2025 Annual Report

St Paul's College

Registered School Number: 1647



St Paul's College is a child-safe community. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which our school is situated, the Wurundjeri (Woi Wurrung) peoples of the Kulin Nation, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Wominjeka!

Message from our CEO



It has been another meaningful year for St Paul's College, shaped by the strong sense of community that sits at the heart of the school.

St Paul's continues to be a place where each student is known, understood and supported as an individual. This commitment is evident in the everyday work of our staff and in the steady growth we see in students as they build confidence, independence and capability over time.

During 2025, St Paul's continued to strengthen its approach to teaching and learning, including important work to align with the updated Victorian Curriculum. Supported by a highly skilled multidisciplinary team and a strong staff-to-student ratio, students are given the time and attention they need to learn in ways that are meaningful for them and to make sustained progress.

The Balwyn campus remains a welcoming and well-designed environment for learning, with flexible spaces and specialised facilities that support both education and wellbeing. These settings, combined with a strong focus on communication and individual learning, help create a calm and supportive school experience for students.

St Paul's College Community Day in July was a highlight, bringing families, friends and staff onto campus for a day of connection and shared activity, including face painting, crafts and hands-on wildlife encounters. The Where Is My Coffee? van, part of VMCH's social enterprise program, also visited, showcasing the kind of real-world learning and employment pathways available to students beyond school.

We also marked St Paul's Feast Day with a Mass at All Hallows Parish in Balwyn. It was pleasing to see students, families, staff and members of the wider VMCH community come together to reflect on the legacy of St Paul, particularly his courage and commitment to inclusion, values that continue to guide the school today. Our ongoing connection with the All Hallows community remains an important part of school life.

Alongside these moments, St Paul's has continued to strengthen external partnerships, including its developing relationship with the Victorian Catholic Education Authority, which will support staff development and enhance opportunities for students into the future.

Thank you to Penny Vakakis for her stewardship and support as Acting Principal during 2025. I would like to acknowledge the leadership of our new Principal Jane Barker and the dedication of all staff, whose expertise and care underpin the success of St Paul's. I also thank our families for their ongoing partnership and trust.

I am proud of what has been achieved this year and confident in the continued growth of St Paul's College.

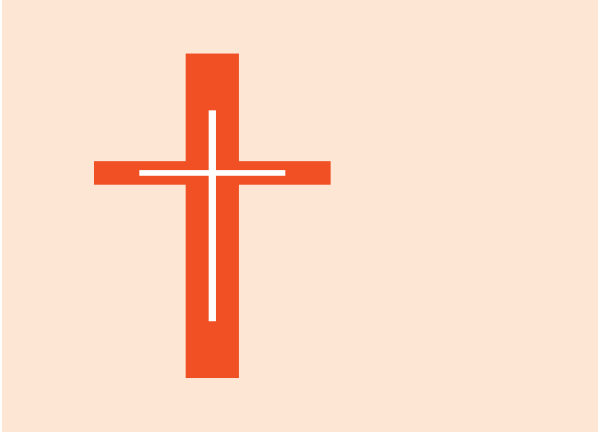
Yours sincerely,



Sonya Smart
Chief Executive Officer
VMCH

Vision

To create a contemporary, safe, and nurturing school environment where children and young people with a range of disabilities have a sense of belonging and every opportunity to achieve optimal learning outcomes.



Mottos

Belong. Grow. Discover. Achieve.

Philosophy and Values

St Paul's College seeks to provide all students with equal opportunities to develop a confident sense of self and understanding of the world within a collaborative and diverse school community. We aim to empower students with disabilities to achieve their highest level of independence and potential through the provision of quality education services.

bringing
Love

We foster connections and show compassion for one another with kindness and respect.

creating
Joy

We create a culture of happiness and positivity, celebrating life and the uniqueness of all.

embracing
Hospitality

We welcome all to our community, bringing comfort and a sense of belonging.

showing
Courage

We do what is right, regardless of our fears, the challenges or consequences.

