

2025

ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

SERVICE | LEADERSHIP | JUSTICE

TOGETHER IN CHRIST



St Mary's Catholic College

47-49 Pacific Highway, GATESHEAD 2290

Principal: Brett Donohoe

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

About this report

St Mary's Catholic College (the 'College') 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 College community regarding initiatives, activities and programs which support the learning and wellbeing of its students.

Detailed information about the College'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 College directly or by visiting the College's website. Information can be also be obtained from the My School website.

Message from key groups in our community

Principal's Message

As I reflect on 2025, I do so with a deep sense of gratitude for the people who make St Mary's the community that it is. This year has been one of steady growth, careful planning and a continued focus on what matters most, the learning, wellbeing and faith development of our students. Grounded in our vision, we remain committed to being a place of learning, growth and hope, centred on the love of Jesus Christ.

Our Catholic identity sits at the heart of College life. Inspired by our Josephite heritage, we strive to ensure every student feels known, valued and supported. The call to be "ready to serve" is evident in the care, respect and inclusion shown each day.

As a growing seven-stream school, we continue to attract high-quality staff. In preparation for 2026, new facilities include a TAS Woodwork space, five learning areas, expanded Learning Support spaces, a second counsellor office, upgraded student amenities and air-conditioning.

A strong focus this year has been our re-imagined House system, strengthening belonging and identity. Alongside this, our commitment to differentiation, inclusive practice and evidence-based teaching, supported by consistent wellbeing practices, continues to improve student engagement and outcomes.

Parent Body Message

In 2025, St Mary's has continued to strengthen family-school partnerships through the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Forums. Held mid-term each term and offered in both face-to-face and online formats, these sessions have provided accessible opportunities for parents to engage with the Principal and Leadership Team. Unlike traditional P&F models, FACE focuses on open communication and collaboration, with parent representatives helping shape each meeting by gathering feedback and raising key topics. Strong engagement has also been evident through Information Evenings, Student-Parent-Teacher Conferences and community events.

Our parent representatives have also contributed at a diocesan level through Federation meetings, ensuring our community has a voice in matters of funding, policy, curriculum and Catholic education. Key information shared with families in 2025 included online safety and cyberbullying, social media age restrictions, support for diverse learning needs, and access to parent webinars, strengthening connection and informed partnership across the College community.

Student Body Message

As the Year 12 cohort of 2025 at St Mary's Catholic College Gateshead, we reflect on our journey with a deep sense of gratitude, growth and community. Our experience of high school has been unique, beginning in Year 7 during the disruptions of COVID-19. Many of us started our secondary education in isolation, missing important opportunities to form friendships and feel connected. Despite this, we learned early the importance of resilience, adaptability and perseverance.

As we moved through the years, we gradually rebuilt our sense of belonging. Through shared experiences such as retreats, excursions, sporting events and everyday moments at school, we formed strong connections with one another. These experiences showed us that school is about more than academic achievement; it is also about relationships, personal growth and community. Over time, we grew not only in our learning, but also in our confidence, character and sense of identity.

We are especially thankful to our families, whose encouragement and sacrifices have made our achievements possible. Their support has been a constant source of strength for which we are grateful.

School Features

St Mary's Catholic College, Gateshead, is a comprehensive Year 7–12 high school proudly serving Catholic families across the East Lake Macquarie region. Founded in 1964 by the Sisters of St Joseph, the College began as an all-girls Year 7–10 school and became co-educational in 1983, aligning with broader changes to Catholic secondary education across the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie region.

Following a Diocesan review, it was announced in 2015 that St Mary's would expand to include Stage 6. This transition culminated in the graduation of the College's first Higher School Certificate (HSC) cohort in 2019, firmly establishing St Mary's as a full Year 7–12 Catholic secondary school.

The College serves as the designated secondary school for six Catholic primary schools: St Paul's Gateshead, St Joseph's Charlestown, St Mary's Warners Bay, St Patrick's Swansea, St Francis Xavier's Belmont, and St Pius X Windale. Students from these partner schools typically comprise 65–70% of the Year 7 intake. St Mary's draws from a diverse community spanning the coastal and lakeside suburbs from Charlestown through to the southern Lake Macquarie region.

