



**Catholic Schools**  
DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

# 2025

## ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

SERVICE | LEADERSHIP | JUSTICE

TOGETHER IN CHRIST

ST JOSEPH'S  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
MERRIWA



ACTIONS  
NOT WORDS

### St Joseph's Primary School

4 Marquet Street, MERRIWA 2329

Principal: Mrs Anne Marie Peebles

Web: <http://www.merriwa.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

It is with great pride that I present the 2025 Annual School Report for St Joseph's Primary School Merriwa.

Our school is a small, rural community located in the Upper Hunter. Demographically, we are the furthest school from the Diocesan offices, yet we are never left wanting for support and guidance.

Our mission is to be a community of Catholic faith where the uniqueness of each child is nurtured and valued; where students are empowered and challenged to become lifelong learners with optimism and hope for the future.

This year, our students have achieved outstanding academic success, including placings in the Diocesan Public Speaking and Debating competitions, and representation in the Regional Spelling and Maths Bee. Two students participated in the Maitland-Newcastle Gifted and Talented Virtual Academy program, and two others were involved in the Aspire Young Scriptwriters program. Stage 3 enjoyed a week of creativity while attending the Upper Hunter Creative Arts project

In sport, students proudly represented our school at Diocesan and Polding levels across several events.

Our dedicated staff have continued their professional learning journey, embedding our Positive Behaviour matrix, planning for the implementation of new syllabuses—particularly HSIE and PDHPE—and refining contemporary collaborative mathematics practices. Staff have also continued to upskill in the new Religious Education Diocesan syllabus and units.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to all staff for their hard work, dedication, and genuine care for each other, our students, families, and our beautiful school community.

Looking ahead, we are committed to improving learning standards, behaviour, and academic outcomes throughout 2026 and beyond, as our school enrolments continue to grow.

### Parent Body Message

2025 has been a busy and successful year for our P&F and a significant milestone as we prepare for the transition to the FACE model in 2026. The strength of our parent community continues to shape the life of St Joseph's Primary School.

Our volunteers have shown exceptional dedication, contributing time and expertise to support students and staff. The Campdraft remained the cornerstone of fundraising and was another outstanding success, thanks to the combined efforts of our amazing community. Year after year, this commitment reflects the values we proudly uphold.

Alongside the Campdraft, the uniform shop, Mother's and Father's Day stalls, and the canteen, the event operated smoothly through the tireless efforts of volunteers, creating a sense of welcome and belonging for all families.

Financially, 2025 was strong, enabling us to fund classroom resources, library and learning support programs, and initiatives that directly benefit every student. These investments have made a tangible difference to teaching and learning.

Regular communication between the P&F President and Principal ensured alignment as we approached the transition to FACE. As the P&F Association's final year, our focus has been on supporting a smooth changeover. The groundwork completed ensures the FACE model is well placed for success in 2026.

I extend heartfelt thanks to our Executive for their leadership and commitment. To every volunteer and supporter, thank you for your generosity and community spirit.

As we close the P&F chapter and look ahead to FACE, I do so with pride in what has been achieved. It has been a privilege to serve in this role, and I look forward to supporting our community as we embrace this next phase together.

## **Student Body Message**

### **2025: A Year of Amazing Opportunities and Experiences**

This year has truly been incredible for St Joseph's, filled with outstanding opportunities and memorable excursions for every year group — including our colourful Kinders! Our teachers and staff worked tirelessly to provide experiences that students will cherish for years to come.

#### **Excursions and Highlights**

**Aspire Production at Newcastle Civic Theatre:** Students from Year 2 to Year 6 attended the Aspire production, which was absolutely amazing. The story centred on rebel citizens taking over the city — and in this case, the rebels were the heroes! We even had the chance to greet someone we knew who played an influential role in the production.

**Stage 3 Canberra Trip:** This was a standout experience! We began at Mt Ainslie Lookout, where the views were breathtaking. The weather was perfect throughout the trip as we explored Questacon, the AIS, the Australian War Memorial, and many other educational and inspiring locations.

High School Transition for Year 6: Year 6 students spent several days at St Joseph's Aberdeen to prepare for their exciting move to high school.

Gymnastics at Scone: After missing our first gymnastics lesson due to the Canberra trip, Nicky — our wonderful gymnastics teacher and close friend — arranged a special session at Scone, where we enjoyed using all the amazing equipment.

#### Gratitude and Reflection

I truly believe 2025 has been a wonderful year, full of opportunities and unforgettable moments. On behalf of all of St Joseph's, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude to every teacher, LSA, and staff member for their dedication and hard work in making this year so special.

