

DIOCESE
OF
BALLARAT
CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
LIMITED



2023

Annual Report to the School Community



St Francis Xavier School

Fortune Street, BALLARAT EAST 3350

Principal: Mark Hogbin

Web: www.sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au

Registration: 981, E Number: E2039

Principal's Attestation

I, Mark Hogbin, attest that St Francis Xavier 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 17 Apr 2024

About this report

St Francis Xavier School is registered by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). The Annual Report to the School Community (ARSC), provides parents and the wider community with information about the school's activities and achievements throughout the year including information about various aspects of school performance. The Report is supplementary to other forms of regular communication to the school community regarding initiatives, activities and programs which support the learning and wellbeing of its students. Further information about the contents of this Report may be obtained by contacting the School directly or by visiting the School's website. Information can also be obtained from the [My School website](#).

Governing Authority Report

The Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) governs 52 primary schools, one F – 8 school, and five secondary Colleges, educating around 13,500 students and employing more than 2,200 teachers and staff, from Mildura in the north, Portland in the south, and west to Edenhope and Nhill.

Now in its third year of operation, DOBCEL continues to work diligently to ensure all its schools flourish fully in their mission to provide high-quality, affordable, faith-based education opportunities for students and families in safe, supportive, and secure learning environments, that value diversity and promote cooperation, care, and respect for all.

During 2023, I was fortunate to visit all of our schools as the DOBCEL Board held meetings in different venues across the diocese. The spirit of harmony and sense of community, along with cultures of care for students and staff I experienced, was extremely encouraging. These school visits were also a reminder of the calibre of young people we have in our education system.

The role of school Principal continues to grow in complexity, demanding an increasingly diverse skillset and knowledge base. I am proud and deeply grateful for the exceptional dedication and professionalism of our 58 Principals, who, along with leadership colleagues and staff, work tirelessly to deliver education services for the families and communities they serve.

Enterprise Bargaining Agreement negotiations continued this year, involving staff from schools and human resources teams giving many hours and great effort to the process. Working with the inter-Diocesan bargaining group, DOBCEL continued to support efforts to finalise the Agreement with the Independent Education Union (IEU) as expediently as possible. DOBCEL continues to recognise the extraordinary work of staff in our schools and offices, and the substantial changes to the Agreement are intended to have a positive impact on staff and their workload.

As mandated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), the development of clear policy and procedural documents continued apace, with schools required to utilise DOBCEL foundational work, yet contextualise documents to suit the specific needs of each school. I express my gratitude to the team at Catholic Education Ballarat, who are both talented and conscientious in delivering this vital work.

During the year we saw the end of an era with the closure of St Brendan's Primary School, Dunnstown. Over 160 years of schooling was celebrated through speeches, laughter, and the sharing of many memories. Pleasingly, we also saw the refurbishment and opening of several new school buildings across the diocese this year.

I continue to be extremely grateful for the ongoing dedication, professionalism, and support of our personnel at Catholic Education Ballarat. I particularly acknowledge the commitment of our school leadership teams and their staff in nurturing and empowering the students in our care, as together we work to bring to life our vision: As partners in Catholic Education and open to God's presence, we pursue the fullness of life for all.

Tom Sexton

Executive Director DOBCEL

Vision and Mission

Our Vision:

Through the mission of Jesus within the Mercy tradition, we are called to action in pursuing fullness of life for all

Our Mission:

St Francis Xavier is a Catholic primary school community, inspired by the example of Catherine McAuley where we promote for all a sense of belonging, nurture right relationships, inspire a passion for learning and live in harmony with creation.

School Overview

Saint Francis Xavier Primary School has occupied its current site since 1902. The Sisters of Mercy commenced education for boys on the farm property once owned by Mr. Fortune, an early entrepreneur from the gold fields era. The original house can still be seen on the property and is currently used as part of the school.

The sisters of Mercy ran Saint Francis Xavier school until the early twenty first century when the last of the Religious sisters retired from teaching at the school. The school currently offers co-education for students from Foundation to Year six. The student population at Saint Francis Xavier sits at 468 with straight year levels across three streams. The staff is composed of 56 teachers and Administration and Support staff. Many families have long standing associations with Saint Francis Xavier school and generations of people in Ballarat can link their family story to education on this site.

