



# 2023

## Annual Report to the School Community



### St Francis' School

Chapel Street, NATHALIA 3638

Principal: Matthew Knight

Web: [www.sfnathalia.catholic.edu.au](http://www.sfnathalia.catholic.edu.au)

Registration: 1823, E Number: E3051

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## Principal's Attestation

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I, Matthew Knight, attest that St Francis' School is compliant with:

- The minimum standards and other requirements for school registration and school boarding premises (if applicable) as specified in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic).
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2023 school year under the Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth) and the Australian Education Regulations 2023 (Cth).
- The Child Safe Standards as prescribed in Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises.

Attested on 20 Mar 2024

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## About this report

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St Francis' School is registered by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). The Annual Report to the School Community (ARSC), provides parents and the wider community with information about the school's activities and achievements throughout the year including information about various aspects of school performance. The Report 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. 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 also be obtained from the [My School website](#).

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## Governing Authority Report

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The 2023 Catholic Education Week theme “Let the Words You Speak Always Be Full of Grace” reminds us of Pope Francis’s call to be a synodal Church in which our understanding of others and respect for diversity is shaped by respectful dialogue borne from deep listening.

Catholic Education Sandhurst continues to be committed to providing contemporary and innovative learning environments that value diversity and promote care, respect and co-operation. In 2023 we launched the CES Ltd Strategic Plan 2023-2027 which sets out directions and priorities that will guide the way in which our Catholic schools pursue excellence in fostering the development of each person in all the dimensions of human existence: intellectual, spiritual, emotional, bodily, relational, environmental and cultural.

Schools have begun the process of developing School Improvement Plans aligning their local strategic planning to the CES Strategic Plan, under the direction of Principal Consultants and in response to schoolbased review findings.

Our governance structure continues to mature, with both CES Ltd and SCECEC Ltd committed to ensuring the highest quality student outcomes in a safe and nurturing environment.

Our learning data has identified pockets of excellence in school communities across the diocese but also highlighted greater scope for improvement in the future. The development of the CES Ltd Catholic Learning and Teaching Framework will promote greater collaboration and focus on student learning growth.

The nation-wide shortage of teachers continues to impact all schools demanding new and innovative ways to attract and retain high quality and committed Catholic educators. Strategic initiatives will prioritize workforce placements that are sustainable and ongoing with particular attention given to our remote and smaller communities.

CES Ltd has a small number of schools with low enrolments and personnel and the Catholic Education Office works closely with leadership in these schools to ensure continued viability. An incentive scheme to attract and retain educators has been initiated and the CES Ltd Board has taken a robust interest in the way small schools are promoted through the CES Ltd Marketing Strategy.

I am extremely grateful for the commitment and professionalism that is clearly identified by the efforts throughout 2023 of Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd - our schools and personnel in the Catholic Education Office. They continue to work tirelessly for the students and families in our schools, true bearers of the Mission to which they have been called.

PAUL DESMOND

Executive Director, Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited

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## Vision and Mission

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### **Our Identity:**

St Francis' school is a welcoming community striving to live the Franciscan tradition of Peace and Joy.

### **Our Vision:**

St Francis' Nathalia strives to:

- Provide a positive learning environment with a commitment to being safe, responsible and caring learners
- Build a community with a sense of responsibility to create a sustainable future for God's world.
- Build an inclusive community that fosters respectful relationships for all.
- Build and nurture a stimulating learning environment where all are supported in reaching their full potential.

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## School Overview

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St. Francis School in the Nathalia area offers a vibrant, student-centred educational approach. Established in 1961 by the Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood, our school embodies Franciscan values such as peace, joy, justice, integrity, and respect for all creation. Our mission prioritises the holistic development of students—intellectual, spiritual, social, physical, and emotional—fostering an environment conducive to learning, nurturing, and empowering young individuals to live out the Catholic faith inspired by Jesus Christ.

