



ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE SCHOOL
COMMUNITY

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School
Norlane

2018

REGISTERED SCHOOL NUMBER: 1525



Contents

Contact Details.....	2
Minimum Standards Attestation.....	2
Our School Vision.....	3
School Overview	4
Principal's Report.....	5
Parish Priest's Report.....	6
Education in Faith	7
Learning & Teaching.....	9
Student Wellbeing	12
Child Safe Standards	14
Leadership & Management.....	16
School Community.....	18



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Minimum Standards Attestation

I, Rodney Sims, attest that St Thomas Aquinas PS, Norlane, 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 2018 school year under the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)* and the *Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)*

May 4, 2019

Our School Vision



At St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School, we aim to empower children in their learning for life and to develop skills necessary to face challenges with hope, faith and resilience.

We journey together as a faith community valuing our Catholic identity.

Children are the heart of our community and we support parents to become actively involved in their children's learning.

We value opportunities for learning and reflection that challenge us to aspire to individual excellence.

School Overview

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, Norlane, is the Catholic primary school in the parish of Norlane. Norlane is a northern suburb of Geelong that faces many challenges. Unemployment and under-employment, social and addiction issues make life difficult for many in the area. The St Thomas Aquinas community is not immune to these issues.

With an ICSEA of 923, a Socio-Economic Score of 73 and with almost 70% of students in the bottom quartile, many families at St Thomas Aquinas face significant challenges. With this in mind, the school community works tirelessly to be as inclusive as it can be and to provide connections between families and services within the community. St Thomas Aquinas School prides itself on its outreach work with the families of the school. With welfare being an important part of children's social and emotional wellbeing, the school, through its arrangements with various agencies, provides a range of services to support families in need.

St Thomas Aquinas strives to provide a safe and secure environment for our children and families. We offer a comprehensive Catholic education through offering rich experiences and opportunities that may not otherwise be accessible to our families. We are now seeing an increasing evangelization within our school community.

In 2016, the school officially opened new learning spaces, funded by the school and a capital grant from the Commonwealth Government. The learning spaces have provided a modern, energy efficient environment that enables students and teachers to work in areas that are flexible for contemporary learning and teaching. The school is thankful for the support of the Commonwealth Government and Catholic Capital Grants for enabling this to happen.

In 2017, the school started the journey with Berry Street to become more informed of trauma-informed positive education. This was to develop common understandings and consistent approaches in working with children and families from trauma backgrounds. The school continues to support all children and works with families and communities to enable learning to occur for all children.

In 2018, stage 2 of the school's redevelopment was undertaken, with the landscaping to be completed in 2019. This stage provides modern, flexible learning spaces for four classes, a dedicated STEM space, a kitchen for classes to use, offices for staff and an extended library. This redevelopment has helped our students feel proud of their school. The school applied for funding for stage 3, which will focus on administration and staff facilities.

The school is committed to providing the children of Norlane with the support they need and opportunities in learning, wellbeing and faith development to ensure that they are successful participants in society.

Principal's Report

Dear Parents and Friends of St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, Norlane,

I am pleased to present the 2018 Annual Report to the School Community. St Thomas Aquinas is a wonderfully dynamic school community which is well-supported by you all.

I acknowledge the Wathaurong people the traditional custodians of the land on which St Thomas Aquinas rests and pay my respects to their elders – past, present and future.

I acknowledge the professional, dedicated staff members who work tirelessly to provide excellent learning opportunities for your children. The professionalism of the teaching staff, supported by caring learning support officers, has created a community where learning is central and each child is valued.

I am thankful for the support of our parent community. You have embraced some of the initiatives that have been undertaken, including School Wide Positive Behaviours, Family School Partnerships and Local Community partnerships. I thank you for your support of our school and hope that we can continue to work together to create an even better school.

I wish to thank our Parish Priest, Fr Ray Zammit MSSP, and the wider parish community for their support of Catholic education within Norlane. We have worked to build authentic connections between the school and parish communities and I see this as an important development within our community.

I am grateful for the support of Catholic Education Melbourne, both the Western Region Office and the Central Office, and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria in supporting St Thomas Aquinas in our unique mission within the Church. I value the professionalism and support of staff, particularly those in the Western Region Office.