Saint Francis Xavier Primary School continues to uphold the Mercy traditions of Hospitality, Compassion, Justice, Respect and Excellence every day. These values inform our interactions as well as our positive approach to behaviour management. Known as 'The Villa Way', our students are able to articulate these values and how each one links to our school story.

Over recent years the school has undergone several building projects. Managing an old site has its challenges and the listing of heritage buildings adds to the complexities which arise from time to time. Thanks to state and federal government grants we have been able to improve facilities over time to reflect change in pedagogy and teaching practice. We work diligently to ensure that all members of our community can access excellent educational opportunities and we strive for excellence in all we do. Each member of the Saint Francis Xavier school community is valued and appreciated for their presence in our school.

Principal's Report

Having experienced my first year at Saint Francis Xavier Primary School I am delighted to be able to reflect upon my year of service to this community.

When I accepted the role of leading this community I knew that I was entering a well established school where learning was not only held in high regard but the pursuit of excellence was a highly regarded value. Having spent time on the external review panel for this school in 2021 I was aware of the planned future directions for the school. Having assisted the outgoing school Principal with the formulation of the new School Improvement Plan I felt that I was well placed to lead this community into the next phase of its growth and development. I have enjoyed becoming more familiar with the school this year as I learn more each day about the community of Saint Francis Xavier.

I have enjoyed many opportunities to meet the wider community of our school. Through events such as Mothers and Fathers day, Grandparents Day, Parents & Friends Committee meetings and the School Advisory Council, I have learned much about how our community operates. The sense of welcome and inclusion has been exemplary and I value this very much. Throughout the year I have employed new staff including a Business manager, Administration officer, seven teachers and five learning support officers. This has brought its own challenges and celebrations as we cater to the needs of a large and busy workplace.

Throughout the year we continued to develop our understandings of Structured Literacy. This has been our main curriculum driver for the year and we anticipate that we will progress our commitment with DOBCEL to become a level 1 school in 2024. We will allocate staffing to address the needs of a fulltime Literacy Leader role thereby allowing support to all year levels across the school.

Moving into a school at the same time as the new Industrial agreement for teachers was introduced has had its challenges. While it remains our desire to provide a fair and just workplace for all, I am also aware that some elements of the new agreement have the potential to change valued practices in the school. Budgeting allocations alone will call for a new understanding of over time and time in lieu for teachers who previously had not sought repayment for extra services. We will continue to work with DOBCEL to interpret the new conditions into the future.

I have enjoyed the challenges and celebrations of the 2023 school year. Learning the names of over 400 children is something I am yet to master however, that like many other things, remains a work in progress.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The following three goals were identified as being key drivers for our Catholic Identity and Mission in 2023:

- Explicit linking of our Catholic Social Teaching to what we do and why
- Continue to recontextualise our Religious Education (with the goal of ensuring our community falls within Post Critical Belief preference.
- Build opportunities for staff to increase their TAP hours through whole staff participation in planning and professional learning.

Achievements

The Catholic culture of our school is strong and vibrant. It has been a pleasure to take part in student led liturgies where our students so respectfully enter into shared prayer and reflection. I realize that this isn't happening without strong staff support and guidance and I can see the dedication that the teachers show when they have the opportunity to create meaningful liturgical experiences with the children.

This year we had over 100 students take part in the Sacramental program. Through the St. Alipius parish, and with the support of Mrs. Cathy Prunty we were able to see the students receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. Fr. Jorge officiated over the ceremonies and of course, our staff supported the program under the guidance of Ms. Christine Meneely, our Religious Education Leader.

As a school community we participated in whole school liturgies this year including Start of the school year, Mothers Day, Easter, Mercy Week, Father's Day, Grandparents Day, and Advent. These were either held in the school or at St. Alipius Church. We will say farewell to Fr. Jorge at the end of the Christmas season and we will be assigned a new Parish Priest in due course

Value Added

Moving forward we would like to extend our knowledge through an exploration of how the principles of Catholic Social Teaching can impact on how we might build inclusive Catholic

Learning Communities which will allow all to flourish. This will link to our commitment to Diversity.

