

2025

ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

SERVICE | LEADERSHIP | JUSTICE

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) 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

Principal's Message

Reflecting on 2025 at St Joseph's, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude and pride in our community. The spirit of collaboration, generosity and faith that defines our school has been evident in so many moments throughout the year.

A significant milestone has been the continued progress of our Library and Quad building project. What began as a vision in 2021 is now close to becoming a reality. This achievement reflects the shared commitment of our Diocese, staff, parents—particularly our P&F—and the many families who contributed through fundraising. We look forward with great anticipation to 2026, when these contemporary learning spaces will be enjoyed by all.

This year, I was also privileged to undertake professional renewal, spending time in the Shetland Islands and Italy. This experience offered space for reflection and spiritual growth, and renewed my sense of purpose. Witnessing the richness of our global Church has strengthened my commitment to fostering a school community grounded in welcome, service and connection.

Our community has come together in many joyful ways this year. Events such as Book Week, Grandparents Day and the World's Biggest Morning Tea brought a strong sense of connection and celebration. The introduction of 'Play and Stay' mornings also provided valuable opportunities for our youngest learners and their families to build relationships within our school.

This year marks the conclusion of our P&F Association. I extend sincere thanks to all who have contributed over the years. Their dedication has played a vital role in shaping the vibrant community we are today. In 2026, we look forward to building on this foundation through our new Family and Community Engagement (FACE) model.

An important focus this year has been the review of our Vision and Mission statements. The thoughtful and collaborative process has strengthened our shared understanding of what we aspire for our students and how we bring this to life each day.

St Joseph's is a place where we strive to be warm, welcoming and supportive. It is a privilege to serve this community, and I look forward with great excitement to all that 2026 will bring.

Parent Body Message

The St Joseph's parent community is deeply appreciative of the strong partnership between families and the school. This partnership continues to play an important role in supporting the learning, wellbeing and development of our children. On behalf of parents, we sincerely thank the school leadership team, teachers and staff for their commitment, professionalism and care. The trust and collaboration between school and families is a defining strength of our community.

Throughout 2025, parents have remained actively involved in the life of the school. This support has taken many forms, including volunteering, fundraising, attending events and engaging with the school in everyday ways. These contributions help create the welcoming and connected environment that St Joseph's is known for, and they directly benefit our children.

A key focus of recent parent-led fundraising efforts has been the redevelopment of the school library and quadrangle. Parents are proud to support this important investment, which will deliver a contemporary and flexible learning space for students. The project reflects a shared commitment to fostering curiosity, collaboration and a love of learning, and highlights what can be achieved when families and the school work together with a common purpose.

This year also marks the final year of the St Joseph's Parents and Friends Committee, as it transitions to a Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Forum in line with diocesan direction. While the structure for parent engagement is changing, the spirit of involvement remains strong. Parents will continue to play an active role in supporting school initiatives and strengthening community connections through the new model.

We thank all families who have contributed their time, energy and support throughout the year. Every contribution, whether large or small, makes a meaningful difference. We look forward to continuing this partnership as we move into the next chapter of family and community engagement at St Joseph's.

Student Body Message

What a wonderful year it has been at St Joseph's! As your School and Vice Captains, we are extremely excited to reflect on the experiences, amazing education, and countless opportunities we had in 2025.

One of the opportunities we had was to run for the Student Representative Council (SRC). We gained leadership experience and developed skills that will be valuable in future life, such as organisation, commitment, and learning how to work with different people. This has helped us connect more strongly with our school community.

St Joseph's provides a wide variety of extracurricular activities, which help us expand our knowledge across all areas of learning and play. These activities include Chess Club, Lunch Club, Choir, Garden Club and more. There really is something for everyone!

Students also have the choice to join the Wellbeing Team or the Social Justice Team (SJSJ). These groups boost community spirit and give students the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in both the school and the wider world. These initiatives support and encourage students to embody Joey's Vision to Learn, Love, and Live the Truth.