In 2024, the College committed to becoming a seven-stream school, with the first Year 7 cohort of 210 students commencing in 2025. Enrolments are projected to grow by approximately 170 students over the next six years. This planned expansion has sharpened the College's focus on long-term development, supported by a future-oriented Master Plan. This plan aims to deliver contemporary learning environments, including modernised facilities for Creative and Performing Arts, PDHPE, and student wellbeing.

St Mary's is grounded in a strong tradition of holistic education, complemented by a vibrant co-curricular program. Students are actively engaged in sport, creative and performing arts, debating, public speaking, chess, Landcare, environmental initiatives, the Science and Engineering Challenge, and leadership development. These opportunities have seen students achieve success at diocesan, state, and national levels.

The consistent success of our HSC cohorts, alongside strong community engagement and a shared commitment to continuous improvement, reflects the enduring vision of the Sisters of St Joseph. St Mary's remains a place where the dignity of every student is honoured, learning is nurtured, and all are welcomed in faith, hope, and service.

Student Profile

Student Enrolment

The College caters for students in Years 7 – 12. Students attending this College 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
497	492	56	989

* 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 87.49%. Attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance rates by Year group					
Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
88.64	86.95	84.63	85.36	88.92	90.43

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/carers 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.

Senior Secondary Outcomes

The table below sets out the percentages of students undertaking vocational training in their senior years as well as those attaining the award of Higher School Certificate (or equivalent vocational education and training qualifications).

Senior secondary outcomes 2025	
% of students undertaking vocational training or training in a trade during the senior years of schooling	39 %
% of students attaining the award of Higher School Certificate or equivalent vocational education and training qualification	100 %

Post School Destinations

Each year the College collects destination data relating to the Year 12 student cohort.

Post school destinations:

University: 46%

VET-TAFE: 12%

Apprenticeships/Traineeships: 18%

Work /Gap Year: 24%

Staffing Profile

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	141
Number of full time teaching staff	68
Number of part time teaching staff	36
Number of non-teaching staff	37

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 Mary's Catholic College in 2025:

Conditional Teachers	5
Provisional Teachers	2
Proficient Teachers	90

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)

In 2025, St Mary's Catholic College continued to strengthen its Catholic identity and mission through a deliberate and integrated approach to evangelisation, faith formation, and community engagement. Grounded in the Josephite charism of "Ready to Serve," the college fostered a culture where the person of Jesus Christ is central, and all members of the community are invited into a living relationship with God.

Students and staff participated in the rhythms of the Church year, including Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Advent, and Christmas. The celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation provided a focal point for the College's identity, inviting the community to reflect on Mary's "Yes" as a model of discipleship, faith, and service.

Prayer and reflection were embedded in the daily life of the College, supporting students in developing their spiritual awareness and capacity for contemplation. Retreat experiences, particularly the Year 12 Retreat, offered intentional opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of vocation, belonging, and their call to service within the broader community.

The College remained committed to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, providing students with opportunities to engage in justice-oriented action. Through partnerships with Caritas, St Vincent de Paul, and Catholic Mission, students participated in fundraising, advocacy, and service initiatives that promoted human dignity, solidarity, and care for the most vulnerable.

A key strategic priority in 2025 was the planning and development of a new College house system, to be implemented in 2026. This process reflected a synodal and consultative

approach, engaging key stakeholders - the Josephite Sisters, students, staff, parents, parish, and diocesan representatives. The house system is designed to enhance student belonging, strengthen pastoral care structures, and provide opportunities for leadership and participation.

The College continues the partnership with the local parish, particularly MacKillop Parish, recognising this element as central to the life of the Church.

Religious Education remains integral to the mission of the College, delivered through the Pedagogy of Encounter. This approach supported students in engaging with Scripture, tradition, and contemporary issues, while fostering respectful dialogue with other faith traditions, including Aboriginal spirituality. Ongoing staff formation ensured that educators were equipped as witnesses to faith and contribute to the evangelising mission of the Church.

St Mary's Catholic College continues to form young people as faith-filled, hope-filled, and service-oriented members of the Church, responsive to the needs of the world and grounded in the Gospel.

Curriculum, Learning and Teaching

Secondary Curriculum

The Secondary Curriculum follows the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabus for each course offered as required for Registration and Accreditation under the Education Act 1990 (NSW) and implements the curriculum requirements of the Catholic Schools in the Diocese.

The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are English, Mathematics, Science, Technological and Applied Studies, Human Society and its Environment, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, Creative Arts, Languages, and Vocational Education and Training. 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.