We were able to develop staff understandings of the four principles of Catholic Social Teaching- namely Human Dignity, The Common Good, Solidarity and Subsidiarity. This introduction to Catholic Social Teaching will be built on over time.

In 2024 we will commence working with a new member of the CEB Religious Education team. Ms. Jo-anne Vandervort will bring deep understandings of biblical studies to our staff. Her ability to draw on historical events to inform teaching is an area in which we can draw to better inform our classes.

Through participation in staff professional development our staff were able to add 10 hours to their TAP record for the 2023 school year.

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The following goals and learning outcomes were identified as key drivers for the area of learning and teaching in 2023:

- Develop agreed pedagogical understanding of what Reading looks like at SFX from Foundation - Year 6. Based on The Science of Reading.
- Ongoing PL opportunities for teachers to enhance collective knowledge of Structured Literacy
- Structured Literacy Partners participation in 2023: Level Two. Begin implementation of Structured Literacy F-6
- Sounds Write to be implemented in F/1 with support for Teachers to attend training
- Build teacher knowledge in reading through a professional learning program and the refinement of a peer observation and coaching program, for individual teachers and teaching teams

Achievements

Through engaging in professional development with SunLit Structured Literacy we were able to enhance our understandings of the elements of focused literacy learning. We were able to improve practice as our knowledge grew.

Resources in the junior school, such as decodable readers have been purchased and are accessible for all students. Professional development in the 'Sounds Write' program has commenced and will continue to be made available for staff over time.

Teachers completed EI for Teachers & middle leaders with the aim of building coaching into our SFX culture and moving away from the scaffold of EI by 2024.

Continued opportunities for Peer Observations with a focus on the implementation of Structured Literacy F-6 allowed us to consolidate our understandings and to challenge our current teaching methodologies.

We explored & developed proficiency scales and SFX Assessment Tasks to assess skills and understandings

Continued opportunities to moderate achievement across year levels provided for rich understandings of the continuum of learning in line with expected learning outcomes at all year levels.

Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes for 2023 reflect similar patterns to previous years. Growth in both individual and year level data remains consistently strong across the areas of Literacy and Numeracy for students in Year 3 and Year 5.

At Saint Francis Xavier Primary School we use the NAPLAN data collected each year to triangulate data collected by classroom teachers. This allows us not only to observe trends in improvement but also to provide a measure by which to critique our own information.

An analysis of the NAPLAN data for 2023 reveals that our students achieve consistently high growth across both cohorts.

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards			
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	444	70%
	Year 5	499	66%
Numeracy	Year 3	446	82%
	Year 5	520	89%
Reading	Year 3	438	84%
	Year 5	505	83%
Spelling	Year 3	424	73%
	Year 5	496	74%
Writing	Year 3	448	95%
	Year 5	508	92%

*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.

Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The following goals and intended outcomes were identified in our annual action plan for the 2023 school year.:

- To embed a culture of inclusivity that celebrates diversity and partners with the community to provide relevant and authentic learning opportunities for all.
- Build and nurture communities of inclusivity, belonging and wellbeing, where all experience hospitality, a sense of welcome and trust with/in each other.
- To embed the ReLATE pedagogical framework as part of the way we nurture each other here at St Francis Xavier to ensure a place of belonging and a strong sense of achievement.
- To launch our Reconciliation Action Plan within the broader St Francis Xavier community.

Achievements

Our school wellbeing has been overseen by Ms. Christine Meneely in recent years. This role is currently being reviewed and will be advertised internally to staff for 2024. Primarily the role oversees programs to support students in need as well as liaising with outside bodies who offer support. Having occupied the role for some time now, Christine will be a great mentor for whoever takes on the role.

We have just completed our first year of working in the ReLate program which is provided by Mackillop family services. The focus on staff and student wellbeing has reminded us of the importance of nurturing a safe and healthy environment for all members of our community. Topics such as self regulation, relaxation, stress awareness and triggering experiences have informed our practices this year. Next year will be our final year with ReLate.

