



**Catholic Schools**  
DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

# 2025

## ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

SERVICE | LEADERSHIP | JUSTICE

TOGETHER IN CHRIST



### St Columba's Primary School

Lockyer Street, ADAMSTOWN 2289

Principal: Jenny Howard

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

[mn.catholic.edu.au](http://mn.catholic.edu.au)

## About this report

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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) which forms part of the broader system of schools governed by Catholic Schools NSW. 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

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### 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 2025.

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. Our core values of compassion, respect and hospitality come from the Mercy values and are central to all we do. The school recognises and celebrates God in everyday life. We strive to foster the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of each person.

The school acknowledges the partnership between home and school as vital in building a vibrant school community. 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 continued to successfully implement strong school and home communication, including student lead conferences as a part of our processes.

I would like to thank all involved in the St Columba's community in 2025 and look forward to the 2026 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 2025, the St Columba's parent body continued with the Parent Engagement Group (PEG) Model. Meetings were 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 regular communication from teachers, including initial meeting phone calls and the opportunity to participate in student led conferences, hearing about learning from the children with the teacher being present.

### **Student Body Message**

This year the students learnt lots of new things, some learnt how to do hard multiplication questions, others learnt multiplication facts, divisions, how to count backwards, count by 2's and many other things. In English, students across all classes did lots of writing and learnt about spelling rules and the history of words.

We started a new program at our school called Grow Your Mind. It is about improving our emotional literacy and using the right words for how we are feeling.

Our school ran many fun PE and sporting activities such as Basketball lessons for all classes and year 6 even attended surfing lessons in Term 4. Year 6 students learnt how to stand up on the board, and the surfing coaches were so nice and encouraging. Our school had gala days, carnivals and lots of students representing us in competitive sports.

We had many liturgies and masses this year, and Fr. Joseph visited the classrooms. We finished with a beautiful Year 6 graduation and end of year Mass. It was a great year to be a year 6 student at St. Columba's!

## School Features

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### 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 7 straight classes and 169 enrolled students. In addition to the seven classrooms, we have three demountable with additional outdoor learning space to accommodate our students for library lessons, music, dance and drama lessons, and a library borrowing space. At times, these spaces are used by our Gifted Project Officer and Aboriginal Education Teacher when working with students. We also have a small room caked the "Learning Hub" where are Learning Support Teacher works from.

Additional teaching staff include a Learning Support teacher who provides expertise in additional needs, supporting students and teachers across all grades, as well as two Learning Support assistants who provide in-class support for teachers, enabling greater access to differentiated learning. A Gifted Project Officer 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, we are committed to Play based learning for kindergarten. 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.

St Columba's Primary School mainly draws students from the suburbs of Adamstown and Adamstown Heights, Kotara, Merewether, Broadmeadow and Hamilton. 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 can select from Trinity College, Adamstown, or St Francis Xavier, Hamilton, for high school for their children.

# Student Profile

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## 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 2025: Additional information can be found on My School website.

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Total Students
87	81	15	168

\* 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.

## Student Attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for 2025 was 92.98%. 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
95.09	93.88	94.05	91.51	94.05	90.65	91.65

## Managing Student Non-Attendance

All schools maintain an accurate register of their student's attendance. Any absences (part or full day) from school are recorded on this register and appropriate intervention strategies are implemented if required.

While parents/carer are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their child at school, school staff, as part of their duty of care, play a vital role in providing a continuum of active support including universal, targeted, and individualised strategies when supporting students with attendance concerns. Documented attendance plans may be developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern.

## Staffing Profile

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### Staffing Profile

Note: The data presented reflects the most current information available at the time of reporting. Variations in data currency may occur where staff updates are pending. Differences between tables are due to variations in staff inclusion criteria; therefore, minor discrepancies in reported numbers may occur.

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2025:

Total number of staff	32
Number of full time teaching staff	8
Number of part time teaching staff	16
Number of non-teaching staff	8

### Total number of teaching staff by NESA category

Teachers are either accredited as conditional, provisional or proficient as defined by the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 (NSW). Accreditation at the levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher is voluntary.

The following table describes the accreditation status of teachers at St Columba's Primary School in 2025:

Conditional Teachers	0
Provisional Teachers	1
Proficient Teachers	22

## Catholic Identity and Mission

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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, and members of the Parish Office. The Sacramental Parish program is run with support from teaching staff and has a small level of school participation.

Our school Catholic Identity goal for our Strategic Improvement plan was: To increase the self efficacy of our teachers in delivering Religious Education lessons, in order to enhance the religious literacy across the school. 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 2025, school Liturgies or Masses 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

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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 embeds capabilities and priorities within curriculum content points in all KLAs. These include 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.