St Joseph's offers a large range of sporting opportunities. Cross country, swimming, athletics and other representative opportunities build students' competitive and supportive spirit. Sport helps us grow, build resilience, strengthen teamwork, and create positive relationships with teammates and others.

Our school community offers many different excursions such as the Year 6 excursion to Canberra and the Year 5 excursion to The Great Aussie Bush Camp. These allow us to extend our learning beyond the classroom while strengthening our connections with others. Excursions also help students connect with nature and appreciate the creation that God has given us.

St Joseph's is a place of kindness and love. We value Catholic liturgies and Masses as times of prayer and reflection. These moments remind us of what God has given to us. We strive to follow in the footsteps of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, living out her example of compassion and courage.

We have experienced an incredible year filled with learning, leadership, and laughter. We thank our teachers for being a constant light, following Jesus' teachings and helping us stand up for what is right while being thankful for what we have.

We are deeply grateful for the opportunities and lessons we have received, and we eagerly look forward to what the future holds. Our time at St Joseph's has been enlightening and unforgettable, and it is an experience we will cherish for a long time.

School Features

St Joseph's Primary School is a two-stream Kindergarten to Year 6 Catholic systemic coeducational school located in Merewether. Most students continue their secondary education within the system at 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 contributed significantly to its development. A girls' high school operated on site from 1932 to 1983, after which the school became a dedicated primary school.

The school has undertaken significant upgrades, including classroom refurbishments (2007, 2018, 2022), a major playground redevelopment (2020), and new interactive boards (2023). In 2025, the Library Hub was renovated to include an outdoor learning space, podcast station, and green screen, alongside the construction of a new COLA shelter in the Quadrangle that enhanced the playground area.

St Joseph's emphasises contemporary teaching and learning practices, with a strong focus on student growth across all Key Learning Areas. Staff engage in ongoing professional development to enhance student engagement. The school is supported by skilled classroom teachers and assistants, as well as specialist teachers in Music, Learning Support, English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D), and Library.

Co-curricular opportunities include overnight excursions, public speaking, Maths and Spelling Bees, creative arts programs, and sport. Students may also participate in extracurricular activities such as music tuition, drama, choir, languages, gardening, and dance. Before- and after-school care is provided onsite by St Nicholas OOSH.

Community spirit and Catholic values are reflected through events such as St Joseph's Day, parent celebrations, liturgies, Harmony Day, NAIDOC Day, assemblies, and performances. The highly active and valued P&F has played an important role in school life. Building on this foundation, the school is transitioning to a Family and Community Engagement (FACE) model to strengthen partnerships with families and the wider community.

Communication is maintained through information sessions, newsletters, the school website and social media, the Compass portal, and meetings.

A strong partnership with St Francis Xavier College supports a smooth transition for Year 6 students as they prepare for secondary education.

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

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Total Students
189	198	56	387

* 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 92.02%. 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
93.12	92.68	92.30	92.53	91.12	91.97	90.39

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.

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	45
Number of full time teaching staff	13
Number of part time teaching staff	18
Number of non-teaching staff	14

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 Joseph's Primary School in 2025:

Conditional Teachers	1
Provisional Teachers	0
Proficient Teachers	30

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, grounded in the Josephite tradition and inspired by the Sisters of St Joseph, lives its motto, "Through Jesus Christ, we Learn, Love, and Live the Truth" through Gospel-centred relationships and an inclusive community where all are valued.

Our vision is to Learn, Love and Live the Truth. We promote holistic development, strive for academic excellence and celebrate diversity. As a Christ-centred community, we foster justice, integrity and peace, and remain committed to social justice and stewardship as the Body of Christ.

Our Catholic identity shapes daily school life through prayer, spiritual formation and visible religious symbols. Staff engage in ongoing faith development, including regular prayer gatherings.

In 2025, the school continued the Teacher Self-Efficacy Project to strengthen teaching and learning. Through Professional Learning Teams (PLTs), teachers reflected on practice, moderated student work and used clear achievement standards to ensure consistency and clarity. Professional Development Meetings supported Religious Education formation through planning and discernment tools, strengthening teacher confidence and collective responsibility for student growth and faith formation.