Ms. Jayne Mohr has applied for funding support for more than 100 students under the NCCD scheme. This provides extra funding to schools for students who require extra support to access their learning. This grant covers wages for support staff as well as training and resources to assist students as required. I am extremely grateful to Jayne for the work she does in this important area. We have employed four new Learning Support Officers throughout the year to assist with programs and presence as required.

The Reconciliation Action Plan has been initiated and is alive in our school. We are proud of the work completed in this important area and we look forward to launching the RAP early in 2024.

Value Added

The Wellbeing Leader worked diligently to provide break time activities and clubs for students who found social interactions to be challenging. Teddy Bear picnics were a highlight of the week for many of our junior school students, Chess club was a highlight for many students in the middle and senior classes and Card Swap meetings were always well attended.

The Buddy system has been an area of celebration for our students throughout 2023. The senior students look forward to becoming a Buddy for Foundation children and throughout the year many opportunities were created for buddies to gather. The Buddy system is also very much appreciated by our parent community.

Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction is attained from the Insight SRC surveys which are collected every two years. In 2023 students in Years 3,4,5 and 6 were surveyed to collect data about how they learn at school, interact with others at school and how engaged they are in their learning.

In 2023 students in Years 5 and 6 scored their connectedness to school as being at 74. This is consistent with historical data for this school which sits at 72. For students in Years 3 and 4, this was not measured.

In regards to teacher relationships with students, our Year 5 & 6 students revealed a score of 83 for purposeful teaching (Historically 78), Teacher empathy was scored by the students as 83 (Historically 81) and Encouraging learning was scored at 79 (historically 74).

Students in Years 3 and 4 were able to take part in the Insight SRC surveys for the first time. They listed student morale as being 70, student distress as being 7 and their connectedness to school as being 65. They also rated their connectedness to teachers as being high. Teacher empathy was given a score of 83, purposeful teaching was rated at 83 and stimulating learning at 63. Overall this group felt strongly motivated at school (80), confident as learners (75) and connected to their peers (82).

The overall aggregate indicator for student wellbeing in 2023 sits at a score of 77.9. Historically this score sat at 76.6. This reflects consistency over time.

Student Attendance

Saint Francis Xavier Primary School regards student safety as one of our highest priorities. In order to monitor student attendance the following procedures are in place:

- Attendance records are kept twice daily. The electronic roles are released each morning and monitored by the administration staff.

- Absences are recorded electronically and followed up by the administration staff prior to first break or at the earliest possible time.
- Parents and guardians are required to contact the office or classroom teacher if their child will not be in attendance at school on any given day.
- Unnotified absences are followed up with a phone call by the administration staff prior to first break or at the earliest possible time.
- All attendance is recorded in student files.

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	90.1%
Y02	91.1%
Y03	92.5%
Y04	91.4%
Y05	90.3%
Y06	89.4%
Overall average attendance	90.8%

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The following areas were identified as goals and intended outcomes for 2023:

- Consolidate the Strategic Implementation Team direction, purpose and impact.
- Facilitate respectful connections between parents, guardians, care teams and staff
- Build the schools capability and capacity to engage respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities and other cultures
- Support congruent school policies and practices that achieve statutory milestones and staff professional learning and development requirements, aligned with
- AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and Principals, Child Safe Standards, the Australian Student Wellbeing framework and the Australian Curriculum.

Achievements

We worked together throughout the year to consolidate our direction as a Leadership team and as key drivers of the improvement agenda for this school. All year level leaders participated in the EI feedback surveys and AITSL standards were met with each teacher. Annual review meetings were conducted with the AITSL standards in mind and individual goals were established with teachers for the year ahead.

