



# St Thomas More's School

## Mount Eliza

2020

## Annual Report to the School Community



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## Contact Details

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## Minimum Standards Attestation

I, Martine Verhagen, attest that St Thomas More's School is compliant with:

- All of the requirements for the minimum standards and other requirements for the registration of schools as specified in *the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)* and the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)*, except where the school has been granted an exemption from any of these requirements by the VRQA
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2020 school year under the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)* and the *Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)*
- The Child Safe Standards prescribed in Ministerial Order No.870 - Child Safe Standards, Managing Risk of Child Abuse in School.

07/05/2021

**NOTE:** The School's financial performance information has been provided to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and will be available for the community to access from their website at [www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au)

## Our School Vision

### **Our Vision**

St. Thomas More Primary School aspires to be a nurturing Catholic school that builds respectful relationships based on Gospel values and is committed to excellence in education.

### **Our Mission**

In our parish school community, we model the teachings of Christ through compassionate and positive relationships. We provide a sense of belonging and develop brave learners, spiritually, socially and academically.

### **Our Key Values**

#### **Respect**

We value individuals and accept differences; listen to others; use positive language; show kindness

#### **Collaboration**

Share ideas and responsibilities; cooperate and support one another

#### **Innovation**

Contemporary learning; risk taking; creative thinking; problem-solving

#### **Integrity**

Pride in self, learning and our community; making positive choices

## School Overview

St Thomas More's School is a Catholic Parish Primary School located in Mt Eliza on the Mornington Peninsula. The school was established in 1981 and is an integral part of the St Thomas More Parish community. We positively and actively recognise the strength of our vibrant community and are enriched by the partnerships between staff, parents, students and parish. We firmly believe that Catholic school communities are most effective when teachers, staff and parents work together to educate the whole child emotionally, academically, physically, socially and spiritually.

St Thomas More Primary School is set within a stunning bushland setting which provides a uniquely beautiful learning environment for our students. School facilities include dedicated Prep, Junior, Middle and Senior blocks where classrooms are spacious, bright and welcoming. In addition to these, the school has a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) room, a well-stocked library, a recently renovated multi-purpose area, a visual arts area, music room and Japanese room. A state-of-the-art gymnasium is used for PE, school assemblies and other special events. Students are blessed with extensive grounds that provide excellent spaces for outdoor learning, fitness and play. They include a huge grassed oval, outdoor basketball courts, two adventure playgrounds and plenty of shaded spaces for passive and imaginative play.

In 2020, there were 279 students enrolled at St Thomas More Primary School. Students were organised into thirteen classes from Prep to Year 6 with an average class size of twenty-one. At St Thomas More we identify ourselves as a community of learners where all students are personally known, encouraged and challenged by a dedicated, caring staff. In 2020, staff numbers totalled thirty-one, with twenty-one teaching staff and ten non-teaching staff, including six learning support officers, two admin officers and our Deputy Principal and Principal.

In addition to our Principal and Deputy Principal, positions of leadership on staff included leaders of Religious Education, Learning and Teaching, Student Wellbeing, Digital Technologies and Learning Diversity. These leaders supported our teaching staff to provide rich, contemporary learning and teaching programs based on current educational research and targeted to meet individual student needs.

At St Thomas More we strive to provide the best possible education for every student, within a Catholic framework. Through our learning and teaching programs students are encouraged to become resilient and independent learners who question, reflect, take risks, critique, analyse and act. Teaching programs are personalised to meet the needs of individual students and are based on the rigorous and consistent use of student data to ensure maximum growth in student learning.

Student learning is further enhanced by a wide range of specialist programs. In 2020, specialist classes included Physical Education, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, STEM, Japanese, Library and Outdoor Learning. Students also had the option of learning an instrument through a private company whose teachers attend during school hours.

Student wellbeing is of utmost importance to all at St Thomas More. Our key value of respect is taught and lived in every classroom and underpins all interactions in and around our school. A range of programs and initiatives also support students in the area of social and emotional learning. These include regular wellbeing classes, class meetings, social skills groups and lunchtime clubs. These initiatives and others ensure that students feel a strong sense of safety and belonging to school and provide the best possible environment for learning to take place.

## Principal's Report

In 2020, I began my career as Principal at St Thomas More Mt Eliza. St Thomas More is well-known for its Catholic ethos and values, its strong sense of community and its clear focus on student wellbeing and the education of the whole child. As a smaller school community, students at St Thomas More are all known as individuals and establish a strong sense of belonging to school. It is this nurturing environment and the school's positive reputation in the community that drew me to St Thomas More and these are also the reasons many families select St Thomas More as the school for their children.

