

2024

Annual School Report

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TOGETHER IN CHRIST



St Joseph's Primary School

Farquhar Street, MEREWETHER 2291

Principal: Karen McGinlay

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

About this report

St Joseph'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

As Principal of St Joseph's, I have the privilege of leading a school where each day brings a diverse and dynamic range of experiences. From engaging in rich learning conversations with students to collaborating with parents, allied health professionals, and staff, no two days are ever the same. This year has been filled with many highlights, reflecting the dedication, talent, and spirit of our incredible school community.

Our Tree Tales school musical was a standout event, showcasing the creativity, humor, and talent of nearly 400 students in a truly magical performance. It was a joy to see them shine on stage, bringing to life a whimsical world through acting, singing, and dancing.

Academically, our students have excelled across many areas. Their achievements in ICAS and Newcastle Permanent Maths competitions, the Da Vinci Challenge, and ASPIRE initiatives have been outstanding. Regional and national success in Spelling Bees, Mathematics, and various sports further highlight their dedication and passion for learning and personal growth.

Spending time with students beyond the classroom remains a highlight of my role. From the Year 6 Canberra excursion and retreat, which offered opportunities for reflection and connection, to joining Kindergarten for a movie outing filled with popcorn and insightful discussions, these moments reinforce the strong relationships that make St Joseph's such a special place.

Exciting developments have also taken shape in our school environment. With the approval of the new Quad and Library refurbishment project, as well as upgrades including new carpet, solar panels, and improved facilities, we continue to enhance learning spaces for both current and future students.

Student well-being has been a major focus this year, with initiatives such as Well-being Mondays, Gratitude Circles, and the establishment of a student well-being team fostering a strong sense of belonging and mental health awareness. Our commitment to this area will only grow in the years ahead.

Another significant achievement has been the school-wide focus on spelling and morphology. Our staff have embraced professional learning in this area, leading to increased student engagement and enthusiasm for language. Watching our students develop a love for words and their meanings has been truly rewarding.

2024 has been a year of achievement, growth, and community. I am incredibly proud of our students, staff, and families for their dedication and support. I look forward to all that 2025 will bring as we continue to learn, grow, and thrive together.

Parent Body Message

The Parents & Friends Committee is filled with gratitude for the teamwork, dedication, and strong sense of community that make St Joseph's such a special place. On behalf of our parent body, we extend our sincere thanks to the teachers and staff for their commitment to nurturing and guiding our children. Their dedication to creating a positive and inspiring learning environment is truly valued by us all.

A key focus of the P&F has been fostering connections among families, and this year has been a wonderful success. From the vibrant Parents' Cocktail Night and the joyful Mother's and Father's Day breakfasts to the excitement of children's discos and the unforgettable St Joseph's Parents' Ball, each event has strengthened our community spirit. These occasions would not have been possible without the generosity of our families, the dedication of our events committee, and the countless volunteer hours contributed by so many.

We are also thrilled to celebrate a major milestone—the approval of the long-awaited School Library project. This exciting development will provide our students with a dedicated space to explore books, collaborate on projects, and foster a lifelong love of learning. The success of this initiative is a testament to the generosity of our community and the commitment of our school leadership.

We thank each family who has participated in P&F events and initiatives. Whether through attending meetings, volunteering, or supporting in spirit, your involvement has strengthened our school community. We warmly invite all families to join us in the year ahead as we continue to build an inclusive and vibrant school environment.

P&F Executive

Student Body Message

What an incredible year it has been at St Joseph's! As your School Captains and Vice Captains, we are so proud to reflect on the amazing experiences, brilliant education, and countless opportunities we've had throughout 2024.

One of the biggest highlights of the year was our school musical, Tree Tales! It was amazing to see so many students shine on stage, showcasing their talents through acting, singing, and dancing. The energy and enthusiasm were contagious, and it was a performance we will never forget.

Sport was another big part of our year. From the Cross Country, Swimming and Athletics Carnivals, we saw incredible determination, teamwork, and school spirit. Whether we were sprinting down the track, diving into the pool, or cheering for our friends, these events brought us together and reminded us of the importance of perseverance and fair play.

Excursions were a fantastic way to extend our learning beyond the classroom. Across all year levels, students explored new places, engaged in hands-on experiences, and deepened their understanding of the world around them. Each excursion created lasting memories and strengthened our sense of curiosity and adventure.

There were many opportunities to connect with God through school liturgies and Masses. These moments reminded us of the importance of faith, gratitude, and being a community of love and kindness. As a Josephite school, we proudly follow in the footsteps of Mary MacKillop, living out her values of service, kindness, and courage.

We have experienced an incredible year filled with learning, leadership, and laughter. Our teachers and staff have been guiding lights, inspiring us to follow in Jesus' footsteps, stand for what is right, and strive for excellence in all areas of school life.

