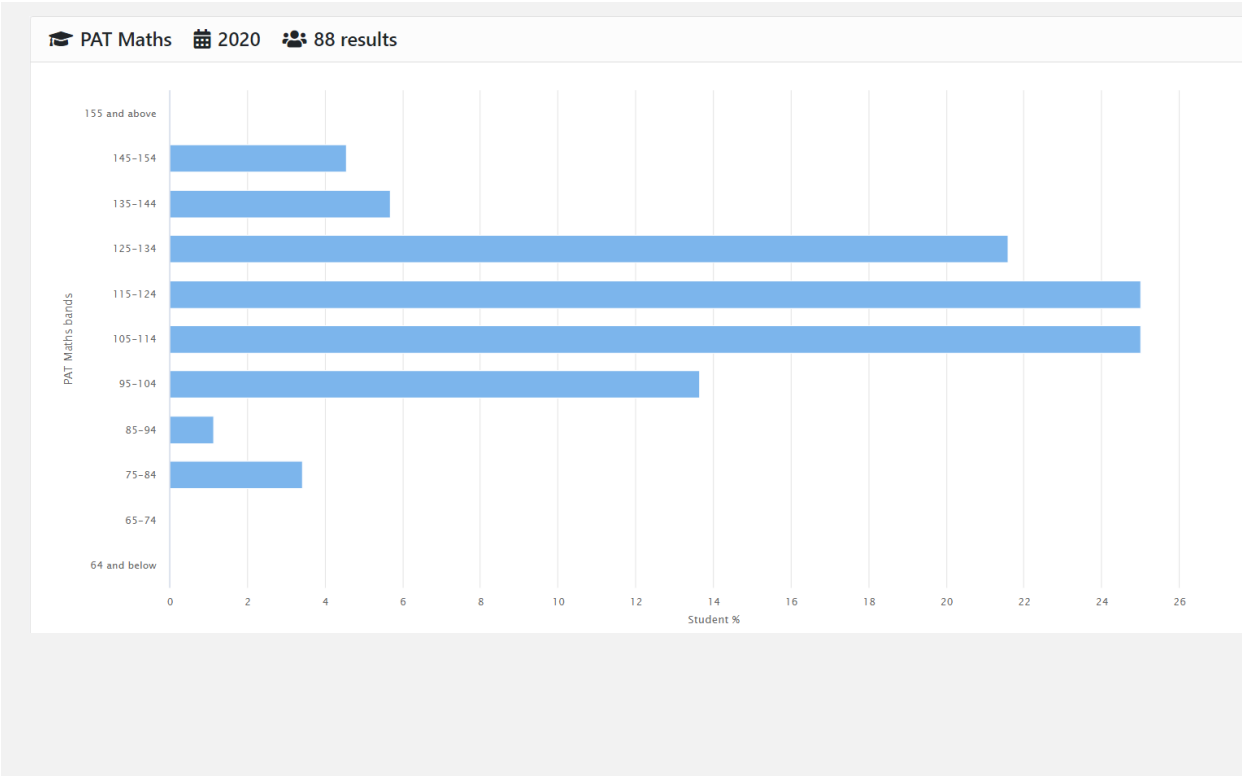
- Throughout the 2020 school year, many areas of expertise were drawn upon from our staff.
- Karen provided ongoing support for numeracy and religion.
- Therese provided ongoing assistance across the school in her role as mentor, literacy co-ordinator and classroom teacher.
- There were many times, especially throughout remote learning, where the specialist program was limited due to necessity.
- The school production has been rescheduled to 2021.
- Mark provided outstanding support to staff, students and families throughout 2020 in his role as wellbeing leader.
- Learning and teaching in term 2 and 3 was predominately facilitated remotely.
- Continuity of learning and teaching was difficult to maintain due to the nature of the modal transitions.
- Many initiatives recommencing as soon as we returned to onsite learning (i.e. the green team, ukulele club).
- Staff determined the need for a catch up/optional day at a closure day preceding the return to remote learning. This was a positive implementation from the perspective of most families. This is but one example of change based on feedback from families that assisted us in the refinement of the remote program.
- It is important to acknowledge the efforts of the supervising teachers at school.
- Book week was the first tangible opportunity to use the refurbished classroom spaces.
- Contemporary pedagogies were discussed and explored, including the use of flexible learning spaces and methods for increasing student voice.
- Discussions occurred to around methods for further personalisation of learning to inform practice for 2021 and beyond. This included aspects of project-based learning, concept-based learning and data walls/proficiency scales.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

