

2024

Annual School Report

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TOGETHER IN CHRIST



St James Primary School

Vista Parade, KOTARA SOUTH 2289

Principal: Mrs Sonya Boslem

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

About this report

St James 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

We, as a school community acknowledge the Awabakal People as the traditional owners of this land where our learning takes place at St James' school. A proud Catholic school, founded by the Sisters of Mercy, we take great pride in our Mercy heritage.

Our core values of respect, courage, service, justice, compassion, and hospitality are embedded into our everyday life and formed the basis of our newly implemented Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) framework.

We are a school with strong connection to our parish of St Philip's and are committed to an inclusive Catholic education. The positive relationships amongst the staff, students and parents are evident in our community and make working alongside each other for the good of our community harmonious and rewarding.

The staff of St James' are dedicated, hardworking professionals who strive to provide a nurturing environment for students to grow in all facets of their life. Considering and attending to their spiritual, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs, establishing a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing.

St James' is a community with a strong commitment to school improvement. We embrace change and embed up to date pedagogical practices to improve learning outcomes for all students. We have an established culture of continuous professional improvement among staff and the deep understanding of how students learn is shared. We strive to deliver academic excellence through implementation of the curriculum using contemporary pedagogy that is research based. At St James', we provide quality support for students with additional needs. As a Gifted Education Lead School, we have been able to identify our gifted learners and implement programs to help meet student needs. St James' is a 'Successful Foundations' school, implementing the Early Years Framework which focusses on the importance of 'play-based' learning to give our students a successful transition to school in Kindergarten.

Our school is set among the trees which gives us a point of difference and is uniquely supportive of the natural fauna and flora. Students and educators enjoy lessons and opportunities to learn and grow within our outdoor spaces.

We joined together to celebrate community events such as Harmony Day, Grandparent's, NAIDOC Week, Mother's, and Father's Day. All that brought that sense of fun, care, and community into our wonderful school.

Reflecting on the past year it is with pride that we saw our students and staff grow and achieve. As we move forward, we look to continue the good work and meaningful relationships present at St James', knowing that together we are living our mission, vision and values.

Parent Body Message

The parent body of St James' has enjoyed working positively and productively with school during the year of 2024. We were supported and encouraged to organise activities that enabled us to raise and spend money on the grounds and resources used by the students. We are thankful for the partnership with the school to make things better for our children here.

We held the usual fundraising activities throughout the year, including the Easter raffle and our Mothers' and Fathers' Day stalls. We also coordinated the Welcome BBQ and School Disco, an event that was thoroughly enjoyed by the children and staff who attended. These events provide opportunities for parents to gather and build networks within our community. We thank all of the parents and carers who gave their time to organising and coordinating the details of such events.

We supported the school through the purchase of many resources that supported and improved the learning resources available for our students. Equipment purchased included STEM Lego kits, Basketball hoops, creative arts resources and classroom readers. We have also been able to continue to offer parents the additional use of the Hall school to cater for an onsite playgroup.

Overall, a hugely successful year was had, and we thank the executive of our Parents and Friends' association for their service. We appreciate that the efforts of our parents and recognise the cohesive school community.

Student Body Message

Last year at our school was truly something special, filled with numerous memorable events and activities. One of the standout moments was the welcome BBQ. It was an afternoon of fun and community spirit. One of the most exciting additions to our school last year was the introduction of the robotics program. It provided an incredible opportunity for students to engage in creative and critical thinking through STEM. Working together, we built amazing robots designed to complete various challenges. The highlight was traveling to the Central Coast, where we showcased our robots' capabilities and marveled at the creations of other teams.

Another event that brought everyone together was the school disco. Held in the hall, it was a night of music, dancing, and excitement. The NED Show was another highlight of the year. It was not only entertaining but also taught valuable lessons about staying positive and

resilient, echoing the principles of our PB4L program. Throughout the year, our school held several important liturgies and masses, marking significant occasions such as Easter, Good Friday, Ash Wednesday, Grandparents Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, and the end-of-year liturgy for Year 6. These events were meaningful and brought our school community together in reflection and celebration. The Health and Wellbeing team also played a significant role in keeping us active and engaged. They set up fun obstacle courses that challenged us physically and mentally. Some parts were easy, while others were more difficult, making the experience both enjoyable and rewarding.

One of the most unique opportunities we had was creating a mural with Aspire staff. Working in the father Doran area, we were involved in every step of the process, from conceptualizing the design to painting it. The staff guided us, especially with the parts that were hard to reach, like the bird and some sections of the tree. The finished mural is a stunning piece of art that we are all proud of.