The curriculum focus in 2025 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 to identify students at risk or students who required extension and enrichment, and these were supported by ongoing use and analysis of data.

Gifted and High Potential students have been formally identified through diagnostic testing and differentiation of the curriculum has been identified as a priority for these students. A Gifted Project Officer 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

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### 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 2025 is reported in the table below.

NAPLAN RESULTS 2025		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 3	Grammar and Punctuation	55%	54%
	Reading	68%	66%
	Writing	95%	76%
	Spelling	68%	62%
	Numeracy	73%	64%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2025		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	77%	63%
	Reading	87%	73%
	Writing	84%	65%
	Spelling	74%	69%
	Numeracy	77%	69%

## Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing

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### Pastoral Care Policy

The School's approach to pastoral care and wellbeing is guided by the [Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#).

This policy provides a framework for the development and implementation of policies, programs, resources, and practices at all school levels. Its purpose is to support and enhance the wellbeing of students and all members of the school community, fostering a climate of care within a Catholic educational context.

The School is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and academically rigorous environment. A strong emphasis is placed on nurturing and maintaining positive, respectful relationships among staff, students, and parents, with the wellbeing of all at the forefront.

### Behaviour Management and Student Discipline Policy

The School's behaviour management and student discipline procedures align with the Catholic School's [Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#) and to the [Schools Behaviour Management Policy](#). These policies uphold the dignity and responsibility of each individual, promote positive student behaviour, and ensure respect for the rights of all students and staff. Corporal punishment is expressly prohibited at the School. The School does not permit or condone the use of corporal punishment by any School personnel or non-School individuals, including parents, as a means of discipline in the School. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the School's website.

### Anti-Bullying Policy

The School implements the Catholic Schools [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) which is adopted by all schools within the Diocese. This policy provides a framework for school communities to collaboratively prevent and address bullying, fostering respectful relationships and responding to individual needs with sensitivity and care. The Catholic Schools Leadership team 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 on the Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle website.

## Complaints Handling Policy

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) is implemented by the School and all schools in the diocese. This policy acknowledges that misunderstandings and differences of opinion may arise and provides a structured process for resolving such matters respectfully and constructively. By addressing concerns within a framework of dignity, respect and truth, the policy reflects the values of the Catholic faith and offers opportunities to model the love of Christ in contemporary contexts. The Catholic Schools Leadership team monitors the implementation of this policy in our schools.

The full text of the [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or on the Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle website.

## Community Satisfaction

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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 for the most part positive and supportive of the school:

- 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. 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.

Concerns were evident about classes where there were smaller numbers of one gender and this is something the school is looking at through enrolment promotion as well as through offering extracurricular opportunities for children.

The school is also looking at various methods of building community, promoting the school and improving communication.

### 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.

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.

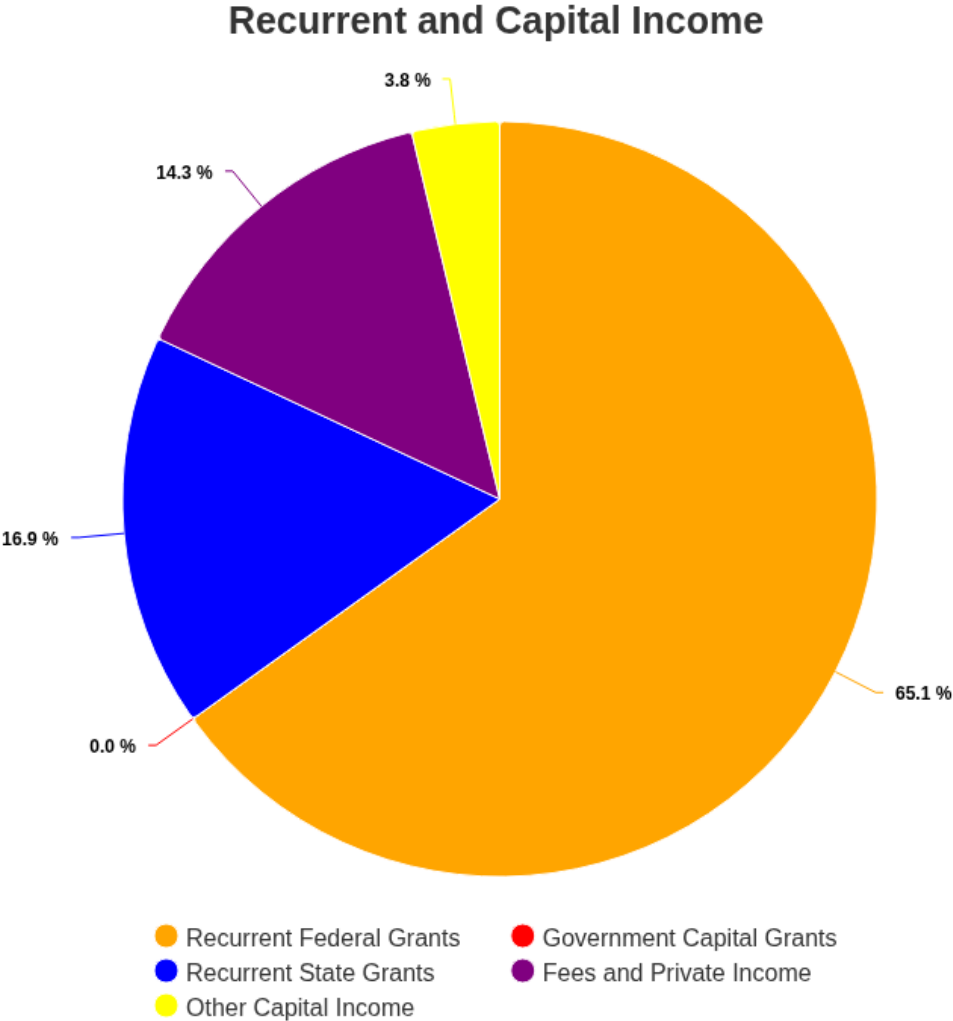
Staff are encouraged to share their skills and abilities and are committed to the welfare, growth and development of all students. The staff of St Columba's agree that the school has a strong Catholic Identity and that teaching and learning is of a high quality. Staff are welcoming and friendly. St Columba's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

