



Diocese of Sale  
Catholic Education Ltd

# 2023

## Annual Report to the School Community



### St Thomas' School

Guthridge Parade, SALE 3850

Principal: Anita Little

Web: [www.stsale.catholic.edu.au](http://www.stsale.catholic.edu.au)

Registration: 1689, E Number: E4028

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## Principal's Attestation

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I, Anita Little, attest that St Thomas' 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 06 May 2024

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## About this report

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St Thomas' 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](#).

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## Governing Authority Report

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The 2023 school year marked my first year as Director of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Sale following the retirement of previous Director, Ms Maria Kirkwood who served in the role for ten years.

Throughout the year, I had the pleasure of visiting each of our 38 Catholic primary schools and five Catholic secondary schools. It was inspiring to witness the dedication of staff and the wonderful work taking place to provide a high-quality Catholic education for our students in a faith-filled environment.

Working with the Bishop, the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL) Board, DOSCEL Secretariat, schools and parishes, the mission to offer every student the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God while achieving their personal best, remained at the forefront of our work.

Investing in school staff and leadership teams to promote expert learning and teaching practices was a top priority. The nation-wide shortage of teachers presented challenges, but we were committed to finding new and innovative ways to attract and retain high quality, committed Catholic educators.

Reflecting on the 2023 year, we have much to be proud of. Ongoing significant investment in new learning facilities and refurbishments through the Capital Grants Program and school community funding continued across our schools to enhance learning spaces and amenities to benefit students and staff.

During 2023, 13 blessing and opening ceremonies were held to celebrate school projects completed over the past three years, while the commencement of three new major projects were recognised with sod-turning ceremonies.

We were particularly excited to begin construction on the new St Josephine Bakhita Catholic Primary School at the newly established Five Farms estate in Clyde North. This will be the 44th school within the network of primary and secondary schools operated by DOSCEL.

The care, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people remain a central focus and fundamental responsibility. During Child Safety Week 2023, schools and parishes were invited by DOSCEL to showcase their innovative projects and activities to keep young people safe. Many of the projects were developed by young people themselves. A video and education resource were created from the submissions to share the work and promote awareness of child safety.

Our Catholic schools continue to be places of learning and enrichment, nurturing students in their spiritual, academic, physical, and emotional development.

I extend my deep appreciation to everyone involved in Catholic education within the Diocese of Sale for their commitment to our vocation of Inspiring Faith, Inspiring Learning.

Paul Velten

Director of Catholic Education - Diocese of Sale

Chief Executive Officer - Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited

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## Vision and Mission

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### **VISION:**

Our school is a place of faith and learning.

“From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illuminated by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics. The inspiration of Jesus must be translated from the ideal into the real. The Gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate”.

### **MISSION:**

It is our mission to make Christ visible within our school community, providing opportunities for all stakeholders to encounter the love of Christ through the words and actions of all those engaged in teaching, learning and supporting our St Thomas school community.

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## School Overview

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St Thomas' is located in the city of Sale, 216 kilometres east of Melbourne. It is one of two Catholic primary schools located in Sale and has a current enrolment of 288 students. We are proud of our school's history, culture and contribution to the local community in providing quality education within a safe and faith nurturing environment.

St Thomas' was officially opened in 1970 with Sister Therese Condon from the Sisters of Sion as Principal and fewer than 100 children enrolled in Grades Prep to Grade Four. There were only six classrooms, a Staffroom and an office. Boys in Grade Five and Six attended St Patrick's College, Sale until 1978. The school quickly grew in size and now operates fourteen classrooms. It boasts a variety of learning spaces, a well-resourced library, an Art, Music, LOTE, STEM learning space, sports stadium and large grounds. A range of technology is accessed in each classroom to support student learning.

At St Thomas', staff collaborate to create innovative teaching environments that personalise learning for students. Learning adjustment takes place at all levels to support and challenge children with their learning. Data informs teaching and professional learning. Evidence based teaching strategies are used to engage and motivate students. Student learning growth and well-being are key school priorities developed through quality teaching and supportive learning environments.

We offer specialist programs in Music, Physical Education, LOTE/ Italian, STEM and Visual Arts and share our skills in these areas with our school and wider community. We participate in sports days at local and state level and value participation in community events.

Child safety is a key priority and permeates all aspects of school life as we go about our daily routines, extra curricular activities and engage in community events.