At the commencement of the school year, staff worked collaboratively to develop an Annual Action plan that was firmly centred on obtaining the best possible outcomes for our students. Despite the many challenges that came with the pandemic of the 2020 year, I am very proud of the way we worked towards these goals as a staff and the many things we were able to achieve.

The 2020 year also began with the refurbishment of the Multipurpose Room and Year 3/4 classrooms. These fabulous works resulted in bright, contemporary learning spaces for our middle level students and a multipurpose space that is now used as a flexible learning space, gathering space, meeting area and as home to the Camp Australia before and after school care program. Much needed replacement of boardwalks also occurred between the admin building, Prep and Junior Units along with painting of many internal areas. Y2 Architecture was appointed to create a Master plan for the future development of our school. This plan will ensure our students continue to experience the best possible learning environment for many years to come.

April 2020 brought with it enormous changes in the delivery of learning and teaching programs as we made the shift to remote and flexible learning due to COVID-19. The months that followed brought with them unprecedented challenges for teachers, students and families. Staff at St Thomas More participated in extensive Professional Learning to ensure that the learning needs of each of our students continued to be met in this new mode of lesson delivery. As a school, we also worked closely with our families, seeking feedback from students and parents throughout the year and adapting programs to meet their changing needs.

When onsite learning finally returned for all students in Term Four, the wellbeing of all in our community was of utmost priority. Students were supported through a range of wellbeing initiatives both in the classroom and on the playground. Classroom learning focused strongly on the key areas of literacy and numeracy, ensuring students who had fallen behind were given the support they needed to catch up in their learning, while students who had made good progress continued to be extended.

We were delighted to be able to end the 2020 year with a number of special events for our students. Our senior students were finally able to experience the joy of performing in their Senior School Production, which was filmed and shown to families in our very own STM Cinema in the Gym. Kaboom Sports visited STM for a tabloid sports day filled with fun and high energy activities. Our Year 6 students received the Sacrament of Confirmation in small group celebrations lead by Fr Joe Truong. These students then ended their time at St Thomas More with a day of graduation celebrations that culminated with our traditional Guard of Honour to send them on their way.

While the 2020 year did not unfold as any of us had planned, thanks to the dedication of our staff and support of our families, there are many things that we can be proud of as a school community. We now look forward to what 2021 may bring. I am very confident that together we will rise to whatever challenges may lie ahead, keeping our students firmly at the centre of all we do.

## Education in Faith

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### **Goal**

Support students to form their Catholic identity, making sense of their lives in today's world and responding in encounter with Catholic Tradition and the school's faith community.

#### **Intended Outcome**

That students will make stronger connections between the school's Catholic culture and their own Catholic identity, their learning and their lives.

### Achievements

Whole school masses and liturgies are a strong component of St Thomas More school and help build connections between the Catholic culture of the school and the students' lives. Celebrating events such as the beginning of the school year, Advent and Christmas through either mass or liturgy, are crucial elements of life at St Thomas More School. The 2020 lockdown and subsequent COVID restrictions on numbers within the Church, lead to the development of live-streamed masses. Students who were onsite participated in masses which were live-streamed to families at home. Later, once students had returned to school, masses were live-streamed to the classrooms.

Staff engaged in professional learning on the Pedagogy of Encounter to further develop their skills in planning for rich units of work that depth students thinking and understanding through recontextualisation. Integrated Religious Education and Inquiry lessons are constantly being revised and improved as teachers build their skills. This was further enhanced during the COVID-19 lockdown with the release of the CEM TeachCool resources which provided teachers with sample units to guide them in their use of the Pedagogy of Encounter planning process. Teachers continued to refine the use of 'I can' statements that reflect the content and standards of the R.E. curriculum, and worked in teams to design assessment tasks that enable students' progress to be more accurately measured.

Learning from home led to the development of many new skills for teachers and this was evident in the use of various digital platforms to engage students in Religious Education. Teachers used Seesaw and Google Classroom as platforms to set tasks and receive samples of students' work in R.E. The use of Flipgrid and Jamboard enabled teachers and students to engage in interactive learning from home and continue the development of their religious education.

As a Catholic school, the Sacraments are an important part of each child's faith journey. In conjunction with the parish, students in Year 3 prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. However the introduction of lockdowns meant that most students were unable to receive this sacrament in 2020. Students in Years 3 and 6 were engaged in some home preparation for the Sacrament of Eucharist and the Sacrament of Confirmation. Unfortunately Year 3 students had to postpone receiving their Sacrament of Eucharist until 2021. Year 6 students were fortunate to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in the last weeks of 2020. Restrictions to parents gathering onsite prevented the usual workshops and information nights from being held, so parents were kept informed via online materials.

