

2024

Annual School Report

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TOGETHER IN CHRIST



St Columba's Primary School

Lockyer Street, ADAMSTOWN 2289

Principal: Jenny Howard

Web: <http://www.adamstownsc.catholic.edu.au>

About this report

St Columba's Primary School (the 'School') is registered by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and managed by the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (CDMN). The Annual School Report (the 'Report'), provides parents and the wider community with fair, accurate and objective information about various aspects of school performance and development. Additionally, the Report complements and 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.

Detailed information about the School's improvement journey is documented in the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) which is developed, implemented and evaluated in consultation with key stakeholders. 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 be also be obtained from the My School website.

Message from key groups in our community

Principal's Message

Our students have enjoyed success in their achievements across the academic, cultural and sporting areas. They flourish in an environment that provides expansive learning activities and the opportunity to perform and grow. We enjoyed the opportunities that opened up through 2024. The school has a rich spiritual life that celebrates our Catholic traditions, is centred on the teachings of Jesus and the charism of our founders, the Mercy Sisters. We are guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ, especially focused on through daily prayer, meditation, staff and student opportunities to recognise and develop their spirituality, liturgical celebrations and by embedding the Mercy values in all that we do. Our school community has benefited from the strong support of parents and the wider community. Families and the staff worked and communicated effectively and positively throughout the year and we were able to successfully implement student lead conferences as a part of our processes.

I would like to thank all involved in the St Columba's community in 2024 and look forward to the 2025 school year with all the opportunities available to enhance curriculum delivery, student engagement and provide opportunities for community activities.

Parent Body Message

We acknowledge the generosity of parents and carers who volunteered to provide a variety of opportunities to engage in the school community events. The parent body is actively involved and consulted on events and happenings in the school and continues to be very engaged in activities at St Columba's. In 2024, the St Columba's parent body transitioned to the Parent Engagement Group (PEG) Model. It was felt that this new model offers benefits for our school and importantly is a better fit for our parents and carers to continue to be actively involved in their child/children's education going forward. Meetings are held each term and provide a forum for parents and carers to provide input and requests for an educational component they would like to see presented.

Occasions, such as Catholic Schools Week, Mother's and Father's Days, Sporting Carnivals and School Assemblies, are always well supported, thanks to the openness and encouragement provided by the school, as well as the desire of the parents and caregivers to be involved in school activities.

Parents have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in student led conferences, hearing about learning from the children with the teacher being present.

Student Body Message

Student voice is a valued feature of our school community.

All students in Year 6 have the chance to be school leaders and get to demonstrate their leadership skills throughout the year. The children participate in committees for Mercy Values, Sport, Learning and the Environments, each of which are self-nominated. Each of the committees takes on roles across the school. The leaders also represented the school at special external functions including ANZAC Day Service, Mission Mass, Catholic Schools Week Mass as well as leading school assemblies.

They have lots of sporting opportunities like swimming carnivals, athletics, soccer and netball gala days and the cross-country.

School Features

History of the school

Established in the 1890's by the Sisters of Mercy, St. Columba's Primary School continues to serve the needs of the Catholic community of Adamstown. The school proudly maintains its close connection with the Mercy order and its charism. Since the retirement of Sr. Mary Regina Donoghue in December 1986, the school has been staffed by lay teachers apart from the recent addition of Sister Paula Volchek as a pastoral care worker.

We have 8 straight classes. Three demountable classrooms with additional outdoor learning space have been added to accommodate our students. Enrolment stands at 196 students with two streams in one grade and strong enrolment in all other classes.

Additional teaching staff include a Learning Support teacher who provides expertise in additional needs, supporting students and teachers across all grades, as well as Learning Support assistants who provide in-class support for teachers, enabling greater access to differentiated learning. A Gifted Education Mentor (GEM) provides professional and learning support to gifted learners and their teachers, across the school. An Aboriginal Education Teacher and an English as an Additional Language or Dialect teacher, raises awareness and supports the school community in celebrating our Indigenous and multicultural heritage whilst assisting the academic growth and cultural development of our Indigenous students.

We look forward to an ongoing range of improvements to our learning and play spaces and all the benefits this will bring for our students.

Our school is a Successful Foundations School and we are committed to Play based learning for early learners. Parents are the primary educators of their children and are seen as partners with our school on enrolment. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school.