Negotiating our way through a new industrial agreement for staff has been an ongoing challenge throughout the year. Collectively our schools have had to move from traditional ways of being, to new understandings for our staff. It would be fair to say that this has occupied most of our leadership time this year and it remains a work in progress. For the first time in our history, schools are now required to pay overtime to staff for any activities beyond the hours of 8.30 am and 3.30pm. This causes us to have to re-think many of the extra – curricular activities that traditionally happen in our school including camps, excursions, meetings and supervisory duties. We will be looking at back paying teachers for extra duties this year. This will have an impact on our financial outcomes for the 2023 school year since no extra funding was provided to cover increased release time for staff since second term this year. 2024 will be our year to consolidate practices as we move forward in this new space.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2023	
<p>In 2023 staff engaged in many different forms of Professional Learning. In accordance with our annual action plan our staff participated in three Structured Literacy days and two staff meetings. This allowed us to formalize our commitment to the SunLit program.</p> <p>Other Professional Development provided to staff in 2023 includes:</p> <p>First -Aid training, CPR training, Anaphylaxis training, SALT training modules, Occupational Health & Safety training, Emergency Services Warden training, Auslan training, ReLate PD, Reporting & Assessment PD, Sounds Write PD, Principal Network, Deputy Principal network, Religious Education Leaders network, Literacy Leaders network, Learning Diversity network.</p>	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2023	50
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$500.00

Teacher Satisfaction

The Insight SRC data collected for 2023 reflects similar patterns to past surveys. Historical data matches 2023 in most areas.

Staff scored their own morale at being 76 (Historically 75). Individual distress was scored at 72 (historically 70). Work demands was scored at 58 (historically 61). Little difference was noted across all areas of the survey for staff in both the organisational climate and teaching climate areas.

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	8.3%
Graduate	11.1%
Graduate Certificate	2.8%
Bachelor Degree	63.9%
Advanced Diploma	11.1%
No Qualifications Listed	2.8%

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	3
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	35
Teaching Staff (FTE)	30.5
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	22
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	15.3
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The following goals were identified as key drivers for our school community in 2023:

- Include all members of the school community, capturing the voices of students, teachers and parents
- Upskill teacher capability to implement daily ReLATE circles, to establish the safety plans within the class and to develop an understanding of the window of tolerance for their students.
- Facilitate respectful connections between parents, guardians, care teams and staff

Achievements

Throughout 2023 we have continued to rebuild our school community after the extended lock down periods of recent years. Having experienced our second year of uninterrupted learning we are now feeling confident that we can begin welcoming families back onsite daily. This includes activities organised by the school as well as through our dedicated Parents & Friends committee. It has been a struggle to reinvigorate school helpers through the hot lunch program, hot chocolates and Zooper-Doopers but we continue to advertise for helpers and welcome those who are able to come in whenever they can assist.

I have met with many parents and carers this year. In these discussions I have valued getting to know members of our community and to learn of their experiences in our school. I have been aware of the hardship that some of our families experience as well as the celebrations that occur within the family unit. Throughout every encounter I am reminded that all parents want the best for their children as do our staff. When we can all share this understanding then our community grows stronger as we walk together.

As we formally moved from a Mercy governance model to the DOBCEL model we have had to work towards new models of operation. Perhaps the most significant for our school was the dissolution of the School Board in 2022 (Mercy Governance) and the creation of a School Advisory Council in 2023 (DOBCEL governance). This will become more active next year as we become more familiar with the new governance model.

Throughout 2023 the senior teachers reviewed the various Leadership roles undertaken by students throughout the year. In term four a Leadership focus was established in the senior school and students identified areas of leadership that they would like to undertake in 2024. These roles were made available for students to apply for and allocated after interviews were

conducted. The senior students were proud of their new roles in our school and they look forward to exercising these roles next year.

Parent Satisfaction

Insight SRC data collected for 2023 in the area of Parent Satisfaction reflects historical data with almost no change.

Parents rated teacher approachability as being at 80 (Historically 81). School improvement was scored at 81 (historically 81), and focused learning was scored at 82 (historically 80). The largest growth areas recorded were in stimulating learning (87, historically 83) and Connectedness to school (88, historically 80). The largest downward trend was in classroom behaviour where parents rated the school at 53 with our historical ranking being 64. This indicates an area for future growth.

Financial Performance

The school's financial performance information and a report of the financial activities of the school's boarding premises (if applicable) have been provided to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and will be available for the community to access from their website at www.acnc.gov.au.

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at www.sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au