During 2020, St. Thomas More School also continued to develop social justice initiatives to follow the Catholic Social Teachings and make a difference in the world by being champions of change. Social justice activities link to our curriculum and are relevant to the context of the students'

learning. The integrated Inquiry/Religious Education units regularly embed social justice initiatives as part of taking further action. Fundraising initiatives to assist others in our world are planned for by students and build great opportunities for student response to the needs of others in the wider world. The experiences of COVID-19 highlighted the importance of thinking about others in our world.

#### VALUE ADDED

A sense of social justice is strongly promoted through the school's fundraising and charitable works. Whilst time at school, and the chance for activities was significantly restricted, the school was able to support the following:

- Caritas, through Project Compassion in Lent
- St. Vincent de Paul, through the Christmas Jars appeal (in place of the regular Christmas Appeal)
- Catholic Mission through our Footy Day fundraiser



## Learning & Teaching

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### **Goal**

Establish a learning culture of engagement, of self-regulation, challenge and growth.

#### **Intended Outcome**

That rates of learning growth in literacy and numeracy will improve.

### Achievements

The 2020 year began with a whole school focus on reading. Building on the work that had commenced at the end of 2019. The school received a grant from CEM (Catholic Education Melbourne) to support this focus. The grant provided our staff with the opportunity to work with CEM consultants who delivered professional development, while also providing funding for teacher release and resources. The key priority and focus for the reading direction was; "to improve growth in reading results by utilising the Fountas and Pinell program to develop consistency in teaching and assessment across the school." In Term 1 all classroom teachers commenced by assessing each student in a one-to-one running record interview. This provided a detailed set of data in the form of a reading level for each student in the school.

Part way through Term One, our school, like all others in Victoria, was placed into remote learning. Using the two preparation days prior to remote learning commencing, staff developed a home learning program that could be accessed by all families. The importance of having a consistent program across P-6 required a higher level of collaboration between teaching teams from Foundation to Year 6. The learning program was presented in a weekly timetable that included hyperlinks to slideshows containing the step-by-step approach to learning for that lesson. This learning program was well-received by students and parents as it provided an opportunity to complete the learning when parents were able to support their child or the student had the flexibility to work when it was convenient for them. The new communication smartphone application 'Schoolzine' was vital to the success of sending and communicating the learning program each week.

As lockdowns continued throughout the year, the home learning program was modified to maintain student engagement in their learning. Teachers used video recordings of their lessons, audio recordings of texts, hyperlinks and shared documents to present content. Teachers also offered weekly and daily check-ins using Google Meet to provide the opportunity to answer questions and support the wellbeing of their students. In Term Four lessons were provided on Google Meet on a daily basis to engage students and to further personalise learning, by offering group reading sessions and focused maths sessions. In seeking feedback from our parent and student community there was overall support and gratitude given for the work that teachers had completed throughout the period of remote learning.

Although the year was significantly interrupted with periods of remote learning, the learning leader team and teaching staff were still able to achieve a great deal of work in the area of reading. Regular professional development sessions were held with Julia Blakey and Donna Anderson from CEM online or when possible in person onsite. These sessions provided staff with research informed strategies for improving students comprehension when reading. Teachers were then better able to plan targeted learning opportunities for teaching reading based upon the student reading data obtained each term.

Throughout the year, teachers also engaged in Writing and Maths professional development in working with Learning Leaders or external experts. Teachers worked with Peter Sullivan, a mathematics consultant, to further develop their understanding of the use of challenging tasks in the mathematics classroom.

A new assessment schedule was presented to staff with a focus on the effective collection and use of data to drive teaching and improve student growth. The addition of a new Professional Learning Team Meeting structure meant that opportunities for regular internal professional development in literacy and numeracy increased. The benefit of both the whole school reading approach to reading and the increased opportunity to meet as a Foundation to Year 6 teaching team increased the collective teacher efficacy of the school. A consistent language and shared understanding of effective teaching practices developed across all areas of the curriculum.

Our Specialist program was changed in 2020 with the addition of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program, Outdoor Learning and Japanese. The shift away from a straight technology subject to a subject that offered a focus on problem solving and creative thinking in the STEM fields would further meet the requirements of the 21st Century learner. The Outdoor Learning subject was also provided so students had the opportunity to learn about sustainable practices and experience the great resource of our outdoor learning classroom and environmental trail to drive the learning experiences. The introduction of our new language Japanese program received much positive feedback from our students. Many enjoyed the introduction to the language and culture of Japan.