## School Features

---

### History of the school

St Joseph's Primary School was founded in 1883 by the St Anne's Catholic Parish, Merriwa. In 1885, the Sisters of St Joseph took up residence in Merriwa and assumed responsibility for the children's education at the school. They were the first Foundation formed from Lochinvar, which had existed for only two years, in 1883. The Sisters of St Joseph continued teaching at the school until the early 1990s.

In 1886, the total enrolment was 77 - 39 girls and 38 boys. On 25th November, 1928, Bishop Dwyer blessed the new school in Marquet Street. In 1954, Bishop Toohey blessed the new infants' classroom, and in 1961, he blessed the new school building of three classrooms.

Secondary classes operated at St Joseph's Merriwa from the early 1950s to 1968. In 2008, the Honourable Joel Fitzgibbon opened the new Kindergarten classroom, and Fr Des Harrigan blessed it, giving the school a total of four classrooms.

In 2016, the school gained a new library with state-of-the-art facilities. In 2019, the total refurbishment of the student toilet blocks was completed. In 2020, the bell tower was lovingly restored after significant damage. In 2021, the new playground shelter was constructed, providing students with a safe place to play in all weather. In 2023, the playground equipment was upgraded, and at the beginning of 2025, the refurbishment of the Kindergarten classroom and the Mackillop room to enhance the educational opportunities for all students was completed.

For over 130 years, St Joseph's Catholic School has provided quality education to the children of the Merriwa district.

### Location/Drawing Area

St Joseph's School is located in the rural township of Merriwa in the New South Wales Upper Hunter Shire Council area. It is the most western school in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. Students travel from within the town limits and from outlying rural properties. This school serves the villages of Cassilis to the west and Gungahlin to the east. Although the geographic drawing area dwarfs other Diocesan urban schools, the population within it is small, as is the school enrollment (2025: 49 students).

Neither the small population nor the 180-odd-kilometre distance from our Newcastle-based Catholic Schools Office can dampen the St Joseph's School Community's passion for education. St Joseph's Primary School, Merriwa, is a small school with a big heart! Students

at St Joseph's are offered Catholic education from K-12. Students completing Year 6 can travel by coach daily to St Joseph's High School, Aberdeen.

# 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
24	25	4	49

\* 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 91.75%. 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
92.61	90.83	92.14	92.09	91.83	92.87	89.90

## 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	21
Number of full time teaching staff	4
Number of part time teaching staff	10
Number of non-teaching staff	7

### 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	9

## 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 Primary School Merriwa strives to be a community of Catholic faith where the uniqueness of each child is nurtured and valued. Our mission is to empower and challenge students to become lifelong learners with optimism and hope for the future. Throughout the year, students had many opportunities to celebrate Catholic mission and identity. These included daily prayer, the Opening School Mass, Commissioning Mass, and liturgies for occasions such as St Joseph's Day, Grandparents' Day, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. Stage 3 students, together with the REC, presented the Stations of the Cross to the school community, with parents invited to attend. In keeping with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope," students and parents deepened their understanding of pilgrimage by participating in a Prayer Pilgrimage. The passing of Pope Francis was respectfully acknowledged, and the papal inauguration of Pope Leo was joyfully celebrated.

Towards the end of their primary school journey, Year 6 students participated in a retreat to reflect on their time at St Joseph's and prepare for the next stage of their lives. Similarly, Year 5 students engaged in a Leadership Day focused on servant leadership—recognizing needs within the community and taking action. Whenever possible, the school community attends significant parish liturgical celebrations at our local church, St Anne's.

Each Friday assembly, students reflect on the Sunday Gospel and consider how its message applies to their daily lives. Parents are invited to join these liturgies and other celebrations. Staff also gather weekly for prayer, focusing on the Gospel message and its relevance to personal and school life. During Lent, staff participated in a dedicated program to deepen their spiritual engagement.

A strong relationship between the school and parish remains a high priority. During Catholic Schools Week, classrooms were opened to the broader community, showcasing the excellent work being done.

To keep families informed, an REC section is included in the fortnightly newsletter, and social media is used to highlight significant religious events and feast days. The school supported the St Vincent de Paul Society through Vinnies Day in Term 2, where students participated in activities organised by Stage 2 students, raising funds. Students also celebrated Catholic Mission by attending the Socktober launch organized by the CSO and hosting Mission Day in Term 3, led by Stage 3 students.