The Choir had a significant achievement last year as well. They performed at the Civic Theatre, competing against 17 other schools. It was their first time performing at the Civic as a school, and they performed three beautiful songs. The Year 5 Leadership Day was another memorable event. Students participated in various activities such as gardening, a scavenger hunt, team games, and creating a value shield. It was a day of teamwork, leadership, and fun. To top it off, we enjoyed delicious pizzas for lunch.

Overall, last year was filled with unforgettable experiences and opportunities for growth, learning, and fun. I'm already looking forward to what this year has in store for us!

School Features

St James' Primary School, Kotara South is a Catholic co-educational Kindergarten to Year 6 systemic school in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. It forms part of the Central Region of schools. St James' students' progress onto Trinity College, Adamstown at the conclusion of their primary schooling. St James' neighbouring schools are St Columba's, Adamstown, and St Kevin's, Cardiff. We are part of the All-Saints Blackbutt South Parish, belonging to St Philip's community.

St James' Primary School had its origins in Garden Suburb where it began on 31st January 1961. Two Sisters of Mercy ran the school in a building which was originally the operating theatre from the Greta Migrant Camp. During that year, the rest of the hospital was transported to Garden Suburb to form more classrooms and a temporary church. In 1963, the Parish of St Philip's was named with a disused colliery building in Kotara South being converted into the church. In 1974, twenty-four acres of land was purchased by the parish, opposite the church grounds, as the new site for St James' Primary School. It wasn't until 1981 that the school opened in its present setting. Our school continues to expand and grow. St James' has a very proactive P&F. Our parents enthusiastically run events throughout the year including Mother's Day and Father's Day stalls, and the Easter raffle. The school community enjoyed a Christmas Liturgy where the students entertained our families through music, dance, and drama. Our P&F meet the first Monday of every month at 7pm.

The school was able to host a number of celebrations including Harmony Day, Holy Week liturgy, an ANZAC service, liturgies for Easter, NAIDOC Week, a Grandparents liturgy, End of Year whole school liturgy and more. Inviting the community to share with us these celebrations continue to build the faith and strength of our school community.

The students of St James' had opportunities to attend incursions, excursions and camps in 2024. Year 6 thoroughly enjoyed their 3-day camp experience in Term 2. Other classes across the school enjoyed excursions to Tocal College, Hunter Valley Wildlife Park, The Wetlands and Net World.

In 2024 St James was excited to be able participate in the Regional Public Speaking and Spelling Bees, Public Speaking and The Diocesan Debating Competition. It was wonderful to be able to highlight these talented students within our school population. We are very proud of one of our Year 6 Debating team students who became the Diocesan Champions of the 2024 Debating Competition.

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
164	165	34	329

* 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 91.39%. 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
93.43	93.28	91.06	91.70	91.02	90.57	88.68

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	45
Number of full time teaching staff	12
Number of part time teaching staff	14
Number of non-teaching staff	19

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 James' is a proud Catholic school. We acknowledge the Awabakal People as the traditional owners of this land, forming a foundation for the Catholic life of our school. The Acknowledgement of Country at Monday assemblies, emphasises the school's respect for the Awabakal People and has become part of the culture of the school.

Our school values were adopted from the Mercy Educational Values, which are reinforced and embedded through Positive Behaviour for Learning across the school. Students are encouraged to articulate and model the school values through their everyday actions. St James' forms an integral part of the All Saints Blackbutt South Parish. The school is held in high regard within the Parish. Parish involvement in school life is highly valued and a great sense of community exists. Each grade attends the Parish Mass on a Friday on a rotational basis throughout the year.

The Parish Sacramental Program is always supported through the school with Religious Education programs being taught concurrently and various teachers volunteering as group leaders and as members of the Parish Sacramental Team. This year we had approximately 40 students who were part of the parish sacramental program to complete their initiation into the Catholic Church.

As a school community we had several opportunities to attend Mass and celebrate major feasts with liturgies and masses in our school hall. A number of other celebrations across the year included Catholic Schools Week, Harmony Day, Holy Week, ANZAC Day, Mother's Day,

NAIDOC Week, Grandparent's Day and Father's Day. We were able to finish our year celebrating the gifts of everyone in our community with Mass and Awards ceremony.