A deliberate approach in 2020 was to move away from standardised assessment tasks and focus primarily on the wellbeing of students. The social emotional facets of our school are not accurately quantifiable in this form of report. Moreover, the qualitative data that we received from parents, students and staff indicated a particular need to focus on the personal wellbeing and friendships of students following extended periods of social isolation from peers. There was substantial academic rigour in 2020 as captured in semester reports, routine pre- and post-assessment tasks facilitated by staff and further standardised testing to ascertain reading levels, comprehension, growth in writing and numeracy. The data sets below provide a snapshot of aggregated data combining all year levels in 2020. The provision of a percentile rank on the y-axis references the overall test performance. The data set is sourced from a standardised test that students sit from ACER.

🎓 PAT Reading 📅 2020 👥 71 results



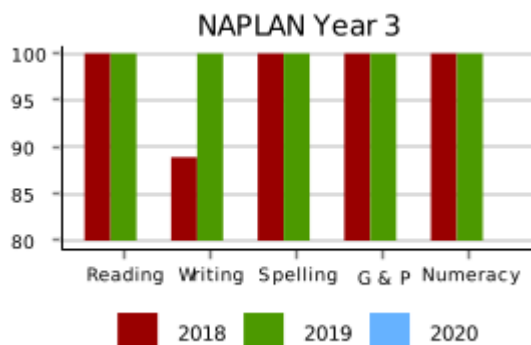


PROPORTION OF STUDENTS MEETING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS					
NAPLAN TESTS	2018	2019	2018 – 2019	2020	2019 – 2020
	%	%	Changes	%	Changes
			%	*	*
YR 03 Grammar & Punctuation	100.0	100.0	0.0		
YR 03 Numeracy	100.0	100.0	0.0		
YR 03 Reading	100.0	100.0	0.0		
YR 03 Spelling	100.0	100.0	0.0		
YR 03 Writing	88.9	100.0	11.1		
YR 05 Grammar & Punctuation	83.3	93.8	10.5		
YR 05 Numeracy	91.7	100.0	8.3		
YR 05 Reading	100.0	93.8	-6.2		
YR 05 Spelling	91.7	100.0	8.3		
YR 05 Writing	83.3	100.0	16.7		

* 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

Goals

To provide a safe, supportive and consistent learning culture wherein students may flourish and their wellbeing is maximised at St Mary's.

Intended Outcomes

That behavioural management strategies will be consistent throughout the school. That each student grows in resilience, respect, empathy and self-regulation. That students' social and emotional wellbeing will be enhanced.

Achievements

- Student wellbeing has been at the front and centre of 2020
- Mark O'Sullivan was appointed the Wellbeing Leader for 2020 and has done an exemplary job of supporting staff, students and families throughout this time.
- Learning Support Officers have made weekly phone calls to families and students that require additional assistance during remote learning.
- Ongoing discussions around processes and procedures for supporting students with additional needs was a key focus with changes to the NCCD guidelines.
- Ongoing shared resources were delivered to students via Google Classroom and families through our weekly newsletter.

VALUE ADDED

- A collective commitment was made between staff that no formal testing or assessments would take place for the first two weeks of a return to onsite learning.
- Social emotional wellbeing was a key focus throughout the year and ongoing supports and strategies such as the Berry Street Instructional Model, Respectful Relationships, circle time and mindfulness were routinely incorporated into classroom practice.
- Online meets provided social interactions whilst lock downs were required.
- Students were exceptionally adaptive to the restrictions to onsite/offsite protocols (i.e. hand washing routine, wiping tables etc. to limit the spread).
- A closure day was used as a mental health day which was promoted for all staff, students and parents with an additional focus on disengaging from screen time.