What makes us unique

Founded in 1957, St Paul's College is an Independent Catholic Specialist School located in Balwyn, offering education from Prep to Year 12 for students with intellectual disability. Our students may also experience co-occurring conditions, including autism, sensory impairments, genetic conditions, and complex communication needs.

As a small school with approximately 50 students, we prioritise meaningful connections and personalised support. Our intentionally low enrolment enables strong relationships between students and staff, ensuring that each learner's developmental, behavioural, and communication needs are well understood and supported. Individual Learning Plans guide each student's journey, with goals tailored to their strengths and aspirations.



Our purpose-built campus is designed to encourage inclusive and engaging learning in a safe and flexible environment. Key features include:

- **Adaptable, multi-purpose learning spaces** that support calm, structured, and responsive teaching approaches aligned to students' emotional regulation needs.
- **Dedicated specialist facilities**, including a Sensory Room, Living Skills Room, STEAM Centre, inclusive outdoor play areas, and a social enterprise café that provides real-world learning opportunities.

Together, these environments support therapeutic learning, build independence, and encourage community participation.

Our multidisciplinary team brings together teachers, education support staff, allied health professionals—including speech and occupational therapists—and a school nurse. With a strong emphasis on communication and collaboration, we work closely with families to support each student's intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual growth.

In 2025, St Paul's maintained an exceptional staff-to-student ratio of approximately 1:1.7. This enables highly individualised learning and care, with each student supported by a consistent, dedicated team. This level of resourcing significantly exceeds typical classroom settings and reflects our deep commitment to every student's success.

During 2025, St Paul's commenced a comprehensive review and renewal of its curriculum, aligning with the Victorian Curriculum Foundation–10. Drawing on guidance from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and Ochre, in partnership with Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools, this work establishes a clear and cohesive framework across the eight learning areas. This updated approach strengthens teaching practice, supports differentiated learning, and ensures thorough and meaningful assessment of student progress.

Each student's Individual Learning Plan is developed in partnership with families and allied health practitioners, ensuring learning is purposeful, relevant, and personalised. Our approach integrates explicit teaching, communication development, life skills, and social and emotional learning. Through a blend of classroom learning, therapeutic support, and community engagement, we empower students to grow in independence, confidence, and wellbeing. This holistic model reflects our commitment to inclusive education and lifelong learning.

At the beginning of Term IV, St Paul's introduced Compass to enhance communication and streamline school operations. Work is also underway to implement Chronicles, further strengthening compliance processes, reporting, and student management systems.

School structure

The St Paul's College school structure reflects our commitment to providing age-appropriate programs, linked to curriculum learning outcomes that encourage strong connections within each level. The school is organised into four distinct levels:

- **Foundation (ages 5–8)**
- **Upper Primary (ages 9–12)**
- **Lower Secondary (ages 13–15)**
- **Upper Secondary (ages 16–18)**

This structure enables us to deliver a tailored curriculum, with appropriate allied health support, and enrichment opportunities that meet the unique needs of students as they grow and develop. It also creates flexibility for the school to add additional levels as our community continues to expand.



At a glance

49
FTE students enrolled

30%
female

70%
male

60%
of students diagnosed with autism

10%
present with Global Developmental Delay

20% of students
diagnosed with conditions such as Down Syndrome, genetic deletions, etc.

53% (26)
FTE in the Primary Program (11 years and younger)

50% (23)
FTE in the Middle/Secondary Program (13 years and older)

1
primary student enrolled in the Dual School Program

91%
student attendance rate

One student
graduated from Senior School and commenced a personalised, interest-based recreational program supported through NDIS funding.

Student attendance is recorded twice daily for every student. Attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify patterns at the school, class, and individual levels. This enables early identification of students at risk of poor attendance or disengagement. For families experiencing school refusal issues, an action plan is developed to support the student's return and engagement with school.

Our students

Alex

Alex began Prep at St Paul's College in 2020 and is now in the equivalent Year 6 upper primary class. Over the years, she has grown in confidence and independence. Alex especially loves music and drama, always shining in the end-of-year Christmas concerts, where her beautiful singing voice steals the show. She also enjoys hands-on subjects like science, cooking and baking.