Dedicated to providing exemplary educational experiences, St. Francis' school embraces the diverse gifts and talents of our students while addressing their varied developmental needs. We are committed to:

- Setting high expectations that encourage learning and responsibility
- Tailoring learning experiences to honour each individual's uniqueness and strengths
- Recognising the innate and ongoing capacity for learning within every person
- Ensuring that learning is meaningful, purposeful, and applicable to daily life

Crucially, we prioritise fostering close relationships among students, teachers, parents, and the parish community. As a Catholic school, we take pride in our rich heritage and faith traditions.

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## Principal's Report

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The 2023 school year was a mixture of challenge, expectation and excitement as we completed a major outdoor building works, continued to acknowledge the ever present COVID considerations and were drawn together to respond to the effects of floods in the area. The strength, compassion and willingness to help and support each other in times of need is a testament to the school community.

There have been many achievements at St Francis Primary this year. The well being of our school community was a key focus during this time, with parents, children and teachers feeling supported during these difficult times. St Francis staff made a purposeful effort to reach out and connect with all families and find imaginative and inclusive ways to support families during the year.

It was another year, where our wonderful staff came together during this time to support each other and our school families. The dedication to our school community in times of adversity, uncertainty and change is a credit to everyone.

We continued to build upon our strong working relationship with St Mary's Parish Priest, Fr. Jophin Joy, and were able to celebrate liturgical events throughout the year.

### **Leadership**

*Student Leadership:* Our students were offered opportunities to develop their unique leadership skills through opportunities such as; ANZAC Day services, Remembrance Day community ceremony, joint Senior Student Leadership teams and Grade 6 students had involvement in running whole school sporting events throughout the year. Students were involved in establishing new Graduate Outcomes and promoting these across the school. It is evident that St Francis has prepared many students to be strong leaders for the future.

### **School Improvement**

*PIVOT:* Pivot allows teachers and school leaders to develop professionally through carefully designed, confidential, evidence-based surveys, services and reports. Students completed surveys about teaching and learning in their classroom, with the data used as a diagnostic and evaluative tool, and support planning at unit and school level.

This year we invested in a weekly student well being check in thorough PIVOT, with student responses allowing our Pastoral Well-being team to address any individual and collective concerns. Lorraine worked with staff and students 1:1 and in small groups to respond to and address any of their concerns.

### **Capital Works & Grants**

*Basketball Court Redevelopment:* We were excited to announce that St Francis had been successful in obtaining a grant from the CES Lid Supplementary Capital Fund to redevelop



our basketball courts. The project involved removing the existing Tiger Turf court, replacing it with a concrete base and drainage and adding a Plexipave finish to a new basketball court and running track. The works were completed in Term 4 and have been enjoyed by all as another outdoor learning space and play area.

*Grants:* The school created an indigenous learning space with grant money from the government. The works involved creating outdoor learning and garden areas to continue our Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden (SAKG) program. Bush tucker plants were established and used as part of students cooking program.

*Grounds:* The Robertson Street side of the school had two portables removed and the junior oval area grassed to establish a larger playing space for the students. The works were part of the Learning Centre redevelopment project in 2022.

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## Catholic Identity and Mission

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

- RE Accreditation for staff
- Support staff planning of RE curriculum units
- Continue to develop understanding of Franciscan Charism

### Achievements

**Assisi Pilgrimage:** Matt Knight participated in the Assisi Pilgrimage with members from St Mary of the Angels, St Mary's Parish and other school leaders. The aim of the pilgrimage was to further understand our school's Charism, reflect on the values and teachings of our founding orders and gain a deeper awareness of how to embrace our school's vision and charism to continue to grow Catholic education in Nathalia. This pilgrimage will run again in 2024.

**Sacramental Program:** We had 5 children receive their sacrament of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation this year. St Mary's Parish held the celebration for our students in Term 3, with Bishop Shane celebrating the event with parishioners. Preparation sessions were completed by our Catholic Identity leader, Veronica Williams, in the lead up to the sacraments and I thank Veronica for her expertise and willingness to teach our students and families.

**ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day:** St Francis held school services to recognise these important days throughout the year. Our students led the ceremonies and those present showed their respect for the sacrifices of all who have served our country so diligently.

**St Francis Feast Day:** Students participated in activities to mark the feast of St Francis on the first week of Term 4, which coincided with all students back at school. It was lovely to see students engage in further learning about our school's patron saint.

**Advent and Christmas:** The students ran Advent liturgies on Monday mornings in the lead up to Christmas and the school finished our 2023 year with a Whole School Mass at St Mary's church.

## Value Added

St Mary's Parish Council - both Catholic Identity Leader and Principal attended and participated in the council meetings.

- 1 staff member attended the Assisi Pilgrimage
- St Vincent De Paul collections including the Christmas and Winter Appeals.
- Ongoing commitment to CARITAS during Lent.
- National Reconciliation school service.
- Commitment to Acknowledgement of Country at all Masses and assemblies.
- Continued commitment to fly the Australian and Indigenous flags each day.

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## Learning and Teaching

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

- Work in partnership with CESL Learning and Teaching teams to model consistent work programmes & planners
- Establish a Data Plan
- Staff professional reading ‘Rosenshine’s Principles in Action’
- Preparation for introduction of Victorian Curriculum Numeracy 2.0

### Achievements

#### Learning and Teaching

*Victorian Curriculum - Numeracy 2.0:* Staff participated in professional learning sessions in the second half of the 2023 year to familiarise themselves with the new Victorian Curriculum Numeracy 2.0 framework. Professional Learning Communities, planning time and Pupil Free days were conducted to understand the changes and create a whole school Numeracy Overview for the 2024 implementation.

*MiniLit:* We continued with MiniLit sessions for selected students to enhance their literacy skills. There has been positive growth shown during the year with this intervention continuing in 2024. This year we also implemented MacqLit, aimed at providing intervention in the Literacy domain for our senior students.

*N.S.I.T Review:* St Francis participated in the National School Improvement Tool review in 2023 which reviewed the Learning and Teaching area of the school. Staff, students and parents were invited to participate and recommendations from the review will be used to formulate the St Francis School Improvement Plan 2024-2026 and Annual Action Plan.

#### Student Learning Outcomes

The 2023 school performance data is made up from a small Year Three cohort (12 students) and small Year Five cohort (7 students). VCAA states caution should be used when drawing conclusions from this data, particularly with small groups of students (i.e less than 10).

All Year Three students met the new 2023 NAPLAN Proficient standard for Writing, with 92% in the Strong band, while 8% were in the Exceeding band of the assessment. 69% of Year Three students were at or above the Strong band in Reading and 50% of students Proficient in Numeracy. Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation will be a focus area in 2024 for these students.

The Year Five data shows fairly consistent NAPLAN results in the Spelling, Numeracy and Writing assessment areas with 70% of students in the Strong or Exceeding bands (Proficient), and 57% of students in the Strong or Exceeding bands for Reading and Grammar and Punctuation.

<b>NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards</b>			
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Year level</b>	<b>Mean Scale score</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	333	25%
	Year 5	*	*
Numeracy	Year 3	365	50%
	Year 5	*	*
Reading	Year 3	397	69%
	Year 5	*	*
Spelling	Year 3	365	33%
	Year 5	*	*
Writing	Year 3	435	100%
	Year 5	*	*

\*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2023 due to participation not meeting these criteria or no students were assessed. Participants include students who were assessed, including non-attempt, or those exempted from the test.

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## Student Wellbeing

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

- Dedicated staff member to lead in the Mental Health in Primary Schools (MHiPs) initiative with Goulburn Valley schools.
- MHiPs training (VC and in person) for school lead & MHiPS school implementation plan
- PBiS Framework is embedded and communicated to the school community.