Location/Drawing Area

St Columba's Primary School mainly draws students from the suburbs of Adamstown and Adamstown Heights, Kotara, Merewether, Broadmeadow and Hamilton. However, we also have students who live in other areas and where family circumstances require a placement in our school. Our school is a part of the All Saints Blackbutt South Parish which also comprises the communities of St Kevin's at Cardiff and St James' at Kotara South. All three schools have active church and school communities.

St Columba's is part of the Central Region, one of the six geographic regions that make up the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Due to our central position, parents are able to select from Trinity College, Adamstown, or St Francis Xavier, Hamilton, for high school for their children.

Student Profile

Student Enrolment

The School caters for students in Years K – 6. Students attending this School come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. The following information describes the student profile for 2024: Additional information can be found on My School website.

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Total Students
99	95	11	194

* Language Background Other than English

Enrolment Policy

The [Enrolment Policy](#) applies to all school enrolments within the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. School authorities manage local enrolment processes and procedures in a manner consistent with the rationale and guiding principles articulated in this Enrolment Policy and accompanying [Enrolment Procedures](#). It aims to:

- Set direction for school procedures and practices for enrolling students into Catholic primary and secondary schools within the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
- Establish a common, consistent approach in enrolment practices.
- Assist the system of Catholic schools to:
 - provide schooling, where possible, for children of Catholic families who seek enrolment
 - cater for the individual needs of each child equitably within the constraints of the available teaching and material resources
 - encourage parents enrolling their children in Catholic schools to give support to parish and school life, especially in education in faith.

Student Attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for 2024 was 91.81%. Attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance rates by Year group						
Kindergarten	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
94.08	91.37	90.91	93.31	91.08	91.70	90.24

Managing Student Non-Attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. The School, in partnership with parents, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

School staff, under the Principal's leadership, support the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the School community
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.

The Principal is responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by ensuring that:

- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented
- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern
- the Professional Officer for School Enrolment is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom the School's strategies have failed to restore regular attendance.

Staffing Profile

Staffing Profile

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2024:

Total number of staff	26
Number of full time teaching staff	7
Number of part time teaching staff	11
Number of non-teaching staff	8

Total number of teaching staff by NESA category

Teachers at this School are either accredited as conditional, provisional or proficient as defined by the NSW Teacher Accreditation Act 2004. Accreditation at the levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher are voluntary. The number of teachers within the Diocesan Schools System (systemic schools) at these levels is as follows:

- Conditional 155 teachers
- Provisional 71 teachers
- Proficient 1953 teachers
- 4 Highly Accomplished teacher

Additionally, there are a number of teachers who are currently actively engaged in the submission process at the higher levels of accreditation. Teacher status at individual schools can be sourced directly from the School.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle participate, under the leadership of the Bishop and in partnership with parents and parishes, in the mission of the Church to provide quality education in the context of a living Catholic Christian tradition. Within this context, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle educate from and for vibrant, welcoming and diverse communities with a particular commitment to the poor; for justice, integrity and peace; and with hope for the future.

At the heart of everything there is always Jesus Christ.

Catholic schools educate:

- From and for the community of faith
- From and for excellence in learning
- In a rigorous, creative and critical pursuit of truth

(Adapted from: The Catholic School's Office Diocesan Vision Statement, 2016)

St Columba's Primary School is part of the All-Saints Blackbutt South Parish. Our Mass Centre is St Columba's Church, located adjacent to the school. Open communication is enjoyed between the school staff and our Parish Priest, the Parish Team, St Vincent de Paul society and members of the Parish Office. The Sacramental Parish program is run with a high level of school participation and information is shared with other members of the parish through parish bulletins.

Our school Catholic Identity goal for our Strategic Improvement plan was: For staff to have improved clarity around the nature and purpose of Religious Education and have a coherent sequenced plan for the development of high-quality Religious Education. This meant a focus on the new RE curriculum and an approach that kept the high profile of quality teaching in Religious Education across the school.

In 2024 school Liturgies were celebrated to mark the beginning and end of the school year. Other school liturgies were celebrated on special occasions including Ash Wednesday, ANZAC Day, Holy Week & Easter, Mother's and Father's Day Liturgies. Year 6 Farewell, the feasts of St Columba and Catherine McAuley.

Our school promotes the values and traditions of the Mercy Sisters who were its original founders. An education in the Mercy tradition invites us to take up a challenge – one that encourages us to develop fully our own God given talents. St Columba's educates and nurtures the faith and well-being of all through the Six Pillars of Mercy and how they influence them on a daily basis:

- service
- respect
- hospitality
- compassion
- justice
- courage

Our Mission and Vision statements reflect the Catholic Schools Mission Statement of “At the Heart of Everything, there is always Jesus Christ”. St Columba’s Vision statement is “Faith, Opportunity and Inspired Learning for every child.”