As we prepare for the years ahead, we are grateful for the lessons learned at St Joseph's—lessons of faith, kindness, resilience, and a love of learning. The friendships we have built, the challenges we have overcome, and the values we have embraced will guide us in the future. No matter where life takes us, we will always carry the St Joseph's spirit with us, continuing to Learn, Love, and Live the Truth in all that we do.

Your School Captains Jack Jones & Jersey Firman and Vice Captains Joseph Cootes & Adelaide Morton

School Features

St Joseph's Primary School is a two-stream Kindergarten – Year 6 Catholic systemic coeducational school located in Merewether. Upon completing their primary education at St Joseph's most of the students follow the system's secondary pathway of St Francis Xavier College, Hamilton.

As one of two Catholic primary schools in the Newcastle Inner City Parish of St Benedict, St Joseph's has provided Catholic education since 1876. The Sisters of Mercy and later the Sisters of St Joseph played a significant role in its development. A girls' high school operated on-site from 1932 until 1983, after which it became a dedicated primary school.

The school has undergone significant upgrades, including classroom refurbishments (2007, 2018, 2022), a major playground redevelopment (2020), and the addition of new interactive boards (2023). In 2024, the Library Hub will be renovated to include an outdoor learning space, podcast station, and green screen, alongside the construction of a new COLA shelter in the quadrangle.

The school places an emphasis on authentic, contemporary teaching and learning practices, focusing on growth in student achievement in each Key Learning Area (KLA). The staff continually participate in professional development experiences to further engage students in their learning. Our staff consists of highly skilled, dedicated classroom teachers and assistants, as well as specialist teachers for Music, Learning Support, English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) and Library.

Co-curricular activities enrich student learning, including overnight excursions to Canberra and The Great Aussie Bush Camp, inter-school public speaking, Maths and Spelling Bees, creative arts opportunities such as the biannual musical and ASPIRE events, and various sports. Students can also participate in extracurricular programs such as music tuition, drama, choir, Mandarin and French lessons, gardening, and robotics. On-site before- and after-school care is available through St Nicholas OOSH.

Special events reflect the school's community spirit and Catholic values, including St Joseph's Day, Mother's and Father's Day celebrations, liturgies, Harmony Day, NAIDOC Day, the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence, assemblies, and creative arts performances.

The active Parents & Friends Association (P&F) plays a key role in school life, organising fundraising and social events. Parent communication is maintained through information sessions, the school website, social media, the Compass portal, newsletters, and meetings.

A strong partnership with St Francis Xavier College supports a smooth transition for Year 6 students as they prepare for Year 7–12 education, fostering a sense of connection and readiness for secondary school.

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
192	205	56	397

* 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 91.42%. 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
92.84	90.85	91.98	90.90	92.64	89.55	91.18

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	39
Number of full time teaching staff	13
Number of part time teaching staff	12
Number of non-teaching staff	14

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. Joseph's Merewether, a school grounded in the Josephite tradition, is inspired by the values of the Sisters of St Joseph. Our motto, "Live the Truth," reflects our dedication to the Gospel in all our interactions. We create an inclusive environment where everyone is valued, embracing the Gospel values inherent in our Josephite heritage.

Our vision and mission are to: Learn, Love, and Live the Truth. We promote holistic development, aim for academic excellence, and celebrate diversity. We cultivate a Christ-centred community characterized by justice, integrity, and peace. We are committed to social justice and stewardship, embodying our faith in God and our identity as the body of Christ.

Our Catholic identity is woven into every aspect of school life. We emphasise spiritual formation, incorporating prayer into daily routines and adorning classrooms with religious symbols. Staff members benefit from ongoing spiritual growth through weekly prayer gatherings.

The school launched a self-efficacy project aimed at deepening intrinsic spirituality and enhancing engagement with the Religious Education curriculum. As part of this initiative, we organised a staff development day where colleagues led sessions on various prayer styles, including prayer as ecology and prayer as music. Throughout the year, we participated in a range of formation experiences that focused on different types of prayer. This helped build teachers' confidence and understanding of the importance of prayer in our faith, enabling them to incorporate it into their classrooms to enrich students' faith lives.

We are also dedicated to professional development through the Pedagogy of Encounter curriculum, which meets students at their individual levels. This approach ensures that our teaching methods are responsive to each student's needs, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment. Teachers participate in workshops and training sessions to stay current with the latest educational strategies and practices, enabling them to create a supportive and dynamic classroom atmosphere.

Collaboration between our Principal, Religious Education Coordinator, and Parish Priest integrates faith into education. The Religious Education Coordinator assists in preparing children for Sacraments and fosters connections with St Benedict's Inner-City Newcastle Parish. Students participate in parish life and represent the school at community events.

We acknowledge the traditional landowners, the Awabakal people, and support the community through initiatives like Project Compassion, Catholic Mission, and St Vincent de Paul appeals, embodying the principles of Catholic education.

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.

At St Joseph's Merewether, we are committed to delivering a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum that meets the diverse needs of all students. Our teaching aligns with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses for Primary Education across all Key Learning Areas: English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and Its Environment, Creative Arts, and PDHPE.