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## Principal's Report

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Throughout 2023, we continued to develop teacher knowledge of the curriculum and student learning by reviewing our assessment policies and practices to ensure each child experienced learning growth through informed teacher practice and decision making. Gathering evidence of student learning, together with analysing and interpreting student data in teaching teams, allowed teachers to identify the needs of students and to seek the various evidence based strategies and resources that could be used to enhance learning for each child. Staff began trialing and investigating what worked best for their students. They sought to measure the impact of their teaching upon student learning and adjusted their teaching accordingly. A decision was made to return to a multiage structure. This allowed a greater number of staff to collaborate together during planning times, to discuss the teaching and learning taking place in their respective cohorts and to support student and staff wellbeing.

The possibility of relocating to the original home and educational facilities established by the Sion Sisters within the Sale community saw staff engage with architects and Diocesan staff to develop plans for a refurbished Convent building and new school build for junior classes. We eagerly await a decision regarding the future of St Thomas' school and value the opportunity to continue Catholic education within a setting with a rich history of serving the Sale community. Again, we look forward to whatever lies ahead, understanding our purpose and vision to be a place of faith and learning excellence.



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## Catholic Identity and Mission

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### **Goal**

- To promote the Catholic Identity of the school through dialogue and a recontextualisation of faith and scripture.

#### **Outcomes:**

- Staff Catholic Culture data improves annually.
- Staff and students experience contextualised and recontextualised prayer regularly.
- Teacher planning and teaching is in line with the Diocesan Religious Education Curriculum and Sexuality Education in Catholic Schools documents.
- Staff utilise a broad range of Scripture in planning for student learning in Religious Education.

### Achievements

Throughout 2023, the Religious Education Leader continued to support staff with respect to their knowledge of the Catholic faith, traditions, rituals and scripture. The REL made himself available during level team meetings and whole school professional learning to engage staff in dialogue about the place for faith in today's context, evangelising, nurturing and forming the faith of educators within our school community. He emphasised the diversity that existed amongst our school population and communicated the need to acknowledge and respect the different beliefs that existed within it, whilst still sharing our Catholic story and inviting families to engage in our narrative.

With respect to the Religious Education curriculum, staff continued to utilise the progressions of learning for RE and in this way, came to recognise the continuum of learning and the key understandings to be developed from Foundation to Year 6. Teaching RE as an inquiry unit proved to be a challenge for some, but all staff recognised the place for dialogue and questioning and making Christ relevant and valued by students. Each term, staff collaborated to construct units of inquiry. Scripture was continually used to introduce children to the life and mission of Jesus.

The school continued to develop its relationship with the Parish through evaluating sacramental programs and playing a greater role in preparing students for various sacraments. Our local parish schools met with the Parish Priest monthly to discuss what was taking place within our school communities and to determine how we could work together to share our faith. We participated in the Parish Assembly and a strategic plan was developed

for the parish which included building effective partnerships with schools by engaging families in the life of the Church.

We all understand the challenges that exist in nurturing a faith community, but at St Thomas', work towards our vision of creating a place of faith and learning.

### **Value Added**

St Thomas' continued to outreach a number of different community organisations throughout the 2023 year.

They included:

- Fundraising for Caritas Australia
- Supporting local foster care children with donations of emergency clothing
- Harmony Day
- Daniel Morcombe Foundation

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## Learning and Teaching

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

**Goal:**

- To ensure quality teaching is enacted across the curriculum.

**Outcome:**

- Teachers engage in evidence based practice to identify and implement teaching strategies to improve student outcomes.

**Goal:**

- To improve learning outcomes for all students.

**Outcome:**

- Learning growth is achieved for all students

### Achievements

During 2023, school leaders focused attention to achieving the goals derived from the School Review year of 2022. Indeed, leaders and teachers were keen to examine their assessment and feedback practices and to develop consistency across the school with respect to assessment, teaching and reporting. Evidence of teaching impact was an integral part of teacher conversations as teachers were encouraged to be self reflective of their practice and to ensure their pedagogy was evidence based and informed by student observations and data. Learning teams were restructured and timetables rescheduled to allow teachers to meet regularly to collate, analyze and interpret student data that was gathered in a variety of ways. Pre and post assessments became the norm, whilst formative assessment was encouraged on a daily basis.

The junior school continued with a synthetic, systematic approach to phonics in an effort to provide students with the fundamental skills of phonological knowledge and phonemic awareness through the implementation of Little Learners Love Literacy. Regular monitoring of student performance and growth enthused teachers as they monitored the impact of their teaching upon student learning outcomes in early reading. It also challenged them as they sought to cater for their higher achieving students within a multi age classroom structure. Indeed, the teaching of Reading revolved around the latest research into the Science of Reading and provided the framework for teaching Reading across all year levels. Multi lit was introduced as an intervention for children who were struggling with their phonic fundamentals

and the teaching of fluency formed a major inquiry for all year levels in the latter half of the year.