STUDENT SATISFACTION

- Whilst no formal student satisfaction data was collected for this period, ongoing conversations were facilitated on a class-by-class basis to determine the effects of remote learning.
- As mentioned in the previous sections, an ongoing focus on student wellbeing was central to our planning as a staff.
- There were a mix of students responses regarding preferences to onsite/offsite learning. Many students were very keen to return to school from a social and co-learning standpoint. However, as a staff, we were surprised by the significant number of students that identified a preference for offsite learning. Points raised included student choice for activities, opportunity to complete tasks at their own rate and at a time that suited them.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

- daily attendance of each student enrolled at St Mary's is recorded at least twice a day
- any absences of a student from school are identified
- reasons for each student's absence recorded
- explanations for absences that are provided, are a reasonable excuse for the purposes of their responsibilities under the Act.
- follow up any unexplained absences of a student by contacting the parent/guardian of the student as soon as practicable on the same day by our administration officer.
- parents are notified promptly regarding a student's unsatisfactory school attendance.
- if contact cannot be made with the parent, contact is be made with the emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school
- information regarding a student's unsatisfactory attendance at school is recorded on their student file
- parents/guardians are informed of their responsibilities around attendance and initiatives aimed at promoting parental awareness of the importance of children attending school every day are implemented.
- attendance improvement strategies, interventions and levels of adjustment are implemented where the absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational achievement and development.
- attendance recording procedures were maintained throughout remote learning with daily attendance recorded on our administration software once daily. Students checked in via Google Meet and/or Google Classroom.

AVERAGE STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE BY YEAR LEVEL	
Y01	85.8%
Y02	94.5%
Y03	93.9%
Y04	91.4%
Y05	92.6%
Y06	90.7%
Overall average attendance	91.5%

Child Safe Standards

Goals & Intended Outcomes

St. Mary's completed the Child Safety Policy on 2 May 2017.

A number of Staff meetings were devoted to the background and importance of such a document.

The staff discussed the commitment and our inherent mission that underpins such a document.

- Discussion around the purpose of a Child Safety Policy.
- The principles outlined in the policy were discussed.
- Parent community informed of process and about child safe laws.
- Policy was developed and a document was ratified.

Achievements

Throughout 2020 St. Mary's continued to:

- embed child safe policies and commitments into every day practice.
- support active student participation and support developing empowerment strategies.
- implement strategies promoting the principle of inclusion
- flag and discuss child safety at weekly staff meetings.
- increase familiarisation of the Four Critical Actions for Schools document
- enhance Child safety - Risk Management practices.
- compose and share remote learning guides with child safety as a central focus (especially online safety)
- promote cyber-safety throughout remote learning program

Leadership & Management

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals

To create a vibrant learning community at St Mary's that is characterised by a culture of professional dialogue, collegiality and teamwork in an environment aimed at improvement of all.

Intended Outcomes

That Clarity, centred on St Mary's School Vision will improve That Organisational Climate will improve particularly the Engagement variables That staff capacity to implement Visible Learning will be further developed and reflected in their practice.

Achievements

- As a community we have developed and continue to develop a common understanding of collective efficacy in our school. Early in term two, with a number of new staff members commencing in 2020, a composition of staff norms and corresponding statements was devised centred upon high performance for positive student outcomes.
- By necessity, the staff at St Mary's have grown exponentially in the facilitation of ICT practices. They have explored novel ways to engage learners in remote scenarios including, but not limited to, the use of synchronous and asynchronous video conferencing.
- Teaching staff have been committed the continuous learning for children of essential workers. Rosters and procedures devised have enabled teachers and LSOs to work offsite in a limited capacity for supervision purposes throughout the pandemic.
- In 2020, classes were relocated throughout the school to allow for the building works in the Mercy Wing. P/1 - library, 2/3 - Dhel Khanya, 4/5 & 6 - Arts Hub.
- Following the major building works, some additional minor works were carried out including the modification of the front entrance to create a brighter and more welcoming first impression in alignment with the refurbished classroom spaces.
- In term 4, St Mary's School worked closely with Fr Wahid Riad to cohesively transition to a change of governance under Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS). This change, in no way, diminishes the important role that Fr Wahid has at St Mary's or our links to our Parish.
- At the commencement of term 3, students were welcomed into the new learning spaces.
- The school transitioned to SIMON/PAM; a digital platform for attendance, reporting, permissions and communication with parents.
- The school network was upgraded including a new server and wireless system throughout the school enhancing the digital accessibility throughout the premises.
- Staff worked through aspects of the school review process in readiness for 2021. This was postponed from the 2020 school year.
- A collective decision was made between the school staff, leadership and school advisory council to promote a straight foundation class for 2020 - a rare opportunity for St Mary's.