Formation also centred on renewing our Vision and Mission. Staff engaged in reflection and consultation with students, families and our Parish Priest to review and refine our shared statement. This collaborative process clarified our purpose and guided our Vision and Mission renewal.

Collaboration between our Principal, Religious Education Coordinator and Parish Priest integrates faith into education. The Religious Education Coordinator supports Sacramental preparation and strengthens connections with St Benedict's Inner-City Newcastle Parish, with staff supporting children and families throughout the sacramental journey. Students participate in parish life and represent the school at community events.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians, the Awabakal people, and support our community through initiatives such as Project Compassion, Catholic Mission and St Vincent de Paul appeals. Our commitment to social justice is strengthened through the St Joseph's Social Justice group, which leads students in putting faith into action through service and Catholic Social Teaching.

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 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.

As a Catholic school, our mission extends beyond academic achievement to the holistic development of each child. We nurture students' spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual growth within a supportive, inclusive, and faith-filled learning environment. A strengths-based approach ensures teaching and learning experiences are responsive to each student's needs.

Student growth in English and Mathematics remains a key priority. Teachers engage in ongoing professional learning to strengthen evidence-based practice, including explicit instruction in Spelling to build strong literacy foundations and high-quality Mathematics teaching that emphasises exploration, adaptive reasoning, and problem-solving.

Throughout the year, professional learning in assessment practice supported improved student outcomes, with a continued focus on data analysis to inform teaching. Staff developed shared understanding of backward-mapping principles to strengthen curriculum planning and assessment design, supporting a consistent whole-school assessment culture.

Backward-mapping processes were embedded in Mathematics and introduced in Writing through Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) and the Quality Teaching and Assessing cycle. Teachers collaboratively planned Writing units informed by assessment data, with this approach beginning to extend into other Key Learning Areas. A broad range of student assessment data, informed targeted teaching, unit planning, and next steps in learning. Pedagogical Mentors supported consistency of practice and professional dialogue.

In preparation for the implementation of the new HSIE and PDHPE syllabuses in 2026, staff engaged in targeted diocesan and school-based professional learning focused on syllabus familiarisation, curriculum mapping, and assessment alignment, supporting a smooth transition.

As a Josephite school, we continued to walk in the footsteps of Mary MacKillop, embedding faith across school life. Implementation of the Religious Education curriculum continued in K–4, grounded in the Pedagogy of Encounter, with preparation underway for Year 5 in 2026.

Research-based approaches supporting student learning and wellbeing included play-based learning in the early years, purposeful use of digital technologies, gifted education opportunities through the Diocesan Virtual Academy, and personalised support through in-class and small-group intervention.

Guided by our vision, “Through Jesus Christ, we Learn, Love, and Live the Truth,” St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School remains a dynamic, inclusive, and faith-filled learning community.

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 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	73%	54%
	Reading	83%	66%
	Writing	97%	76%
	Spelling	77%	62%
	Numeracy	78%	64%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2025		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	61%	63%
	Reading	76%	73%
	Writing	93%	65%
	Spelling	86%	69%
	Numeracy	68%	69%

Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing

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

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

Parent satisfaction remained strong, reflecting confidence in the school's direction, communication and commitment to learning and wellbeing. Families valued the supportive partnerships between home and school, particularly during a year of significant development.

The commencement and progress of building works in the Quadrangle and Library were welcomed, representing an important investment in contemporary learning spaces. Parent fundraising contributed to new library furniture and resources, enhancing the space as a welcoming environment for the whole community.

The Class Parent initiative continued to strengthen communication and connection, supporting engagement within class communities.

Parent participation in community and faith-based events, including Grandparents Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and key liturgical celebrations, remained strong. These events fostered a shared sense of belonging and Catholic identity with families expressing appreciation for the school's efforts.

Parents also acknowledged the leadership team's openness to feedback, noting that concerns were addressed respectfully and that parent voice is valued as an important part of ongoing school improvement.