With respect to Mathematics, middle leaders began examining the revised version of the Victorian Mathematics curriculum with their peers across the diocese and set about planning how they may upskill teachers during 2024 year.

2023 saw staff continue developing a shared language around teaching and learning and deepening their understanding of their professional responsibilities in school improvement.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Teachers used online assessments to assist with monitoring student achievement and growth. PAT Reading and PAT Math were key assessment tools, together with the Essential Assessment online platform, observations and student work samples.

NAPLAN results were published in a different format for individual students in 2023.

Our Year 3 students performed best across Reading, Writing and Math.

Our Year 5 students performed best across Reading and Writing.

Reading and Writing results for Year 3 and Year 5 students were well within the range of state and national benchmarks, whilst Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar needing improvement across both cohorts.

Year 3 students performed better in Numeracy than their Year 5 counterparts.

<b>NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards</b>			
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Year level</b>	<b>Mean Scale score</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	402	48%
	Year 5	506	72%
Numeracy	Year 3	428	80%
	Year 5	483	65%
Reading	Year 3	431	83%
	Year 5	502	80%
Spelling	Year 3	399	55%
	Year 5	483	74%
Writing	Year 3	427	88%
	Year 5	491	83%

\*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2023 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.

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## Student Wellbeing

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

**Goal:**

- To create effective and safe learning environments for all learners.

**Outcomes:**

- That the school works in partnership with the community, supporting student achievement and well-being.
- That all staff acknowledge the importance of effective relationships between all school stakeholders and actively supports the work of the Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour team.

### Achievements

Student wellbeing continues to be central to the work of St Thomas' school community.

During 2023, the school piloted the Mental Health In Schools Initiative (MHIS) with local government and independent schools and appointed a MHIS leader to support students and staff with their wellbeing. A pathway to Mental Health Framework was developed to support teachers in pursuing support for their students. The pathway reflected a response to intervention model, highlighting the resources and processes involved to engage school staff and external professionals to support the social and emotional needs of students.

All classes once again participated in 'The Resilience Project' allowing teachers to engage more confidently in teaching the personal and social capabilities. Online workshops were held for teachers and parents and student surveys once again provided us with valuable information about student attitudes towards the many aspects of schooling.

The Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour Initiative continued to underpin expectations around resilience, respect and safety. With the support of Diocesan leaders, school staff made a concerted effort to identify the key elements implemented thus far and to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative. A decision was made to focus on developing consistent routines across the school and to foster positive relationships amongst students and staff within various learning environments.

Our Learning Adjustment Leader, together with the Whole School Intensive Team continued to monitor the needs of all students, particularly those needing extra support. Intensive Support

Plans were provided when necessary and relevant personnel engaged with external

professionals to ensure the active participation of all students in school life. Teachers were continually encouraged to communicate with parents about their children, sharing success and challenges in their social, emotional and academic domains.

We worked hard to provide an inclusive environment, acknowledging our indigenous communities, being open to the faith of many cultures represented at the school and supporting the many learning and medical needs of our students.

## **Value Added**

Recognising that all stakeholders play a part in developing a positive and supportive culture, various activities were held to build community and to encourage a sense of belonging.

Throughout 2023 we:

- Celebrated whole school and weekly year level Masses and/or liturgies
- Invited families to athletic and swimming carnivals
- Participated in a variety of interschool sporting events
- Re-engaged with volunteers to assist with various school activities.
- Participated in outdoor adventure camps with overnight stays.
- Celebrated our end of year concert and graduation with families
- Participated in Cyber Safety workshops
- Celebrated Reconciliation Week
- Celebrated Harmony Day

## **Student Satisfaction**

Student Insight SRC survey data followed a similar trend to the 2022 year.

Students were aware of the impact of student behaviour upon student learning and indicated they were keen and motivated to learn.

The teaching climate data indicated teachers had a healthy respect for their students.

## **Student Attendance**

Parents are to provide a dated and signed written note, an email, phone call or return a completed absence form via the online Parent Access module (PAM) to explain why an absence has occurred. The principal/deputy principal will contact parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimize absences. Reminders are placed in school newsletters and notifications sent to parents, explaining the need for written communication when their children are absent for the day or longer periods.

Student reports indicate the number of days absent and teachers may comment or follow-up absenteeism during parent/teacher interviews. The Attendance Roll is completed twice a day, with an SMS message sent to parents/guardians if their child/children are marked absent in the morning with no formal explanation as noted above. Administration staff will follow up with a phone call to parents/guardian if they have not responded to the SMS message.

Administration will notify the Attendance Officer/Deputy Principal if a pattern of non-attendance emerges.