### Achievements

The Pastoral Wellbeing team had a strong emphasis on supporting the wellbeing of all in our school community this year. Lorraine Bain (Wellbeing Officer) continue her role and she worked with families in a range of ways throughout the year. We catered to the needs of all through initiatives conducted by the CARE team, school wellbeing team and in partnership with local community organisations. The mental wellbeing of everyone was acknowledged with Lorraine organising a number of sessions with Kids Helpline for students throughout the school year.

We welcomed Darren Ogier as the Mental Health in Primary Schools (MHiPS) Leader. Under the MHiPS program, every Victorian government and low-fee non-government primary school received funding to employ a mental health and wellbeing leader to implement a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. Darren worked with students, staff and families to promote Mental Health, wellbeing and awareness across the school.

### Value Added

- Embedded teacher practices based on the PBiS Framework and provided students resources of how to implement in the classroom and yard.
- Provided Respectful Relationship PD & training for staff.
- Monitored and promoted student attendance at assemblies, in the newsletters and in classrooms.
- Introduction of the MHiPS Leader role.

### Student Satisfaction

The PIVOT survey student results show that there was consistency from 2023 across most reported elements, especially within the areas of social connections, "I have friends at school I trust", online safety "I feel safe online from bullying" and Resilience "I keep trying even

when my schoolwork is difficult". Students report that they like how teachers encourage them to think instead of just telling me the answers, and know the behaviour expectations at St Francis.

A future area of consideration for the school may be connecting student learning with authentic application to their lives, with the PIVOT results indicating students would like more choice in who they collaborate with during their learning time and the topics of learning during the day.

**Student Attendance**

Student non-attendance at school is monitored through SIMON and is followed up through automated SMS or phone contact made with parents to ensure that the student is able to return to school as promptly as possible, and that there are no serious impairments to them returning to school. First contact is completed by administrative staff, followed by the classroom teacher and further correspondence is made by the principal as needed.

Student attendance is consistently promoted at assembly and through the newsletter. Early in 2023, COVID positive cases were reported to CESL / DHHS and the school families notified as the school was alerted.

<b>Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level</b>	
Y01	89.4%
Y02	88.1%
Y03	91.0%
Y04	89.4%
Y05	90.4%
Y06	89.2%
Overall average attendance	89.6%

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## Leadership

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

- Review and develop School Improvement Plan documentation
- Update Graduate Outcomes
- Develop middle leaders within the school
- Complete NSIT Review
- School budgeting reflects strategic directions and local improvement

### Achievements

*School Improvement Plan:* St Francis worked with personnel from CESL, school staff, School Advisory Council (SAC) and students to develop their School Improvement Plan 2024 - 2026. This plan outlines the goals for St Francis Primary over the next three years and works as a framework for the school's Annual Action Plan.

*Building Works:* St Francis worked in close partnership with St Mary of the Angels (SMOTA) to provide SMOTA with additional classroom space during 2023 while their new classroom construction was carried out. St Mary of the Angels completed their works late in 2023 and the St Francis portables were removed to open up the school junior oval area.

*Basketball Court Redevelopment:* We were excited to announce that St Francis had been successful in obtaining a grant from the CES Lid Supplementary Capital Fund to redevelop our basketball courts. The project involved removing the existing Tiger Turf court, replacing it with a concrete base and drainage and adding a Plexipave finish to a new basketball court and running track. The works were completed in Term 4 and have been enjoyed by all as another outdoor learning space and play area.

*PIVOT:* Pivot allows teachers and school leaders to develop professionally through carefully designed, confidential, evidence-based surveys, services and reports. Students completed surveys about teaching and learning in their classroom, with the data used as a diagnostic and evaluative tool, and support planning at unit and school level. Again in 2023, we invested in a weekly student wellbeing check in thorough PIVOT, with student responses allowing our Pastoral Wellbeing team to address any individual and collective concerns. Lorraine and Darren worked with staff and students 1:1 and in small groups to respond to and address any of their concerns.