There was limited opportunities for external school sporting experiences throughout the year with many external events cancelled. During remote learning, sports lessons continued and, thanks to our Physical Education teacher's expertise in Karate, we were able to offer online Karate lessons for all students. These live-streamed lessons were a highlight for our families on Friday with many of our parents getting involved as well. Students had the opportunity upon returning to school to complete an assessment to receive their first Karate Belt.

Students also participated in engaging Visual Arts and Music lessons throughout the year and remote learning periods. Our new music teacher launched our first combined Year 5/6 production in Term One. Two performances of 'Seussical Jnr' were planned with a different cast for opening and closing night to allow for greater opportunities for students to take on lead roles. Due to COVID-19, the majority of rehearsals were completed via Google Meet throughout remote learning. Due to limits on crowd capacity, each performance was recorded as a film in the school gym with a very impressive backdrop. In the final weeks of the year, we were delighted to be able to invite our families back into school to view the show on a big screen.

Although the year did not go to plan, our staff, students and parents came together to provide learning experiences that not only provided growth in learning but also engagement in difficult circumstances. Our intended outcome, of achieving growth in numeracy and literacy, was achieved despite periods of remote learning and interruption. We are particularly proud of the intensive work our staff put into developing their knowledge of effective teaching of reading comprehension strategies and hope to see the benefits of this work in student outcomes for many years to come.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

As students did not sit NAPLAN tests in 2020, the end of year and ongoing data was used to measure growth of students. From the end of Year assessment it was determined that Foundation to Year 6 the school recorded an average of 41% of students performing one or more years above the expected level in reading. With the senior year levels accounting for a large percentage of high achievers. In Pat Maths assessments, 83% of students achieved at level or a level of one or more years above the expected standard. Results of Junior students were particularly strong.

End of year reading levels in the junior school are as follows:

86% of Preps reached the expected standard of level 5 or above, and 67% were at level 8 or above.

92% of Year 1 children attained their expected standard of Level 15, with 87% of students above Level 20.

At the end of Year 2, 90% of students had reached the benchmark level of 26 and 75% had reached level 28.

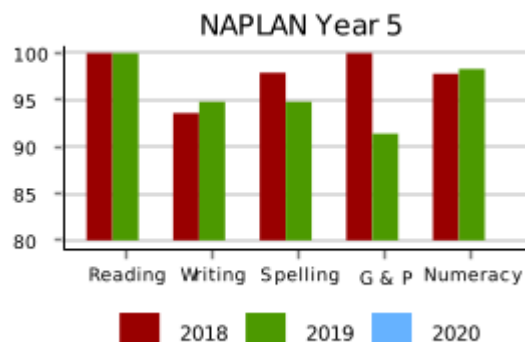
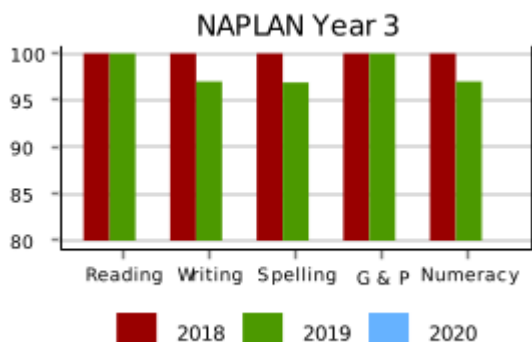
When comparing our 2020 results to those of the previous year, it was noted that a small number of students throughout the school had not achieved the growth that we would usually expect. In many cases, these results could be directly attributed to challenges faced by these students due to COVID-19. For students that did not achieve expected growth in 2020, a range of intervention programs have been prioritised for 2021.

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS MEETING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS					
NAPLAN TESTS	2018	2019	2018 – 2019	2020	2019 – 2020
	%	%	Changes	%	Changes
			%	*	*
YR 03 Grammar & Punctuation	100.0	100.0	0.0		
YR 03 Numeracy	100.0	97.0	-3.0		
YR 03 Reading	100.0	100.0	0.0		
YR 03 Spelling	100.0	96.9	-3.1		
YR 03 Writing	100.0	97.0	-3.0		
YR 05 Grammar & Punctuation	100.0	91.4	-8.6		
YR 05 Numeracy	97.8	98.3	0.5		
YR 05 Reading	100.0	100.0	0.0		
YR 05 Spelling	97.9	94.8	-3.1		
YR 05 Writing	93.6	94.8	1.2		

\* There are no NAPLAN results to report in 2020 as the Australian Government decided that due to the COVID-19 pandemic NAPLAN Assessments would not take place.