<b>Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level</b>	
Y01	90.3%
Y02	90.1%
Y03	90.0%
Y04	88.9%
Y05	90.8%
Y06	89.6%
Overall average attendance	89.9%



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## Leadership

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

**Goal:**

- To build an effective organisational climate that leads and sustains school improvement.

**Outcomes:**

- Leaders ensure the Organisational Climate drives the Teaching Climate
- Effective leadership structures support the development of expert teacher practice.

### Achievements

During 2023, we found it difficult to recruit teachers and leaders to fill various positions of leadership. However, a solid and familiar executive core, worked hard to empower staff in their work and engaged collaboratively with each other to develop a professional learning plan that addressed assessment and evidence based practices within the school. Middle leaders worked within their level teams to foster best practice.

Leaders actively sought to engage in conversations about teaching and learning with teachers and time was scheduled for various leaders to meet regularly with staff to address the learning and well-being of students and to examine the impact of their teaching using the evidence of student learning at hand. Leaders also met with each other to evaluate the impact of their work and the clarity of their communications. Key priorities were kept to a minimum and regularly communicated to staff to develop a shared vision and purpose. Leaders utilised the staff handbook to document processes and to link them to school policies.

Evidence based practices still remain at the forefront of teacher learning, and we continue to explore best practice and research that will meet the particular needs of our students and improve our skill set and knowledge. As leaders, we take responsibility of supporting teachers in this space, directing them to appropriate research and trialling best practice with them.

## Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning

### List Professional Learning undertaken in 2023

Teachers participated in the following Professional Learning during 2023

- Learning and Teaching Network Meetings for School Leaders
- Learning and Teaching Network Meetings
- English and Math Learning Progression Workshops
- Learning Adjustment Workshops
- Quality assurance NCCD
- SAM 4 Schools - Contractor Compliance
- Middle leader Collective meetings (Teaching & Learning/ Math & English)
- Weekly Professional learning and Development meetings led by school leadership
- Language (LOTE) network meetings
- Zart Art Workshop
- RE Accreditation
- RE: planning & assessment
- Principal & Staff Formation
- Formative assessment
- Mandatory Reporting
- NAPLAN online training
- WSAPB leader and team training
- WSAPB whole staff workshops
- De-escalation Training
- Return to work Coordinator Training
- Utilising the SIMON platform: Admin
- Diocese of Sale Leadership Program
- VIT mentor Program
- Graduate Conference
- NCCD learning Modules
- CPR and First Aid updates
- Mandatory Reporting
- Staff formation - Catholic Identity: Sion Charism
- Anaphylaxis briefings
- Little Learners Love Literacy
- Multi Lit
- Resilience Project Workshop for teachers
- Science of Reading - Learning Support Officers.

Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2023	31
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$1300.00

## Teacher Satisfaction

Though work demands were of concern to staff, a developing team based culture, supportive leadership and a pastoral care approach was valued.

Student behaviour is a focus and conversation piece for staff as they reflect upon the core elements of establishing a safe and engaging learning environment within the framework of a Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour.

Student wellbeing experienced positive growth during 2023 year.

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	6.3%
Graduate	12.5%
Graduate Certificate	9.4%
Bachelor Degree	56.3%
Advanced Diploma	9.4%
No Qualifications Listed	6.3%

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	2
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	27
Teaching Staff (FTE)	19.7
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	18
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	11.8
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	1

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## Community Engagement

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

**Goal:**

- To promote positive community partnerships within a safe school environment.

**Outcomes:**

- Parents actively participate in the life of the school.
- Relationships between families, students, staff and the wider community are strengthened.

### Achievements

It was wonderful to see our families re-engage with the school and volunteer their time to support their children and school staff.

Parents participated in school liturgies and Masses and in various incursions and excursions.

Sports Days, Mother's Day and Father's Day Breakfasts were well attended and proved to be great community days.

Our Parents and Friends Committee were keen to be involved in the life of the school and set about seeking the support of new families using online platforms and face to face meetings to connect and promote their work. Though many families could not necessarily attend meetings, many offered their support. Our food bank was regularly filled and distributed to needy families, whilst volunteers regularly staffed the school canteen.

### Parent Satisfaction

The 2023 Insight SRC survey data regarding parent satisfaction differs slightly to the data represented in 2022, however, the pattern remains much the same.

Parent partnerships remain positive, with families believing staff are engaged in their work and working towards developing the social literacy of students to further develop relationships and a sense of connectedness to the school.

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## Financial Performance

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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](http://www.acnc.gov.au).

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at [www.sttsale.catholic.edu.au](http://www.sttsale.catholic.edu.au)