The Parish Priest maintains an active partnership with the Principal, REC, and staff. The REC works closely with the parish priest and students preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation. This year, one student completed their Sacraments of Initiation, a milestone celebrated by both school and parish communities.

## 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.

Staff at St Joseph's Primary School Merriwa continued to engage in relevant and meaningful Professional Learning, which built upon and aligned closely with the School's Improvement Plan for 2025.

Professional Learning Highlights included:

A Lenten Program was held weekly for 6 weeks, nurturing staff members' Faith Formation, according to the Catholic Schools Office, FEA Policy.

One staff member is completing further Religious Education qualifications on a scholarship from the Catholic Schools Office.

Pedagogical Mentor, Principal and staff attending professional learning with a focus on the implementation of new syllabus documents, particularly HSIE and PDHPE. The professional learning allowed staff to:

Develop an understanding of the new HSIE Syllabus – Organisation, Considerations, New and Revised Content

Deep Dive into system developed scope and sequence presentation with consideration on how this can be adapted to their school context.

Join and begin the work of the Collaborative Planning Team – to develop exemplar assessment tasks and learning sequences to deliver scope and sequenced content.

Be equipped to facilitate the PL and ongoing work in the schools in preparation for HSIE in adapting the system-wide support to their context.

Staff engaged with the Positive Behaviour for Learning Model, with Professional learning for the Catholic Schools Office of Maitland Newcastle and in-house ongoing training.

Termly writing samples continued and were marked collaboratively with the PLT partner and tracked on a data wall, as well as Acadience reading data.

Staff continued their pursuit of excellence and consistency throughout the year through regular Professional Learning Team meetings, where conversations focused on student learning and improvement.

## 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	80%	54%
	Reading	100%	66%
	Writing	100%	76%
	Spelling	100%	62%
	Numeracy	83%	64%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2025		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	60%	63%
	Reading	40%	73%
	Writing	60%	65%
	Spelling	40%	69%
	Numeracy	80%	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

This year, the school maintained steady enrolments, finishing 2025 with 49 students and projecting an increase to 53 students for 2026.

Results from the most recent Tell Them From Me survey reflect a strongly positive school community, with parents reporting they feel welcome and able to communicate easily with teachers and the Principal.

Parents indicated they are well informed about their child's learning and school events, and appreciate the timely, appropriate feedback they receive. Survey responses also show high confidence in the school's approach to supporting positive behaviour, noting that students clearly understand school expectations.

Overall, parents expressed strong support for the school and their child's learning, highlighting a collaborative and engaged school community.

### Student satisfaction

In the most recent Tell Them From Me survey, students reported strong engagement across several key areas of school life. Results showed high participation in school sport and a strong sense of belonging among students. Most students indicated that they put significant effort into their learning, and 31% reported having a high level of skill when working with challenging tasks in English and Mathematics. Students also noted that positive behaviour is consistently demonstrated across the school. Together, these results reflect a supportive, inclusive and academically focused learning environment where students feel connected and are encouraged to strive for success.

### Teacher satisfaction

In the 2025 Staff Engagement Survey, three key areas were highlighted: engagement, well-being and progress. Engagement scored 92%, indicating high levels of job satisfaction and strong staff commitment to the school. Wellbeing rated at 87%, reflecting staff confidence in