\*\* Data cannot be reported for this year as the number of students that sat the test was below 5 and the data has been suppressed for privacy reasons in accordance with the ACARA NAPLAN data reporting provisions.

\*\*\* No students sat the NAPLAN tests in this year level and in one or both of the relevant years.



## Student Wellbeing

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### **Goal**

Develop in students a strong sense of self in relation to others.

#### **Intended Outcome**

That students' strong sense of self in relation to others will promote their emotional wellbeing and engagement in their learning.

### Achievements

Student wellbeing is at the heart of every staff member's responsibility. The school has a genuine focus on whole-person wellbeing for its students and due to the impact of COVID19, student wellbeing was made the highest priority. The focus of relationship building and strengthening social and emotional development was at the forefront of all aspects of learning.

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) aligned in 2018 to the school census figures, determines funding for Students with Disability. Teachers used the Disability Discrimination Act to decide on a student category and provided evidence that adjustments had been made over a 10-week period to enable the student to access the curriculum. At St Thomas More School, there were 47 students listed across the four levels of need; quality differentiated teaching practice, supplementary support, substantial support and extensive assistance. The Learning Diversity Leader was responsible for ensuring equitable access to the curriculum for these students.

An important aspect of student wellbeing is ensuring a smooth transition for students at the beginning of the year. Our ongoing wellbeing tracking system, enabled class teachers to share information regarding social and emotional wellbeing, family situations and strategies used for students with behaviour or emotional issues. A new procedure was outlined and established for referring students for extra Wellbeing support and individual class tracking tools for referring students continued to be utilised. Monitoring of students in the schoolyard was documented, regularly checked, analysed and shared with staff to action.

A Wellbeing Team consisting of nine members was established to provide support for staff and students. The team proposed, monitored and evaluated the strategies used for each identified case especially each time the students returned to school after lockdown. The services of a clinical psychologist supported the wellbeing of high needs students and their families throughout lockdown as well as when the students were able to return to school.

Teaching staff implemented units of learning incorporating some aspects of the Bounce Back, Catching On and Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships programs and regular class meetings. A whole school unit called 'Learning to Learn', undertaken during the first few weeks of the year, explored the school values and learning dispositions in detail. Extra lessons with a wellbeing focus were included this year, both during onsite and offsite learning, and staff held regular Google Meets with their classes to build connections with students and support student relationships, when learning at home. The Wellbeing programs across the school for the past two years were audited and a need for a more sequential program was identified. In response to this, plans to incorporate The Resilience Project were initiated and meetings for implementation were held in Term 4. This project to support mental health and wellbeing for students, families and staff is scheduled to begin at the start of 2021.

Professional learning from The Berry Street Education Model was incorporated to:

- support staff understanding and identification of trauma and stress
- develop strategies to aid students with self-regulation
- develop strategies to enable students to be present and ready to learn
- provide practical suggestions to support classroom programs

At lunchtime in Term Four, staff provided a range of activities to promote student connections, friendships and social skills. There were opportunities for gardening, skipping, bush walking and ball games. This initiative was targeted to, but not restricted to, students experiencing friendship issues, and was well-received.

The school provided a safe environment for all students as well as providing avenues for connecting students with their school, staff and peers. Regular onsite or Google unit meetings enhanced and addressed safety and wellbeing issues. Other avenues during Term One included whole class and whole school assemblies, student wellbeing leaders organising lunchtime games and a buddy system in which Year 5 students buddied with Prep students. During Term Four, Google Meet assemblies and liturgies supported student connections. During lockdown, the Wellbeing Leader visited the onsite students at school at least three days per week and continued to connect with offsite students via email and by making individual screencast videos. Following each big lockdown, the Wellbeing Leader visited all students in their classes weekly. Extra support for parents was provided through newsletter items to support family wellbeing due to the extreme challenges presented this year. 'STM News' was established and the videos sent home regularly.

A student safety survey conducted with the Year 5/6 students during Term Four. It revealed that the students were feeling safe and connected now that they were able to reconnect at school. They were feeling supported by teachers and peers. The data was not dissimilar to that from the previous two years, despite the challenges of 2020, affirming the extra efforts taken by the school to support student wellbeing.