Sport is another big part of Alex's life. She loves the swimming program at school and playing basketball. The school bus service has also helped her build independence and confidence.



Alex has a cheeky personality and a great sense of fun, and it's been lovely to see her express that so comfortably within the supportive and caring environment that St Paul's provides.

Lukas's testimony about school

"I like school. I enjoy community exploration, especially going to the café and having hot chocolate.

I cook chicken nuggets at The Black Cat Café. I feel happy in drama class because it is fun and I enjoy participating in the activities.

School gives me opportunities to learn new things, spend time in the community, and take part in activities that I enjoy."



Stefan's testimony about school

"Being School Captain is the best. I enjoy music and drama, and I love hanging out with my friends both in class and in the playground.

School gives me opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities, participate in activities I enjoy, and spend time with my friends."



Our dedicated team

In 2025, St Paul's staffing included:

1
Principal

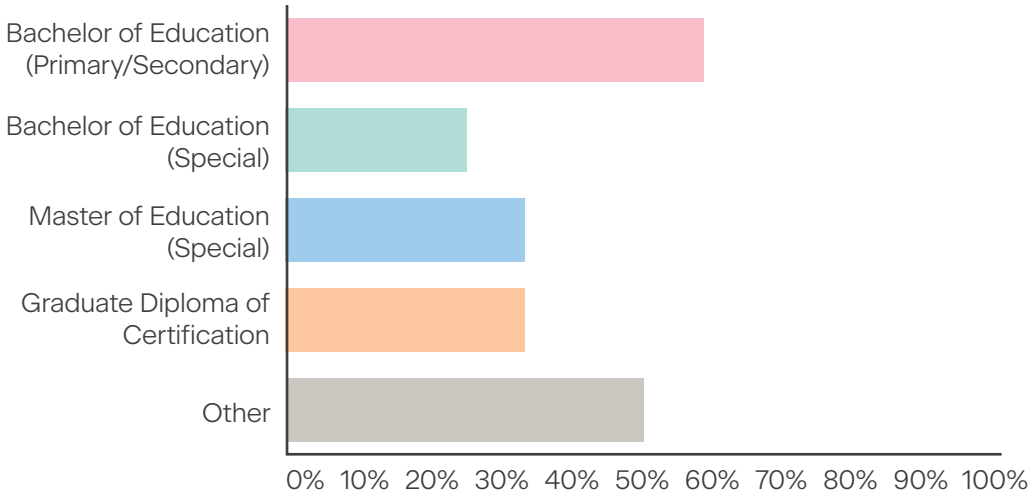
1
Deputy Principal

7.6
FTE Teachers

12.8
Learning Support Officers/ Allied Health staff

1.8
FTE Administrative staff

All teachers were fully qualified and registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Each held a Bachelor of Education and/or a Bachelor of Education (Special Education), with many also completing a Master of Education in Special Needs. Additional staff qualifications included a Master of Art Therapy, a Bachelor of Applied Science (Disability), and a Bachelor of Arts, enriching the school's multidisciplinary approach.



Staff provided feedback to school leadership through individual discussions and various school meetings, including the Consultative Committee.

Professional development

- Child Safety PROTECT
- Team Teach
- Building a High-Performance Team
- LAMP (Speech)
- Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)
- Comprehensive Literacy
- First Aid/CPR
- Mandatory Reporting
- Anaphylaxis Briefings (twice a year)
- Fire Awareness

Child Safety Compliance

St Paul's College, through its governing authority VMCH, attests that it has implemented child-safe policies, procedures and practices in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 1359 and the Victorian Child Safe Standards, and maintains ongoing review and improvement of these arrangements.

Improvement initiatives include:

- Mental Health in Primary Schools (MHiPS) trained staff member to lead wellbeing across St Paul's
- Team Teach and Protect training for all staff
- Community Hub - Community Liaison Officer providing family and student support at the right time.