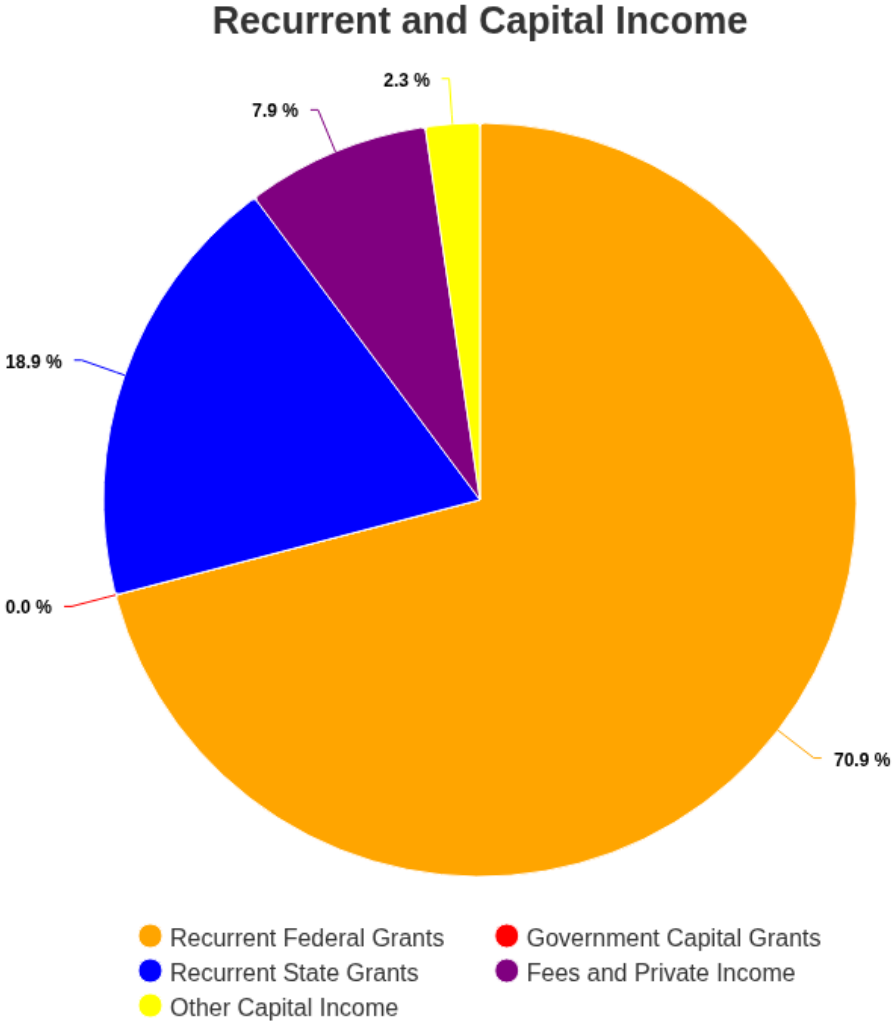
their emotional wellness at work and their capacity to manage job-related stress effectively. Progress, which measures staff perceptions of organisational performance and improvement, also fell within the high range. Collectively, these results demonstrate a highly positive and supportive working environment where staff feel motivated, valued and optimistic about the school's direction.

# Financial Statement

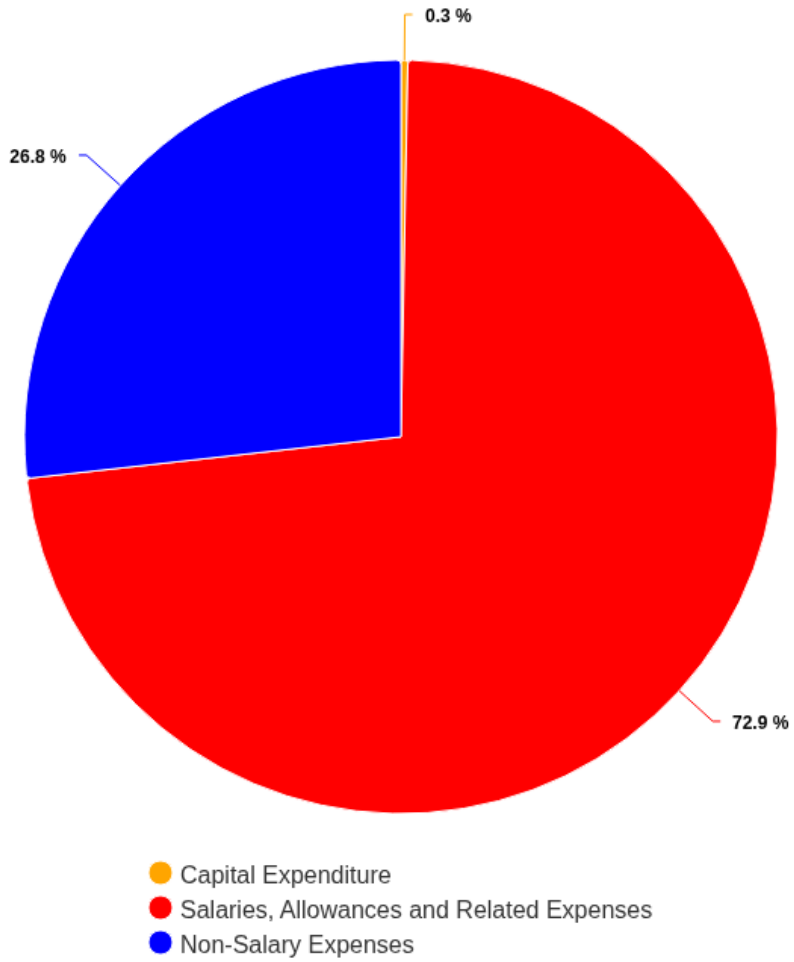
---

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