Finally, I want to thank the wonderful children we have the pleasure to work with. It isn't always easy but you are the reason we are all here. I thank you for your learning, your care for each other and your respect for our staff.

This annual report reports on the five dimensions of Catholic education. The rest of this report covers these areas. I ask you to read through and come forward if you have any questions.

Rodney Sims

Principal

Parish Priest's Report

Dear Friends

This Annual Report presents an opportunity to look at our outcomes for 2018. It is important to continuously refer back to our mandate: we provide education to enhance and develop the human dignity of our students. This is a task of social justice and must remain our main focus.

"Better to illuminate than merely shine" is a quote from St Thomas Aquinas, which we have adopted, to assist us in our search for a constant deepening of our commitment to mission. We are to look after the light, who is Christ, within us, allowing it to shine. This is what, then, impels us to illuminate, sharing that light with one another. Indeed, every work of justice is necessarily expressed in mission.

The Report itself testifies to the ongoing development of our pedagogical process as well as to our growing sense of community. We seek to enable our students to strive for excellence in their growth as persons. All of this is grounded in our sense of faith as we proudly proclaim our Catholic heritage. The many and varied activities, involving a growing representation of all stakeholders, have led to a marked impact on the wider community. The increasing enrolment and parent participation testify to this.

Throughout 2018, there has been a continued emphasis on the essential aspects of education that really impact on the personal growth of the students. Different programs and initiatives, that enhance student wellbeing, have been embraced. For the staff, too, this has meant more personal and professional development. We are all committed to constantly improve the services the School offers for the good of our students and their families.

The building has continued to develop. Stage Two of the Refurbishment will be completed in 2019 and we all look forward to the eventual completion of the whole school refurbishment. Part of the refurbishment was operational, late in the year. And it was gratifying to see students enjoying their new learning environments.

I thank all members of Staff for their dedication and commitment. I encourage our families to be ever more involved in the life of the School. Let us always remember that all we do is for the good of our students. The challenge is there for all of us. We can be better people, better at the way we allow the Gospel to speak through the way we live. This is not simply a goal we achieve: this is a guided journey as we seek to strengthen one another. We have commenced this journey. Let us look ahead with confidence knowing we can do this because we are centred in Christ.

Fr Ray Zammit mssp
Parish Administrator

Education in Faith

Goal

To further develop a living Catholic culture which encourages people to come closer to God and to live out the Gospel values in today's world.

Intended Outcomes

That members of the school community will be able to explicitly make links between faith and life.

Achievements

Members of the school and parish community have been involved in personal and professional development focusing on religious education and our Catholic identity over the last twelve months.

Some other major initiatives implemented to help us work towards achieving our goals were;

- The appointment of a Religious Education Leader position with time release and POL allowance. This has raised the profile of RE in the school community.
- Sacramental evenings catering to the needs of the school community.
- Invitations to families to attend school and family masses. These were created by the children for their families. These had some success.
- Beginning the exploration of Ignatian Spirituality with staff.

It appears that many of these initiatives have had more of an impact on the staff than on the students and parents. We will need to make a more concerted effort to make explicit links to show how these initiatives lead to opportunities to reflect on and develop the students' faith.

As a staff we are clear about the fact that we are a Catholic school and we gather together at different times for prayer and liturgy. Opportunities for prayer are embedded in our staff gatherings, we have prayer at the beginning of our assembly as well as gathering at least three times a term for a mass or liturgy with the whole school. The staff is supportive of the Sacramental program with most supporting the students at First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation masses.

Our goal as stated above, is to integrate our Gospel values into our school culture. The values of *respect, justice, service and compassion* recognises the links our school has had with the Sisters of Mercy and importance we place on making the Gospel values part of our everyday living. The Gospel values are integrated into all that happens in the Learning Communities and are explicitly named in our Inquiry planner.