#### VALUE ADDED

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to discuss concerns for students
- Clinical psychologist supports high need students and their families
- Learning Support Officers create social stories for students experiencing issues inside the classrooms and outside in the playground
- Class Google Meets established and used regularly to support student to student and student to teacher connections
- Fun staff videos were made to support wellbeing connections between families and staff
- 'STM News' was established and student leaders presented many items which helped support school/home connections
- Student Representative Council (SRC) members met regularly with the Deputy Principal and Wellbeing Leader to discuss issues related to student wellbeing

- SRC students designed a gratitude slogan for the school and used it when making the final 'STM News' of the year
- Regular notices were placed in the newsletter regarding wellbeing of students
- Berry Street Education Model professional learning was provided for all staff
- Audit of Wellbeing programs to give direction to forward planning
- Student Safety Survey conducted for all students from Years 3-6 and analysed by all staff
- Maths Olympiad was reimaged for students who require extra challenge in Maths and held in Term 4 for 29 students from Years 4, 5 and 6
- Outreach program continued to provide meals and support to families experiencing difficulties through sickness or injury

## STUDENT SATISFACTION

Student wellbeing data was collected in November 2020. Feedback was collected from 92 students in Years 3-6. Responses were as follows:

- 84% of students indicated that they feel they belong at St Thomas More
- 92% of the surveyed students feel safe with their class
- 88% of the surveyed students feel safe on the schoolyard

These results were echoed in many of the student explanations of their scores:

"I fell very safe at this school and I feel that I belong because there are so many teachers and peers that I can trust because they make me feel cared for and happy!"

"STM is a really great school with a welcoming community."

"Everyone is very welcoming and I feel that everyone is very supportive"

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Attendance at St Thomas More's continues to be closely monitored electronically. Late arrivals and early departures are required to sign in or out at the office. To ensure safety of all students, an automated system is in place to communicate with parents when their child is absent from school. Any unexplained absence is followed up on the morning of the absence via phone call to parents.

During periods of lockdown in 2020, parents were asked to contact the school to advise when their child would be absent from remote learning programs. When children did not attend scheduled Google Meets, parents were contacted by school staff to establish whether children were actively participating in their remote learning that day or were to be marked absent. All student absences were recorded in nForma.

AVERAGE STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE BY YEAR LEVEL	
Y01	95.3%
Y02	95.9%
Y03	96.9%
Y04	97.4%
Y05	96.8%
Y06	97.7%
Overall average attendance	96.7%



## Child Safe Standards

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

St Thomas More Parish Primary School continues to hold the care, safety and wellbeing of students as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. St Thomas More Parish Primary School acknowledges that creating a child-safe environment is a dynamic process that involves active participation and a shared responsibility from all within the school community.

Throughout 2020, our school has sought to further embed its child safety strategies through the ongoing review and implementation of policies and practices. Professional boundaries have been reinforced with all staff members and volunteers, as has obligations regarding the protection and reporting of allegations or disclosures of abuse. We take into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

### Achievements

- Regular presentations and information provided for staff on the school's Child Safety strategy with a focus on classroom and student management, duty of care, reporting requirements and the Child Safety Standards.
- Regular meetings of the Child Safety Team and Student Wellbeing Team identify and discuss child safety concerns.
- Staff and Parish Education Board review and sign the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct annually.
- Student representatives involved in the annual review of the 'STM Child Friendly Code of Conduct'.
- All staff complete the Victorian Department of Education and Training online Mandatory Reporting modules annually.
- Display of, and access to, 'PROTECT, Identifying and Responding to all Forms of Abuse in Victorian School' resources for staff.
- Child Safety Information and concerns discussed at Parish Education Board Meetings.
- Introduction of Passtab to induct and digitally track all visitors and volunteers to our school and to maintain current records of Working with Children Checks.
- All volunteers and visitors required to sign in via Passtab and agree to the school's Code of Conduct.
- Review and distribution of Cyber Safety Policies and ICT User Agreements to parents and students, including newly developed Video Conferencing Policies.
- Child safety risk assessments completed prior to all school excursions and camps.
- Level Two first aid training for all staff.
- Continued implementation of essential child safety protocols when recruiting and inducting new staff.
- Regular wellbeing lessons ensure ongoing education is provided for students about healthy and respectful relationships.

## Leadership & Management

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### **Goal**

Develop a school-wide performance development culture committed to improving student learning and wellbeing.

#### **Intended Outcomes**

That all staff are clearer about their roles and responsibilities and the expectations of them.

That staff capacity to improve their professional practice is strengthened.

### Achievements

Positions of Leadership were allocated in 2019 for a 2-year period to effectively address the goals of the School Improvement Plan. These included an Education in Faith Leader, Wellbeing Leader and Learning Diversity Leader, as well as a Learning and Teaching Leadership Team consisting of a Learning and Teaching Coordinator and two Learning Leaders.