Our curriculum integrates general capabilities such as literacy, numeracy, critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, personal and social competence, intercultural awareness, and digital literacy. We create engaging, challenging learning experiences that foster curiosity, resilience, and independence, enabling students to achieve their personal goals.

As a Catholic school, our mission extends beyond academic learning. We nurture each child's spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual growth. Through a strengths-based approach, we value each learner's unique abilities and provide a supportive and adaptable environment. Our teachers collaborate to provide high-quality learning, equipping students with skills like teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

We place strong emphasis on student growth, particularly in English and Mathematics. Professional learning ensures staff use evidence-based strategies, including:

- Explicit instruction in Spelling to build literacy foundations
- Exploration, adaptive reasoning, and problem-solving in Mathematics to enhance numerical understanding.

We monitor student growth through data walls and analysis tools, which guide targeted teaching. Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) and Pedagogical Mentors support consistency and continual improvement in practice.

As a Josephite school, we walk in the footsteps of Mary MacKillop, embedding faith across school life. We continue to implement the new K-4 Religious Education curriculum, focused on the Pedagogy of Encounter, which supports students in exploring the mystery of God and the Catholic tradition.

We incorporate research-based approaches to ensure meaningful learning:

- The Early Years Learning Framework and Successful Foundations project in K-1 to support early development through play
- Technology integration through BYOD in Years 4–6 and structured device use in K–3 to build digital literacy
- Gifted education opportunities through the Diocesan Virtual Academy and in-class extensions
- Personalised support for students needing assistance, delivered in-class and through small-group intervention

St Joseph's Merewether is a dynamic, inclusive, and faith-filled learning community. Guided by our vision, 'Through Jesus Christ, we Learn, Love, and Live the Truth', we inspire every child to thrive and grow as a compassionate and capable learner.

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 Joseph'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	80%	66%
	Writing	88%	77%
	Spelling	73%	61%
	Numeracy	73%	63%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2024		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	80%	65%
	Reading	89%	71%
	Writing	87%	67%
	Spelling	78%	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

Parental feedback on their satisfaction with St Joseph's has been gathered through electronic forms, emails, P&F meetings, and informal discussions.

Parents frequently express appreciation for the time and effort dedicated to school activities that foster community engagement. Events such as Mother's Day and Father's Day liturgies and breakfasts, Grandparents' Day, Book Week, the school musical, and the end-of-year Christmas picnic and performance are particularly valued.

The school's commitment to maintaining and enhancing its facilities has been acknowledged, with parents expressing gratitude for the ongoing investment in the school environment.

The high standard of teaching, staff dedication, and the level of care provided to students are consistently praised. Parents have also welcomed the introduction of a school Wellbeing Coordinator and student wellbeing team, recognizing their positive impact on student support and development.

Student satisfaction

Students appreciate the spacious and well organised classrooms, noting the ample learning resources, particularly in Mathematics and technology. They also value the school's outdoor facilities, including the soccer field, and the parish church for liturgical celebrations.

Students commend their teachers for making learning engaging, providing ongoing challenges, and supporting them in developing resilience. They appreciate opportunities for collaboration across grades and acknowledge the diverse teaching styles that cater to different learning needs. Learning support assistants are highly regarded for their guidance, and the school support dog is recognised for its role in promoting self-regulation and a calm learning environment.

Sporting events and gala days, are a highlight, offering enjoyable experiences that accommodate a range of interests. The MAT Life Skills program has also been well received, with students recognizing its value in building essential life skills.

The biennial whole-school musical remains a cherished event, providing an inclusive opportunity for all students to participate and fostering a strong sense of community among students, families, and staff.

Teacher satisfaction

Throughout the year, staff at St Joseph's shared feedback on school initiatives and practices through surveys, discussions, informal conversations, and written responses.

A strong theme across responses was the value of collaborative planning through Professional Learning Teams and staff meetings, particularly in designing learning sequences, assessment tasks, and student goals. Staff appreciated ongoing professional development, especially in Spelling and Morphology with Jocelyn Seamer, and opportunities to work in partnership with families to support students' learning needs.

There was strong engagement with community life, with staff highlighting the positive involvement of families in religious celebrations, sporting events, and the performing arts.

Staff also expressed appreciation for formation experiences, exploring new ways to pray, and working in well-resourced, high-quality learning environments.

Overall, staff reported feeling professionally supported and connected to the school's mission and community.

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	\$3,577,048
Government Capital Grants ²	\$0
State Recurrent Grants ³	\$940,816
Fees and Private Income ⁴	\$1,381,398
Interest Subsidy Grants	\$3,023
Other Capital Income ⁵	\$346,257
Total Income	\$6,248,542

Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2024	
Capital Expenditure ⁶	\$1,751,082
Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷	\$4,437,372
Non-Salary Expenses ⁸	\$1,896,452
Total Expenditure	\$8,084,906

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