The Secondary Curriculum at the College follows the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabus, meeting Registration and Accreditation requirements under the Education Act 1990 (NSW), and aligns with the Catholic Schools Office (CSO) standards. It is structured around outcomes and content for each learning area, incorporating general capabilities like literacy, numeracy, ICT, critical thinking, creativity, ethical behaviour, personal and social competence, and intercultural understanding.

The curriculum complies with NESA's requirements for NSW Secondary Schools. Additional Stage 5 and Senior Stage 6 courses are offered based on student choice, reflecting the College's commitment to addressing students' needs. The College provides a diverse range of Stage 6 courses, including VET Frameworks, SBATs, and eVET patterns, to support growing enrolments and retention.

Learning Support Programs are led by skilled staff who understand students' emotional, social, and academic needs. Clearly established policies ensure access to the curriculum and assessment completion. The team also fosters student belonging and supports teachers with curriculum differentiation. Life Skills Courses are available for Stage 6 students with special needs.

The School Improvement Plan emphasises strengthening writing proficiency across the College by embedding effective school-wide pedagogical practices, as well as strengthening mathematical proficiency by embedding comprehension and problem-solving strategies. Teachers focus on leadership in learning and implement a consistent approach to embedding Learning Intentions, Success Criteria, Feedback, and Formative Assessment in all lessons,

fostering student independence. St Mary's has a strong focus on teaching critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, alongside literacy and numeracy development through data analysis and baseline testing. Professional development also targeted High Impact Teaching strategies to guide students from Surface to Deep to Transfer learning.

Technology integration continues to evolve with ongoing professional learning in AI as a classroom resource, particularly for differentiated curriculum. Staff received training on online learning environments, including Microsoft and AI tools. Additionally, students learn about the responsible use and application of AI, reinforcing digital literacy and ethical considerations.

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 Mary's Catholic College for 2025 is reported in the table below.

NAPLAN RESULTS 2025		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 7	Grammar and Punctuation	65%	62%
	Reading	70%	69%
	Writing	75%	64%
	Spelling	75%	72%
	Numeracy	73%	69%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2025		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 9	Grammar and Punctuation	66%	56%
	Reading	77%	65%
	Writing	73%	61%
	Spelling	75%	72%
	Numeracy	83%	66%

Higher School Certificate (HSC) Diocese

The results of the College's Higher School Certificate (HSC) candidature are reported for particular subjects. The table provided shows the percentage of students who achieved in the top two bands and shows comparison with results from previous years.

NB: A number of new syllabuses were implemented this year which means there was a change in either subject name and/or course number. For this reason, results from previous years may appear as 0%. Some courses no longer run and therefore will show as 0%.

The 2025 HSC cohort achieved strong academic results, reflecting the continued growth of the College's senior school. A total of 21 Band 6 results were earned across a wide range of subjects, alongside 151 Band 5 results, marking an increase from the previous year. Additionally, 16 students were recognised on the HSC Distinguished Achievers List, highlighting high-level academic performance across the cohort.

Outstanding individual success was evident, with multiple students achieving first in their diocese across courses including Mathematics, Physics, Software Engineering, Design and Technology, and Music. Student excellence extended beyond examinations, with nominations

for SHAPE in Industrial Technology, Design and Technology, and Textiles, and inclusion in exhibitions such as Art Express.

ATAR results were also impressive, with several students achieving scores above 90, including a highest ATAR of 98.1.

Overall, the results reflect a strong culture of commitment and collaboration among students, staff, and the wider College community, with ongoing analysis planned to further enhance future student achievement.

Higher School Certificate	<i>Percentage of students in the top 2 bands (Bands 5 and 6)</i>					
	2023		2024		2025	
	School	State	School	State	School	State
Design and Technology	-	-	40 %	48 %	86 %	20 %
English Extension 1	100 %	94 %	-	-	100 %	95 %
Legal Studies	36 %	43 %	18 %	44 %	57 %	18 %
Mathematics Extension 2	100 %	86 %	0 %	86 %	100 %	84 %
Music 1	50 %	69 %	71 %	68 %	86 %	29 %
Software Engineering	-	-	-	-	50 %	14 %
Spanish Continuers	-	-	-	-	100 %	26 %
Textiles and Design	-	-	38 %	50 %	82 %	20 %
Visual Arts	71 %	66 %	50 %	67 %	68 %	27 %

Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing

Pastoral Care Policy

The College'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 College 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 College'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 College. The College does not permit or condone the use of corporal punishment by any College personnel or non-College individuals, including parents, as a means of discipline in the College. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the College's website.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The College 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 College'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 College 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 College's website, the administration office or on the Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle 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 College has used a variety of processes to gain information about the level of satisfaction with the College 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

Feedback from parents and carers, both through the 2024 Tell Them From Me (TTFM) survey and ongoing conversations, reflects a strong level of satisfaction with the College. Parents consistently highlight the quality of care provided to students, the strong sense of community, and the commitment of staff in supporting both learning and wellbeing. Many affirm that students feel safe, known and encouraged to achieve their best.

This positive feedback is further reinforced by the continued demand for enrolment, with applications for Year 7 exceeding projections and sustained interest across other year groups. The feedback from families of our 2024 HSC cohort was also overwhelmingly positive, particularly for the support provided to students throughout their senior years.

Our Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Forums have strengthened partnerships between home and school. These have been well attended across the year, with increased participation when offered online in Terms 2–4. Parent feedback has been affirming, highlighting the value of open communication and opportunities for connection.

We remain committed to listening to our community and to inform our ongoing improvement.

Student satisfaction

Feedback from the most recent Tell Them From Me survey and the Year 12 exit survey in 2024 highlights a strong and positive student experience at St Mary's. Students report that they feel safe at school and know there are trusted adults they can turn to for encouragement and support. There is a clear sense of belonging and connection to the College community.

In the classroom, students describe their learning as engaging, relevant, and enjoyable. They recognise that lessons are well organised, purposeful, and supported by timely feedback that helps them improve. Students also acknowledge the high expectations set by their teachers and the positive learning environment created through strong relationships and mutual respect—something they genuinely value.

Importantly, students demonstrate a growing confidence in themselves. They take pride in their achievements, see the relevance of their learning to everyday life, and understand the importance of clear expectations in maintaining a positive and productive learning environment.

Teacher satisfaction

Teachers recognise the strong partnership they have with school leaders in creating a safe, orderly, and supportive environment where quality learning can thrive. They value the role of leadership in setting clear and challenging learning goals, and in fostering a culture where these goals are visible and understood by students.

There is a strong emphasis on collaboration, with teachers working together to design assessment strategies, share practice, and develop cross-curricular learning opportunities.

Teachers maintain high expectations and provide regular, purposeful feedback to support student growth. They draw on data to inform their teaching and to guide students in improving their performance, particularly in formal assessment tasks.

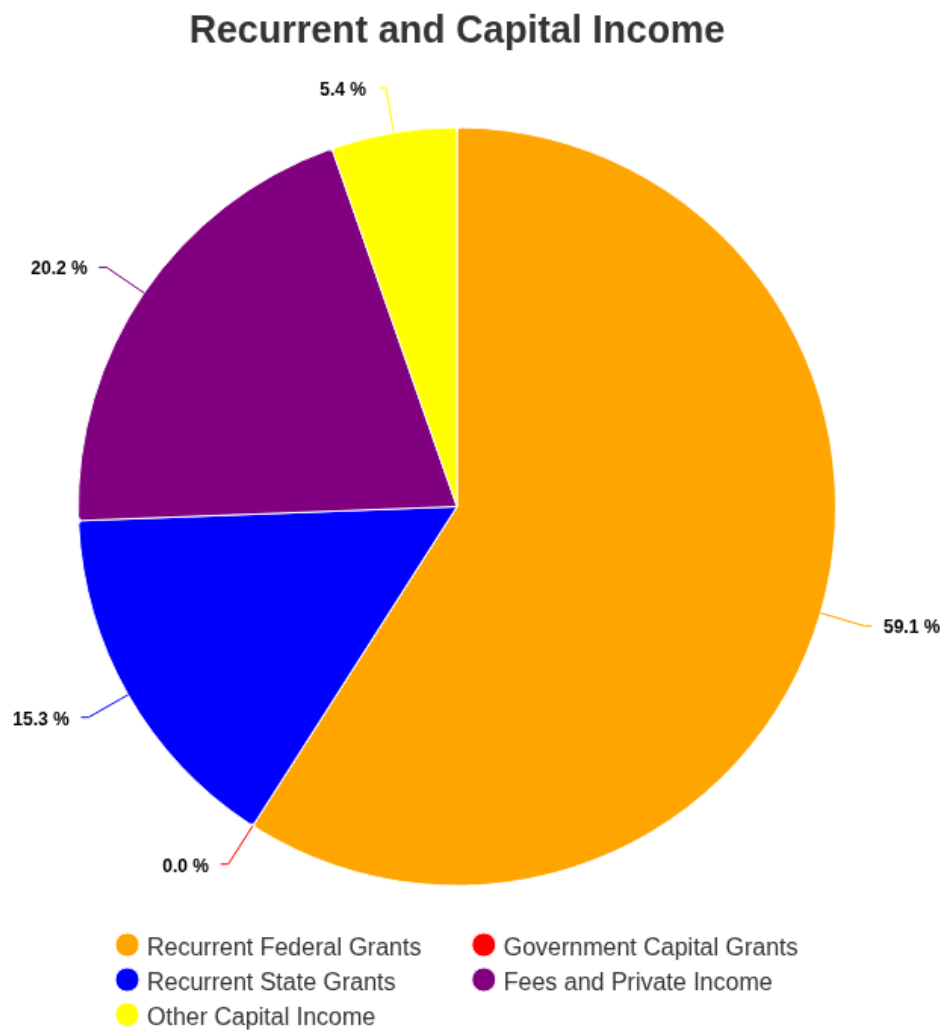
Collaboration also extends to supporting students in setting meaningful and challenging learning goals. Increasingly, there is a focus on the effective use of technology to help students analyse, organise, and present their learning.