- The School Leadership Team met regularly throughout 2020 to monitor and plan for the implementation of the School Improvement Plan. The implementation of effective remote learning programs was also a regular agenda item.
- Biannual review meetings were implemented for staff in 2020. These meetings use the AITSL Standards together with school-based initiatives to provide feedback, set goals and determine future direction.
- A weekly staff memo that covered administrative matters and included important information from leaders was introduced.
- Professional learning team meetings and/or level meetings were held twice weekly with a focus on expert learning and teaching.
- Intensive professional learning for staff also took place in the area of Reading with the support of specialist advisors from Catholic Education Melbourne in facilitated planning sessions.
- Resources to support learning were continually updated as a result of requests by staff as they strove for best practice in learning and teaching.
- Staff participated in annual training in their legal obligations in OH&S, Mandatory Reporting, anaphylaxis and first aid training, the Disabilities Discrimination Act, and also in emergency management through the service provider Dynamiq.
- School Leadership Team members attended relevant network days and external professional learning relevant to their roles.
- Individual staff were also involved in specific professional learning suited to their developmental needs and the needs of their students.
- Building student leadership continued to be a priority during 2020 and our student leaders were provided with a unique opportunity to showcase their leadership during lockdown in our fortnightly 'STM News Program'.

**EXPENDITURE AND TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

Description of Professional Learning undertaken in 2020

- Mandatory Reporting & Child Safety Training
- Emergency Management
- First Aid
- Disability Standards for Education
- Ongoing Reading PL facilitated by CEM Literacy Advisors
- Unpacking the Learning Cycle and the Literacy Toolkit
- Effective Strategies for Remote and Flexible Learning
- Online Tools for Learning including Seesaw, Google Meets, etc
- Introduction to nWellbeing
- Using Challenging Mathematical Tasks facilitated by Prof Peter Sullivan
- Wellbeing PL using Berry Street Educational Model
- Smart Spelling
- Religious Education - The Pedagogy of Encounter
- Developing Rich Inquiry Units
- Introduction to the Intervention Framework
- Individual staff sponsored study

Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2020

22

Average expenditure per teacher for PL

\$500

**TEACHER SATISFACTION**

Feedback from staff was collected on an ongoing basis throughout 2020, particularly in relation to staff wellbeing. It was a year that brought so many challenges and at times left staff feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the task at hand. However, despite this, staff feedback indicated that they were very satisfied with the level of support they had received from leadership throughout the year. Staff also highly valued the collaborative relationships they have within their teams and the support they received from one another.

**TEACHING STAFF ATTENDANCE RATE**

Teaching Staff Attendance Rate

87.4%

### ALL STAFF RETENTION RATE

Staff Retention Rate	71.1%
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### TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	10.5%
Graduate	15.8%
Graduate Certificate	10.5%
Bachelor Degree	68.4%
Advanced Diploma	57.9%
No Qualifications Listed	5.3%

### STAFF COMPOSITION

Principal Class (Headcount)	3.0
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	27.0
Teaching Staff (FTE)	21.0
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	12.0
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	9.8
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0.0

## School Community

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### **Goal**

Develop authentic learning partnerships with families and the community that improve outcomes for students.

#### **Intended Outcome**

That collaborative parent and community partnerships support student learning.

### Achievements

In 2020, we were very excited to launch our new school communication app. Communication had been identified as an area of concern for parents in 2019 and, after extensive research by a dedicated Communication Team, 'Schoolzine' was the platform chosen for this purpose. Schoolzine was able to provide a cost-effective, easy to use parent engagement platform that would enable important messages to be sent directly to parent mobile phones as well as to email addresses. It also provided a reliable way to send out our fortnightly school newsletter and provided easy access to many other school related apps and websites, such as Quickcliq and Operoo, that were often accessed by our parents.

The roll-out of Schoolzine was announced at the Parent's Association Annual General Meeting in March. It wasn't long before its capabilities were put to the test with the arrival of COVID-19. At this time, prompt and effective communication with parents was essential and Schoolzine made it possible for us to communicate important updates for parents at the push of a button. Feedback from parents throughout the year was that our school communication was now excellent.

The move to remote and flexible learning at the beginning of Term Two required staff to adapt teaching practice and utilise a range of new digital learning tools to connect with students. In order to ensure we were able to deliver quality remote learning programs that would engage our students and meet the needs of our families, teachers trained in the use of tools such as Google Meet and Screencastify. These tools enabled teachers to connect with students at home via pre-recorded and live video lessons. Google Forms for parents and students were also utilised during this time to collect feedback about remote learning programs, so these could be adapted to meet the changing needs of our families during the extended period of lockdown.