At the end of term 1, St Mary's farewelled Ms Bronwyn Phillips as principal. Her dedication and commitment to St Mary's in greatly appreciated. Bronwyn's efforts to modernise St Mary's will endure for many years to come and St Mary's owes a special thanks for her efforts to secure funding for the redevelopment of the Mercy Wing and instilling the vibrancy and positive school culture that makes for a truly engaging and inspired learning community.

EXPENDITURE AND TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Description of Professional Learning undertaken in 2020

- National Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) training and support facilitated by Kimberley Morgan. An aspect of this professional development was an assurance of data collected for students with additional needs and the levels of adjustment implemented.

- Religious Education Leadership support.

- Profession development for senior staff in the area of learning diversity.

- Professional learning team meetings occurred on an ongoing basis throughout 2020 with the key focuses areas being:

1. Literacy

2. Indonesian/Wellbeing

3. Sustainability

4. Remote Learning

1. Creating shared protocols from F-6

2. Establishing take home packs

3. Exploring remote learning guides for parents in alignments with Child Safe Standards.

5. Self and Collective Efficacy

6. Digital Technologies

1. Engaging methods of delivery for remote learning

2. Critical reflection of digital pedagogies used during remote learning for transfer to daily classroom practice

3. Assessment scheduling and reporting frameworks

7. SIMON: introduction to new administration and reporting software

8. Data collection and analysis

- An investigative approach had been taken into the adoption of aspects of the Walker Learning model at St Mary's. Online professional development was attended by select staff based on the focus cohorts.

- Learning and Teaching support was offered by Andrew Callea, especially through the development of inquiry. Two year cyclic approach to inquiry was adopted and will be implemented in 2021.

- Whilst in the second lock down period, staff worked virtually with Joe Scerri and Pauline Cicutto to respond to the SIF Rubric in preparation for the review. The school review was postponed from 2020 to term 3, 2021.
- First aid refresher training was attended by all staff.
- Spelling in Context professional development was attended by all teaching staff. Misty Adoniou facilitated this course remotely over a number of weeks. The key focus being the morphology and etymology of words and, as a result, best practice methods for teaching spelling in a primary context.

Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2020	9
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$400

TEACHER SATISFACTION

2020 was a significantly difficult time for teachers across the education sector. Teachers were asked to work and adapt to unavoidable changes at a rapid rate. The teaching staff at St Mary's were exemplary in their professional and personal approach towards navigating the requirements of transitioning from onsite to remote learning.

There were a number of additional elements for the teaching staff to accommodate also. A change of principal at the commencement of the first lock down was challenging for the teachers and community in general. Furthermore, throughout the second and third terms substantial building works were in progress in the main classroom areas (Mercy Wing) with classes being displaced to other areas within the school.

Whilst CEMISIS data was not collected in 2020. Routine staff wellbeing surveys were facilitated as a means for determining the general staff dispositions whilst there was a significant disconnect during the remote program.