Curriculum, Learning and Teaching

The School provides an educational program based on and taught in accordance with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses for Primary Education. The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and its Environment, Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education and Languages.

The Curriculum is structured around the outcomes and content for each KLA and provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding through assessment. The curriculum incorporates a focus on capabilities and priorities, including literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding, and personal and social capability.

St Columba's is a learning community committed to ensuring a whole school approach to quality learning and teaching. There was a high level of professional collaboration across all stages of learning, creating consistency in practice and understanding. We continued to be engaged in the Leading Learning Collaborative in 2024 that identifies 14 parameters that matter most in learning, teaching and leading. Parameters 1 and 14 of shared beliefs and understandings, responsibility, and accountability, underpinned our whole school approach to improve student achievement.

The curriculum focus in 2024 was in Mathematics, utilising PD and ideas from Peter Sullivan as well as best practice in the teaching of Mathematics to improve student learning and outcomes. Case management meetings were conducted regularly to identify students at risk or students who required extension and enrichment and these were supported by ongoing use and analysis of data.

Gifted students have been formally identified through diagnostic testing and differentiation of the curriculum has been identified as a priority for these students. A Gifted Education Mentor continues to work with teachers providing guidance and support to improving pedagogy in differentiating the curriculum to meet individual needs of identified gifted students.

Our Learning Support Teacher ensures that the needs of students at risk in their learning are receiving funding and assistance in class as required through engagement with specialised literacy and numeracy programmes and providers. Adjustments are made in all programs by all teachers ensuring Quality Differentiated Practices.

Grades 4-6 utilised features of Teams and OneNote to provide timely feedback to students, marking rubrics and criteria for assessments and a collaborative learning space. Our kindergarten and year 1 teacher implanted strategies from Successful Foundations to ensure meaningful play-based learning was occurring through intentional provocations.

Student Performance in Tests and Examinations

NAPLAN

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia participate in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

NAPLAN is a nationwide measure through which parents/carers, teachers, schools, education authorities, governments and the broader community can determine whether or not young Australians are developing critical literacy and numeracy skills. NAPLAN results allow parents/carers and educators to see how students are progressing in literacy and numeracy over time - individually, as part of their school community, and against national standards. NAPLAN is made up of four domains of:

- reading
- writing
- conventions of language (spelling, grammar and punctuation)
- numeracy.

NAPLAN results are reported against proficiency standards with four levels of achievement to give parents and carers, teachers and schools clearer information on how students are performing:

- Exceeding: The student's result exceeds expectations at the time of testing.
- Strong: The student's result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing.
- Developing: The student's result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing.
- Needs additional support: The student's result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

The percentage of student achieving at Exceeding and Strong proficiency standards in NAPLAN at St Columba's Primary School for 2024 is reported in the table below.

NAPLAN RESULTS 2024		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 3	Grammar and Punctuation	72%	54%
	Reading	86%	66%
	Writing	97%	77%
	Spelling	83%	61%
	Numeracy	83%	63%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2024		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	65%	65%
	Reading	81%	71%
	Writing	88%	67%
	Spelling	81%	68%
	Numeracy	85%	68%

Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing

Pastoral Care Policy

The School's pastoral care and student wellbeing policies guidelines and procedures are informed by the [Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#).

The Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy 2022 aims to provide a framework for the policies, programs, resources and practices implemented at system and school level with the purpose of supporting and enhancing the wellbeing of students, and all within its school community. It refers to the overall climate of care that exists within a Catholic school.

The environment is designed to be safe and inclusive, one that promotes academic rigour. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents, and the wellbeing of all.

Behaviour Management and Student Discipline Policy

The School's policies and procedures for the management of student behaviour are aligned with the Catholic School's [Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#) and to the [Schools Behaviour Management Policy](#). The dignity and responsibility of each person is promoted at all times along with positive student behaviours whilst ensuring respect for the rights of all students and staff. Corporal punishment is expressly prohibited in this School. The School does not sanction administration of corporal punishment by School persons and non-School persons, including parents, to enforce discipline in the School. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the School's website.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Catholic Schools Office has established an [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) which is implemented by our school and all schools in the diocese. It provides a framework for school communities to work together to prevent and address issues of student bullying, in order to build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each person. The CSO monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the Anti-Bullying Policy may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or at the CSO website.