*Student Placement:* We had a number of pre-service student teachers and Learning Support Officers completing their professional placement this year.



<b>Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning</b>	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2023	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal &amp; Deputy Principal Meetings</li> <li>• R.E.C. Network Meetings</li> <li>• Assisi Pilgrimage</li> <li>• Child Safe Leader Training</li> <li>• MiniLit &amp; MacqLit Literacy Training (Interventions)</li> <li>• Learning Diversity Professional Development</li> <li>• Numeracy PD and ongoing PLCs throughout the year</li> <li>• Respectful Relationships Rights and Resilience updates</li> <li>• Wellbeing Leader network days</li> <li>• Little Learners Love Literacy PD</li> <li>• MHiPs Professional Learning</li> <li>• ZART Art PD</li> </ul>	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2023	8
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$538.66

### Teacher Satisfaction

There is a palpable sense of energy, enthusiasm, and pride among the staff at St. Francis School. Collaborating in such an environment fosters the development of effective teaching and learning methods.

The findings from the Orima Survey highlight the strong sense of collegiality at St. Francis, with 82% of respondents acknowledging the valuable relationship between the staff and leadership team, and 73% expressing satisfaction with the positive school climate. Moreover, staff safety, psychological well-being, and collective efficacy were rated highly, with 73% of staff members identifying these as areas of strength.

The survey results suggest that further exploration into methods for providing effective and timely feedback would be welcomed by staff. Additionally, there is a call to continue integrating the behaviour management framework throughout the school. Furthermore, there's an opportunity to explore avenues for professional development for Learning Support Officers.

<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	7.1%
Graduate	7.1%
Graduate Certificate	7.1%
Bachelor Degree	42.9%
Advanced Diploma	14.3%
No Qualifications Listed	21.4%

<b>Staff Composition</b>	
Principal Class (Headcount)	2
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	15
Teaching Staff (FTE)	10.8
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	7
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	5.9
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

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## Community Engagement

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

- Embedding teacher practices based P.B.I.S Framework
- Provide Parent and Student Cyber Safety Learning Opportunities
- Monitor and promote student attendance at assembly/newsletters and in classrooms
- Maintain St Francis CARE team initiatives
- Introduce MHiPs Leader role and outcomes

### Achievements

**Pastoral Wellbeing Team:** Throughout this year, the Pastoral Wellbeing team placed a significant focus on supporting the overall wellbeing of our school community. We were pleased to welcome Darren Ogier as the MHiPS Leader, joining Lorraine Bain (Wellbeing Officer) and Malinda Rankin (Wellbeing Leader).

The team engaged with families in various ways, catering to diverse needs through initiatives led by the CARE team, the school wellbeing team, and collaborative efforts with local community organisations. Lorraine facilitated several sessions with Kids Helpline, Ditto Bravehearts, Ride to School, Harmony, and Epilepsy awareness days, acknowledging the mental wellbeing of all community members.

Additionally, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden (SAKG) Program encouraged family involvement by inviting volunteers to support student learning in both the garden and kitchen settings. These activities aimed to impart valuable life skills related to cooking and healthy eating.

### Parent Satisfaction

The parent responses from the Orima Survey show that families value the positive school climate at St Francis, especially the approachability of staff, the welcome environment and the respect St Francis staff show to their children (100% positive). 100% of parents indicated that they were very comfortable if needing to, "reach out to the school for support" and are happy with the range of communication methods used at school, especially the online portal (PAM).

Continuing to develop a range of ways to 'provide timely feedback to parents about their child's progress' (67%) and post COVID restrictions, inviting parents to engage in their child's learning are areas for future consideration.

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## Financial Performance

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The school's financial performance information and a report of the financial activities of the school's boarding premises (if applicable) have 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).

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at [www.sfnathalia.catholic.edu.au](http://www.sfnathalia.catholic.edu.au)