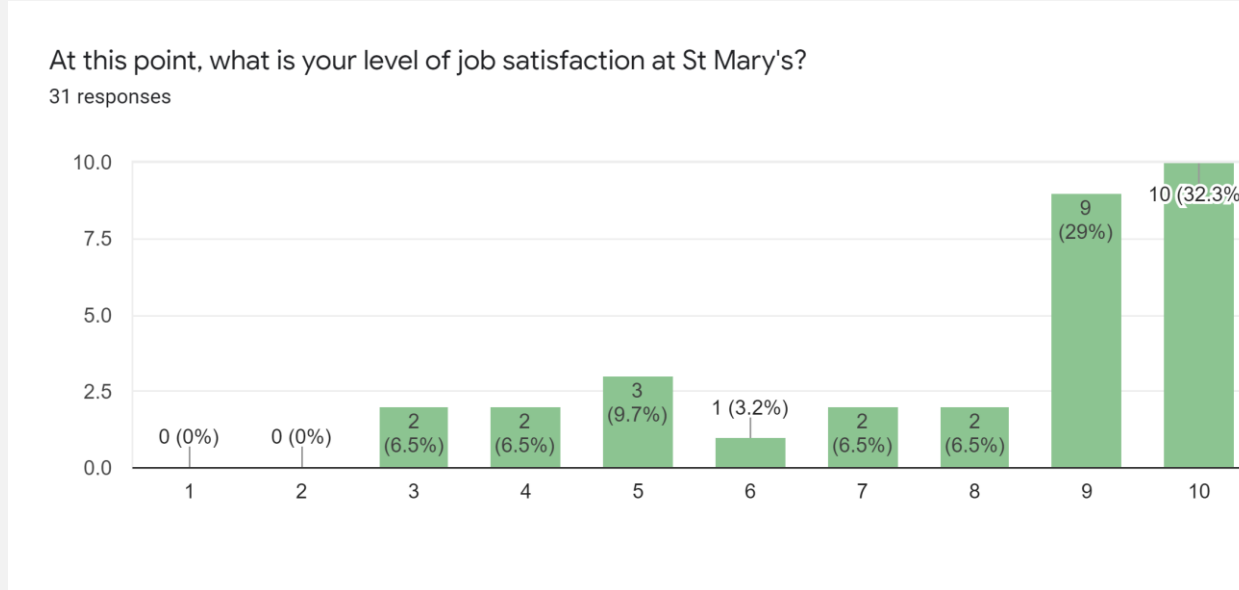
Pertinent comments made through the surveys during this time captured a mix of feelings during uncertain times:

"Really good communication, positivity, a sense of hope, good direction."

"I think there is enough support. The whole situation is tricky, not just school."

"There is a lot of extra planning and documenting, but less interaction. This suits some staff but not others. Change takes time. It will be ok."

The below data charts capture the overall level of job satisfaction from the St Mary's staff in 2020.



Weekly staff meetings were conducted in 2020 via Google Meets as a way of maintaining continuity of learning as well as regularly checking in with each other to monitor wellbeing.

Congratulations to all the staff at St Mary's for their agility and flexibility to manage change professionally and consistently in 2020.

TEACHING STAFF ATTENDANCE RATE

Teaching Staff Attendance Rate 98.6%

ALL STAFF RETENTION RATE

Staff Retention Rate 88.9%

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	0.0%
Graduate	20.0%
Graduate Certificate	0.0%
Bachelor Degree	80.0%
Advanced Diploma	40.0%
No Qualifications Listed	0.0%

STAFF COMPOSITION	
Principal Class (Headcount)	2.0
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	7.0
Teaching Staff (FTE)	5.5
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	3.0
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	3.8
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0.0

School Community

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goals

To improve student learning outcomes through partnerships with family, parish and community that creates a positive sense of belonging.

Intended Outcomes

That parents understanding of Visible learning will be deepened. That the broader community will become an active partner in the learning at St Mary's.

Achievements

- Ongoing promotional opportunities were sought to advertise our school throughout the wider community for prospective 2021 enrolments.
- Continued advertising through articles in local newspapers to raise the profile of St Mary's.
- An overhaul of the website as a primary platform for new parents. Website statistics indicated substantial increases in site visits.
- Video newsletters were included in term 2 to provide an introduction to the new principal.
- Onsite supervision was available for families during the lock downs.
- There was a clear disconnect between school and home which posed some challenges, especially throughout the second stage of remote learning. Minimising movement amongst the community resulted in the closure of our library and ceasing collection days for hands on materials.
- We could not begin to comprehend how difficult it must have been balancing work commitments whilst supporting your child's learning.
- Parents have had the opportunity to witness their child/ren's learning and gain an insight into their school work.
- Our Parents & Friends Association resumed monthly meetings in term 4 and turned their attention to potential fundraising opportunities for 2021.
- They aim to support students through healthy eating initiatives such as supplying fruit each Tuesday and Thursday.
- The Parish School Advisory Council continued to meet throughout 2020 and provided valued information and feedback to support the refinement of remote learning and transitions to onsite from a practical and wellbeing perspective.
- The end of year celebrations, including Yr 6 Graduation and our end of year picnic went ahead which provided a much-needed face-to-face community connection.