# Financial Statement

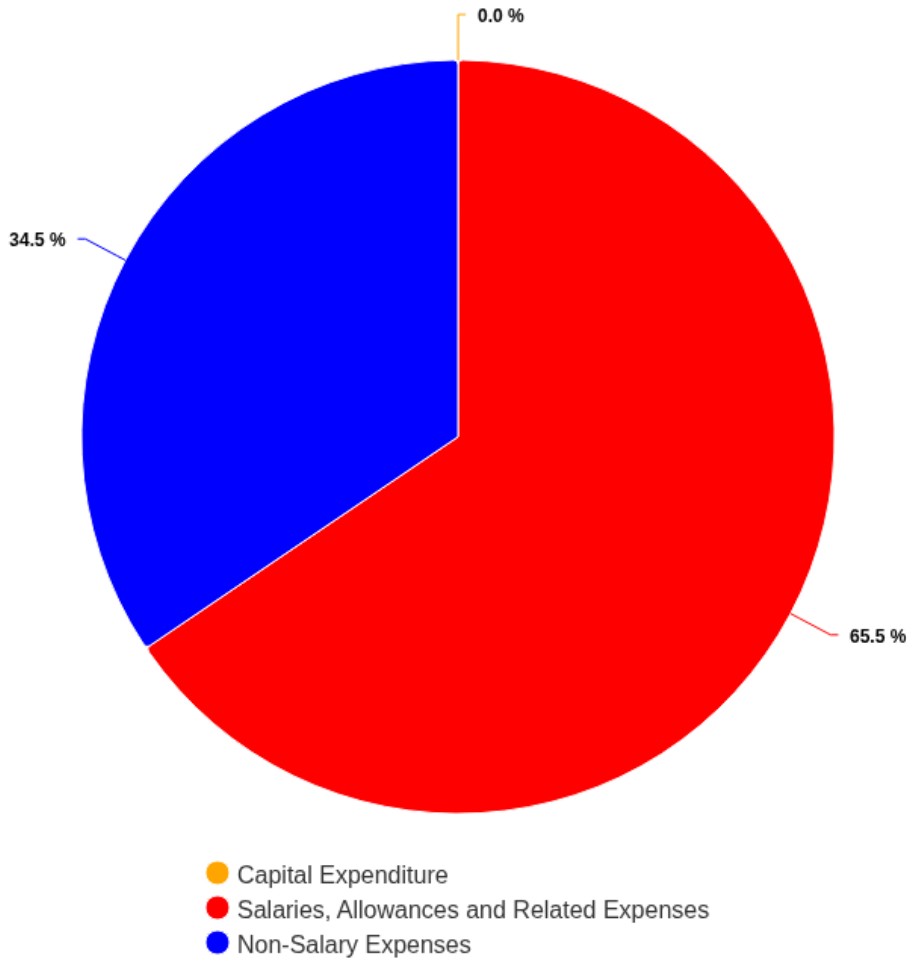
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This School Financial Information is based on the detailed information provided to the Commonwealth Government in the Commonwealth Financial Questionnaire.

School Financial Information for the 2025 year is detailed below:



## Recurrent and Capital Expenditure



END OF 2025 REPORT