Student satisfaction

Various student groups shared positive feedback about their experiences at St Joseph's.

In learning, students reported that teachers explain concepts clearly, set appropriate expectations, and encourage them to try their best. They value being supported and challenged, enjoy engaging learning experiences, and appreciate connections to real life, as well as the personal approach of teachers.

Students expressed appreciation for school facilities, particularly the playground and “big field,” which support a variety of activities. They value the range of equipment, welcoming classrooms, flexible furniture such as whiteboard tables, and calm-down spaces. Students also noted that staff respond to safety concerns.

Extracurricular opportunities were highly valued, including Gala Days, sports trials, excursions, the SRC, the MAT Life Skills, and clubs such as choir, garden and culture club. Students appreciate staff who facilitate these.

Whole-school events such as Book Week, Harmony Week, and the anti-bullying incursion were also highlights.

Overall, students feel there is “so much to do” at St Joseph’s and describe their teachers as supportive, welcoming, and committed to helping them thrive.

Teacher satisfaction

Staff satisfaction remained strong in 2025 reflecting a shared sense of purpose, collaboration and commitment. The collaborative reworking of our Vision and Mission offered meaningful opportunities to reflect, strengthen cohesion and reinforce a collective commitment to faith, learning and inclusion.

Professional learning was highly valued, with PLTs and PDMs providing time to collaborate, analyse assessment data and design focused units with clear summative tasks. Staff felt this improved consistency across classrooms and supported positive student outcomes. Targeted learning, including Essential Assessment and PB4L, further strengthened reflective practice and shared understanding.

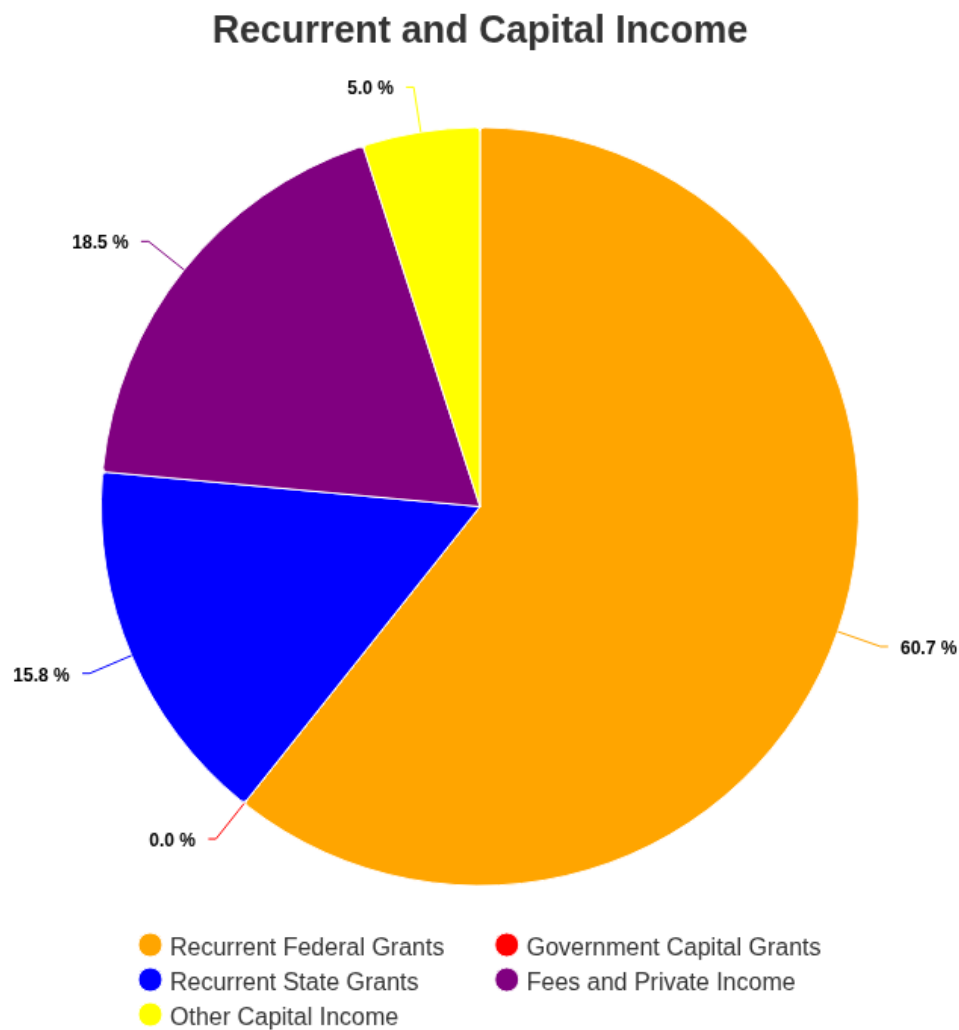
Student and staff wellbeing remained a priority. The introduction of a Professional Care Worker enhanced support for students and families. Staff noted a strong sense of collegiality and worked together to foster a positive, inclusive culture.