Across the College, classrooms are characterised by clear expectations for behaviour, and students with additional learning needs are well supported through targeted feedback and inclusive practices.

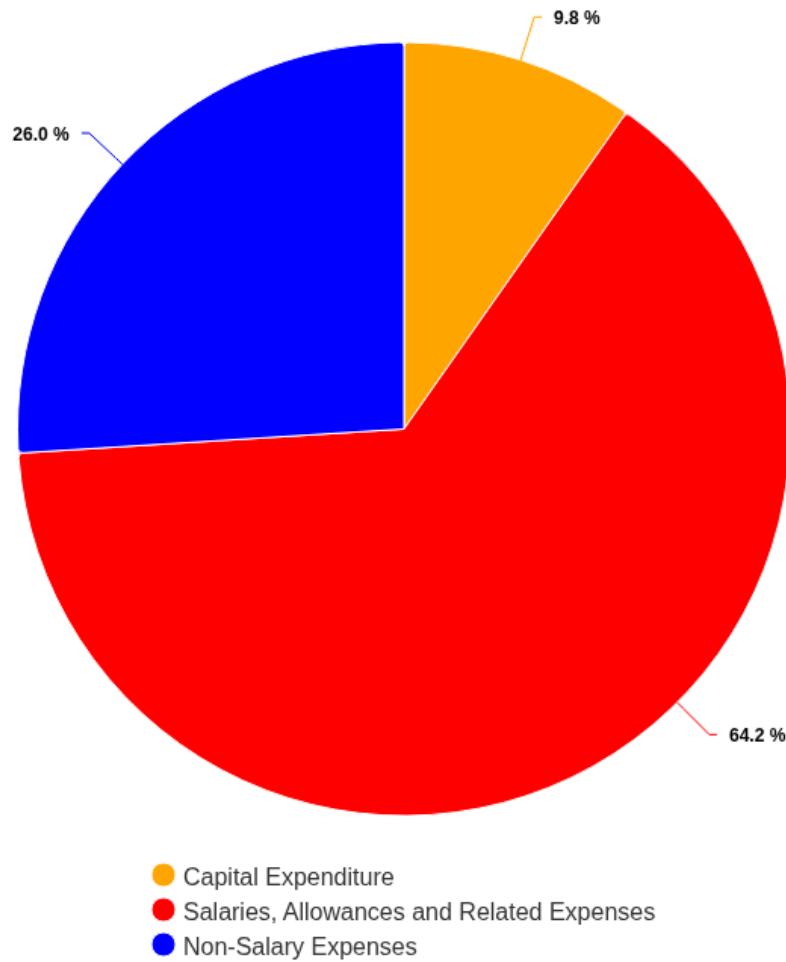
Financial Statement

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 2025 year is detailed below:



Recurrent and Capital Expenditure



END OF 2025 REPORT