PARENT SATISFACTION

In 2020, the disconnect caused by the pandemic was exceptionally distressing for our school community. We are fortunate to have a very active parent body at St Mary's. The necessity to implement access restrictions when returning to onsite created a disconnect between school and families. As with many other facets of the community, many valued activities were cancelled. Given limited access to onsite for 2020, the following commentary primarily focuses upon remote learning facilitation.

Surveys were sent out to families throughout 2020 to ascertain the remote learning experiences. We sought feedback to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program. However, there were significant challenges in responding to the feedback as many comments received were positives for some parents and negative experiences for others.

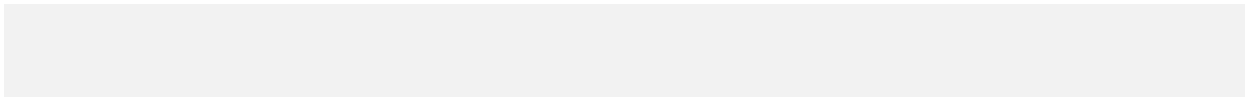
The overarching positives for our parents were:

- Google Meets with teachers and students
- Work books and tactile materials for junior students
- Availability of online interactive resources
- Clear outlines of what was expected of the child for each subject
- Tasks that were independently achievable for students or clarity if parent support was required/expected
- Learning projects that could be done together as a family
- Pre-recorded videos
- Dedication to reducing screen time throughout activities
- Having a real time opportunity to see where their children were at

Key feedback on future improvements:

- Additional tasks for senior students
- Additional check-ins with junior students
- Challenges associated with specialist lessons (i.e. materials and unfamiliar content)
- Recommendations to remove specialist program and focus on literacy and numeracy (adopted)
- Assessment tasks facilitated remotely caused anxiety and overall frustration
- Differentiated tasks to meet all abilities
- Structure and expectations were difficult for larger families

All feedback received was highly valued by our staff and assisted greatly in refining our remote learning program. Thank you to all parents for their perseverance and understanding in difficult circumstances. One of the key highlights for the year was re-opening our doors to parents and re-establishing our wonderful school community culture in a face-to-face setting.



Future Directions

The future direction at St Mary's is to work together with our community to challenge our current knowledge and understanding of education to co-design a contemporary approach befitting the needs of our school. To do this we need to critically reflect upon the following: What is the purpose of a school? Is it to provide a rigorous academic education that prepares the most capable adolescents for college? To train youth for a slot in the labour market? To create citizens capable of responsible participation in a democratic society? To enable those most disadvantaged by hierarchal structures of race, class or language to transcend those barriers? These are some of the questions which have been debated across time and cultures. Is there a single answer or maybe it is a combination of all?

One realisation is apparent, especially in the pandemic climate, our world is more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) than it was when the current education model was initiated. If the current and future generations wellbeing is a priority, then we must redesign the educational experience for the complexities of today and possibilities of tomorrow.

At St Mary's we will not be content maintaining the educational status quo. Learning is complex, wondrous and possibility filled. As such we will be commencing action research into the use of emerging fields of Educational Neuroscience and The Science of Learning to inform our methodology and enable designed research-practise translation. As a staff, our future endeavour is to align the principles of 'deep' learning and content with the trajectory of learning; surface knowledge to deep analysis to conceptual understanding. A critical element of this process is the redefining curriculum structures to drastically increase student voice and disassociate the 'mystery' of future learning with authentic student-centred goals.

The students are the central focus of a vision for future learning at St Mary's. However, to truly realise the extent of the direction a strong, cohesive and sustained collective staff efficacy is paramount. A strategic alignment between content oriented professional growth and development of highly effective team practices will be the hallmark of 2021.