Complaints Handling Policy

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has established a [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) which is implemented by our school and all systemic schools in the diocese. The rationale for the policy is that within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world. CSO monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or at the CSO website.

Community Satisfaction

Consultation with parents, students and teachers is valued and sought. Their feedback contributes to the planning and the achievement of improved outcomes for students. This year, the School has used a variety of processes to gain information about the level of satisfaction with the School from parents, students and teachers. The school undertakes extensive surveying of all stakeholder groups every 2 years. This data is shared with the school community and contributes to the priorities for future planning.

Parent satisfaction

Parents are positive and supportive of the school:

- A modern, warm, encouraging school where my child thrives
- Small school with lovely teachers. I feel my child and family are known to staff. Very welcoming. My children are happy and happy to go to school.
- My kids love the school and they are comfortable and feel safe and secure in the environment. Being a small school they know most of the other students and know all of the staff. The staff make a big effort for special days such as Mother's Day celebrations etc and on these days it is a very welcoming environment. I love the Aboriginal education that the kids receive also.
- Teachers can be reached all the time and it is easier to discuss with the teacher. Kids enjoy going to school. The school children are friendly and accommodative. Teachers take children's learning seriously and encourage them. Principal and class teacher are easy to reach.
- Our family has felt so welcome and cared for by our amazing school. This is the first year of our schooling journey and feel so grateful to have such a wonderful school that care about their students. We thank you so much for all that you do and appreciate you so very much!

Student satisfaction

Students at St Columba's express that they are happy at school and enjoy their friendships and the positive relationships with their teachers. Students mix well in the playground & utilise all parts of our playground with creative and imaginative play. They are proud of their school and eagerly contribute to make St Columba's a better place for everybody.

- St Columba's is a great community because they organise great sporting events and excursions for you and your friends. For example, camp helped me become closer with my friends and made St Columba's even more enjoyable (which I didn't believe was possible) Thank you for another great year!

- St Columba's is such a great community because there is lots of fun ways to learn like camp and playing, like in Kinder. In Year 5 the best things were going to Great Aussie Bush Camp to learn to work as a team together. Same with meeting our buddies. It's so much fun.
- I like how we have different places to play and they help us learn in fun ways and the teachers are really kind
- I like my teachers and my friends. I like that my teacher tries to make most lessons fun. I like that we have days that we can participate in like gala days

Teacher satisfaction

The staff express satisfaction with the expectations, support and current direction of the school.

The staff team works together to improve outcomes and provide for the learning and growth of all the students at the school.

Staff are encouraged to share their skills and abilities and are committed to the welfare, growth and development of all students. The staff of St Columba's agree that the school has a strong Catholic Identity and that teaching and learning is of a high quality.

Staff are welcoming and friendly

St Columba's has a highly supportive and cohesive staff.

This year we gathered for a Formation Retreat with a social evening attached to it. This was a highly positive event for staff, was very well attended and valued.

Financial Statement

This School Financial Information is based on the detailed information provided to the Commonwealth Government in the Commonwealth Financial Questionnaire.

School Financial Information for the 2024 year is detailed below:

Recurrent and Capital Income 2024	
Commonwealth Recurrent Grants ¹	\$2,332,427
Government Capital Grants ²	\$0
State Recurrent Grants ³	\$618,016
Fees and Private Income ⁴	\$603,289
Interest Subsidy Grants	\$0
Other Capital Income ⁵	\$146,069
Total Income	\$3,699,801

Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2024	
Capital Expenditure ⁶	\$47,612
Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷	\$2,759,019
Non-Salary Expenses ⁸	\$1,081,089
Total Expenditure	\$3,887,720

Notes

1. Commonwealth Recurrent Grants includes recurrent per capita grants and special purpose grants.
2. Government Capital Grants includes all capital grants received from the Commonwealth and State Governments.
3. State Recurrent Grants includes recurrent grants per capita, special purpose grants and interest subsidy grants.
4. Fees and Private Income include Archdiocesan and school based fees, excursions and other private income.
5. Other Capital Income includes building levy fees and capital donations used to fund Capital Expenditure.
6. Capital Expenditure includes expenditure on School Buildings, and Furniture and Equipment.
7. Salaries and Related Expenditure includes all salaries, allowances and related expenses such as superannuation and workers compensation insurance.
8. Non-Salary Expenses include all other Non-Salary Recurrent Expenditure covering resources, administration, operational expenses, utilities, repairs and maintenance.

END OF 2024 REPORT