Our school and parish share a common mission to educate and form students as disciples of Jesus. We offer students experiences that develop them as members of the Catholic community. We do this in partnership with our staff, our parents, Parish Priest and the Diocese. There is a focus on practical community outreach and support for Catholic agencies such as Caritas Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society and Catholic Mission. The school fully supports the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, led by the Year 6 Social Justice team, through fundraising efforts, evidenced by the generous support of fundraisers for Project Compassion and Socktober as well as the amazing food hampers put together during the Winter Appeal and prior to Christmas. As well as supporting the parish, the Year 6 Social Justice team raise awareness of people who are marginalised and supported by Caritas and Mission Australia.

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.

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.

The Curriculum is structured around the outcomes and content for each learning area and general capabilities for learning across the curriculum including literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, critical and creative thinking, ethical behaviour, personal and social competence and intercultural understanding.

Last year a continued focus for St James' was set around improving student Mathematics skills with focus on the Number and Algebra strand including the understanding of Mathematical literacy with a focus on Assessment. The walks and talks conducted focused on this KLA and ensured feedback was given to staff around Learning Intentions and Success Criteria. We also ensured our regular Case Management Meetings and Professional Learning Teams (PLT's) had a focus on Mathematics and the implementation of the new NSW Syllabus.

As a school to compare the growth over the 2024 school year we had teachers implement the Number and Algebra assessments constructed by staff in 2023. These assessments strongly aligned with the new syllabus outcomes. The assessments were administered at the start of each term and formed and informed our data wall. This ensured time for student improvement to occur and a comparison of scores after the students once again completed the termly test.

Our pedagogical mentors' (PM's) led PLT's on a fortnightly basis and used the data obtained was central to the agenda of the meetings. Engaging staff in new resources, ideas, pedagogy and time to refine their programs in Mathematics assessment and vocabulary.

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 James 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	64%	54%
	Reading	71%	66%
	Writing	89%	77%
	Spelling	69%	61%
	Numeracy	71%	63%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2024		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	80%	65%
	Reading	87%	71%
	Writing	76%	67%
	Spelling	76%	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

In 2024 the "Tell Them From Me" survey was available for Parents to give feedback. From the feedback obtained the school community feels that their children are safe and are supported at school. The report indicated that there is an improved sense of feeling welcome and inclusivity. Indicators of parent satisfaction is also evident by the attendance at events held at school. We had very high attendance rates for Harmony Day, Holy Week liturgy, our Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations, Grandparent's Day, Christmas concert Gathering and our End of Year whole school liturgy and awards ceremony.

The Open Night in Term 1 for prospective families James' was a great success and at this community event we were able to showcase our school and extend an invite to new families. The school's Kindergarten orientation program was a great success and led by the Leadership team, Infants teachers and support staff.

Our school Parents and Friends association was well represented, and the monthly meetings were always productive and students/school focused. These members reported a keenness to help the school with purchasing resources and organising school events.

Student satisfaction

Students involved in the Year 6 Leadership team reported the 2024 school year to be productive, happy and fun. They felt their ability to run assemblies and talk in front of an audience had improved and enjoyed the chance to lead their school. Students in other grades were given surveys via Microsoft 'forms' to gauge what children thought about their learning inside the classroom. Student feedback was then shared with staff to ensure student voice was given and heard.

Students were given further educational opportunities should they wish to engage with opportunities such as ICAS testing, chess teams, Lego masters to name a few. Play spaces were looked at to cater for all student needs and the library open daily for quieter play and activities.

Learning walks and talks conducted throughout the year reported that student's (K-6) knew what they were learning across Key Learning Areas and how they were going to be successful in the task they were given. Students communicated that their peers, parents, and teachers would help them if they needed it.

Teacher satisfaction

St James' is blessed to have such a highly motivated, dedicated, professional staff. The high level of pastoral care amongst staff members is to be admired and helps support the great reputation the school has in the Diocese.

The staff value the professional development opportunities offered to them and are always seeking ways to enhance their teaching practice and pedagogy to improve student outcomes and wellbeing. The staff work as a team and support each other when challenges arise.

St James' staff value the partnership between home and school and recognise the important role that parents and carers play in the education of their children.

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	\$3,641,958
Government Capital Grants ²	\$1,007,123
State Recurrent Grants ³	\$965,660
Fees and Private Income ⁴	\$975,920
Interest Subsidy Grants	\$7,488
Other Capital Income ⁵	\$260,300
Total Income	\$6,858,449

Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2024	
Capital Expenditure ⁶	\$4,243,094
Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷	\$4,381,657
Non-Salary Expenses ⁸	\$1,809,841
Total Expenditure	\$10,434,592

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