St Paul's College Council

St Paul's College has a College Council that holds ultimate accountability for compliance with the VRQA Minimum Standards, delegating day-to-day operations to the Principal. Responsibility of the College Council includes:

- Governance
- Strategic and Business Plans (vision, mission, values)
- Appointment, support and oversight of Principal
- Financial Management and Viability
- Compliance and Risk Framework (inclusive of policies and delegation)
- Child Safety
- Registration, Review and Ongoing Assurance

St Paul's College Child Safety Review and Improvement Plan

In 2025–2026, St Paul's College developed and began implementing a Child Safety Review and Improvement Plan, endorsed by the College Council and Principal and approved by the VMCH Board, to strengthen its child safety compliance, culture and practice. The Plan spans governance, risk management, policy, training, curriculum and community consultation, with early achievements including a College Council with dedicated child safety oversight, a child safety risk register, and updated policies, training and reporting pathways. Progress is monitored through regular reporting to the College Council, with implementation continuing through 2026.

Parents and Friends Committee

Parents and Friends Committee included 11 active members in 2025. They meet regularly to strengthen school community connections, support events and fundraising, welcome new families, and provide a valuable parent voice to school leadership.

St Paul's College strategic plan

During 2025 work commenced on St Paul's College's 2026–2028 strategic direction which focuses on strengthening St Paul's identity as a specialist Catholic school, enhancing teaching and learning outcomes, and building sustainable enrolments. This will be achieved through clear positioning, strong community partnerships, and a continued commitment to personalised, inclusive education for every student.

Summary of parent and student surveys

2025 parent satisfaction survey

Approximately 20% of parents participated in the 2025 Parent Satisfaction Survey. Among those who rated three stars or higher:

92%
expressed that their child was happy at school

92%
were satisfied that the school provides a safe environment to learn

83%
were satisfied with the learning program

92%
expressed satisfaction with the school environment

100%
were confident to approach the school for feedback and discussion

92%
were satisfied with opportunities for parent-teacher communication

76%
expressed satisfaction with teachers as enthusiastic and positive

2025 student survey

Approximately 10% of students participated in the 2025 Student Survey. Among those who strongly agreed or agreed to the following:

83%
of students like coming to school

84%
of students felt safe at school

66%
of students said they were responsible

83%
of students felt their teacher listens to them

84%
of students like their teachers

Financial report

Statement of Profit or Loss and other comprehensive income

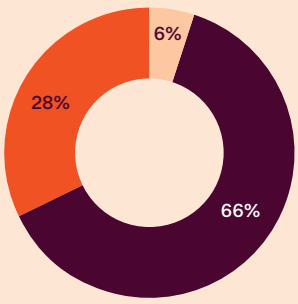
For the year ended 31 December 2025

Revenue	2025	2024
Federal Government grant revenue	2,703,498	2,403,091
State Government grant revenue	1,162,990	1,235,254
Private Income	-	-
School fees and charges	229,125	199,650
Income from excursions and trips	-	-
Employee benefits expense	(3,769,678)	(3,318,030)
Agency staff	(266,037)	(325,682)
Depreciation	(499,359)	(178,534)
Lease interest expense	(150,930)	(167,275)
Utilities and maintenance	(271,815)	(264,294)
Other expenses	(229,371)	(138,275)
Bad debts expense	(1,680)	(13,258)
Profit/(loss) for the year	**(1,093,257)**	**(567,353)**
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of income tax		
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	**(1,093,257)**	**(567,353)**

Income	2025	2024
Federal Government grant	2,703,498	2,403,091
State Government grant	1,162,990	1,235,254
School fees and charges and others	229,125	199,650

2025 Income

$4.1M



- State Government grant **(28%)**
- School fees and charges and others **(6%)**
- Federal Government grant **(66%)**

About VMCH

Here at VMCH, love, joy, hospitality and courage aren't just words to us. As a Catholic for-purpose organisation, these values underpin everything we do.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

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VMCH

The information in this brochure has been prepared by VMCH (Villa Maria Catholic Homes) as a general guide to our services and operations. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, VMCH accepts no responsibility for any loss or inconvenience caused by reliance on the information set out in this brochure. Please contact us if you require detailed information about any of our services. June 2026.