Improved school marketing and showcasing of learning in the wider community was also identified as a priority for 2020. To achieve this goal, a Marketing Committee was established. This committee met remotely throughout the year, conducting market research and establishing some clear direction for improving the school's online presence. A new school Facebook page was developed for showcasing the great learning opportunities on offer at St Thomas More and promoting our school in the wider community. The school website was updated and plans for its redevelopment in 2021 were set in motion.

While we started the year with some wonderful community events that included our Opening of the School Year Mass, Prep Welcome Mass, Summertime Disco and Year 3-6 Swimming Carnival, these events came to an abrupt standstill late in Term One. Throughout the year we continued to look for opportunities to connect with the community remotely. Learning Conferences were held via Google Meet, as were Parent Support Group Meetings. A Virtual Disco was held for students in September and online Parent Information sessions were held in Term Four to answer questions about the return to school and end of year events.

Our Year 5/6 students began preparing excitedly for their Senior School Musical Production of 'Seussical Jnr' in Term One. Rather than have these students miss out on this fabulous experience, Mrs Kate Chan, our music teacher, continued to connect with these students during lockdown via remote rehearsals. When students returned to school in Term Four, onsite rehearsals resumed and the students' hard work paid off when they were able to bring it all together and perform the show in the gym, which had been transformed into a Seussical set! While audiences could not be in attendance, the show was filmed and a video recording was produced for families. With COVID restrictions finally easing in December, we were delighted to be able to bring our community together at this time for a very special screening of the recording on a giant screen in the gym.

## PARENT SATISFACTION

Communication with parents was an area of focus in 2020 and parent feedback in relation to our new school communication app was overwhelmingly positive. With the increased need for rapid and effective communication to parents brought about by COVID-19, the Schoolzine app provided the perfect platform for this. Parents regularly expressed their satisfaction with both the mode and frequency of communication.

Feedback from parents was sought throughout the year in relation to remote learning programs. Initial feedback was positive with over 90% of families indicating that the learning provided for students was both user friendly and effective. As the year progressed, it was clear from ongoing feedback that changes needed to be made to ensure all children were adequately supported and engaged in their learning during the extended lockdown. As a school we responded to concerns and adapted our programs to meet the needs of our students and families.

Overall feedback from parents throughout 2020 indicated their appreciation of the dedication and hard work of our teaching staff. Parents valued the opportunity to provide feedback on a range of school related issues during the year and appreciated actions that were taken in response to their feedback.

## Future Directions

In 2021, we will continue to focus on excellence in learning outcomes and the full flourishing of each of our students. This will include a particular focus on the continued improvement of literacy and numeracy standards for all students. To this end we will continue to embed the use of the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System to ensure rigorous teaching in the area of Reading. We will begin a focus on the effective teaching of Writing through participation in a Writing Collective with St Macartan's, lead by MACS Literacy Advisors. We will focus on using data to drive instruction in numeracy and developing children's problem solving skills by embedding challenging tasks in the mathematics classroom. We will also continue to embed and improve on the work of our Inquiry Based Learning which aims to provide students with a voice in their learning and thereby engage them in their education in a deeper way.

Student Wellbeing will continue to be an area of utmost priority in 2021, and we are delighted to be commencing the year with staff, student and parent presentations from The Resilience Project. Following these visits, The Resilience Project Wellbeing Program will be implemented in classrooms to help promote students emotional wellbeing and positive mental health.

In Education in Faith will continue to focus on assisting students to make stronger connections between the school's Catholic culture and their own Catholic identity, their learning and their lives. We will work to deepen teacher understanding of the Religious Education content and standards and design rich assessment tasks to accurately measure student progress against the Victorian Curriculum Standards.

We acknowledge the need to continue to build teacher capacity to employ contemporary teaching strategies that engage and challenge students to assume greater responsibility for their learning. We will implement regular Learning Walks for school leaders and teachers to promote authentic conversations about best practice and to gather data to plan our next steps in professional learning. We propose to adopt a more outward facing stance by developing strategies to proactively build community-based learning partnerships.

We will look for opportunities to re-engage with our community post the lockdowns of 2020. We hope to again be able to open our doors to parents and look forward to welcoming our parent community back into classrooms and special school events and liturgies. We will showcase the learning that takes place at St Thomas More in school and level newsletters, in an Art Show scheduled for Term Three and in the wider community via our redeveloped website and school social media platforms.