Clear and open communication supported staff engagement and strengthened partnerships with families and the parish community. Staff also showed flexibility and professionalism during the building project while maintaining focus on teaching, learning and wellbeing.

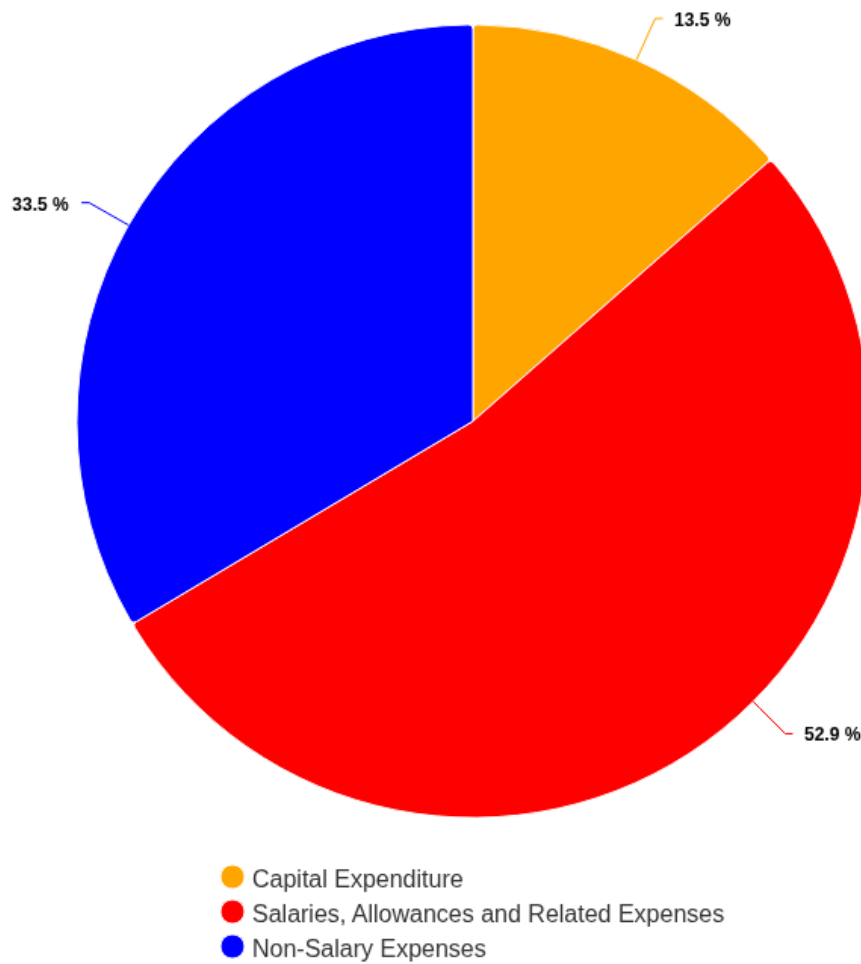
Financial Statement

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