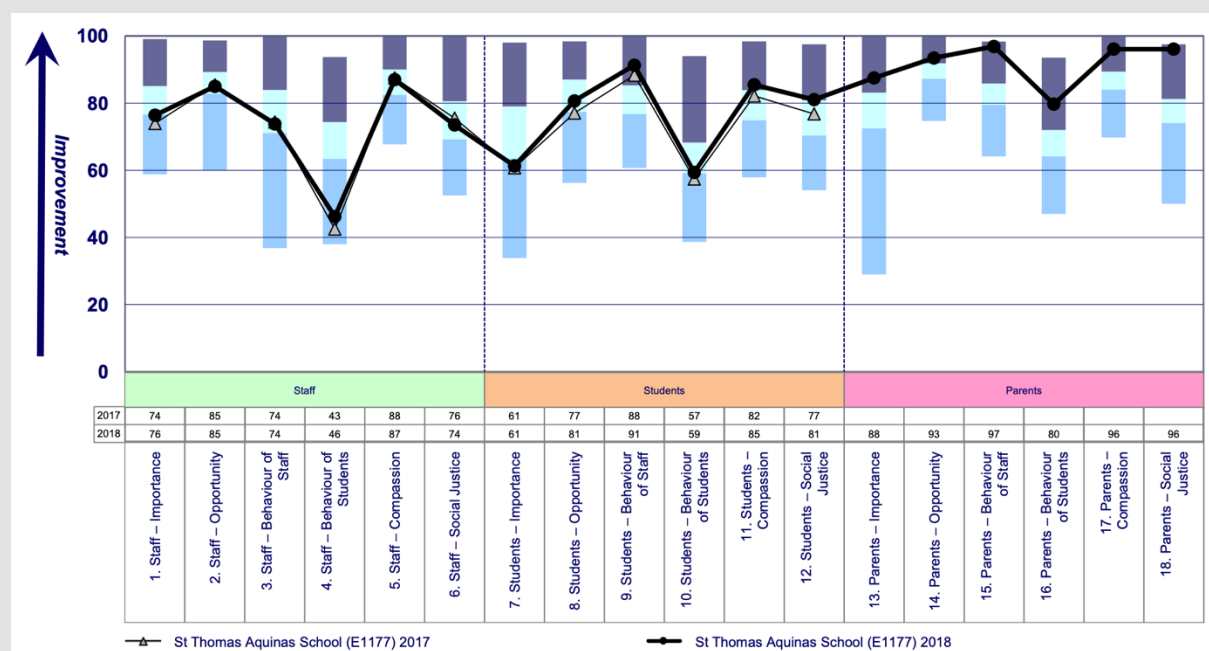
VALUE ADDED

Exploration of Ignatian Spirituality with staff and professional learning for teachers focused on the school values of ***respect, compassion, justice and service***

Implementation of variety of teaching strategies in Religious Education - including the use of art, music, Good Shepherd Experience

Further embedding of Gospel values within the school community

Increased opportunities to celebrate as a worshipping community



2018 Catholic Culture – actual scores

Parents in 2018 Insight SRC survey had overwhelmingly positive perceptions about the school's Catholic culture, particularly in the areas of behaviour of staff, compassion and social justice. They recognise the valuable role the school and its staff play in the growth of their children as important members of society.

Learning & Teaching

Goals Intended Outcomes

To provide an engaging and purposeful learning environment in which every student is challenged and supported to achieve continuous improvement and success.

Intended Outcomes

- That student achievement in English will improve
- That student achievement in Mathematics will improve.
- To develop teacher knowledge and student participation in STEAMD.
- To develop teacher knowledge of the General Capabilities in the Victorian Curriculum
- To develop teacher knowledge of intervention strategies to support student learning

Achievements

Assisting our students to become life-long learners is of fundamental importance to the staff. We have undertaken a variety of Professional Learning to improve the staff's knowledge of the curriculum and how best to help students achieve. This has led us to believe that personalising the learning for our students is of great importance and a direction that we have implemented and are in the process of refining.

In recent years we restructured the organisation of the school to work in Learning Communities, Prep – Year 2 and Years 3 – 6. This has led to collaborative planning and teaching in both areas and a more stimulating and challenging environment for our students. Although the school remains committed to open learning communities and teachers working together in team teaching approaches, 2018 saw the following groupings – one Foundation class, one Year 1 classes, two Year 2 class, two Year 3/4 classes and two Year 5/6 class. We recognized that our students learn best in groupings that meet their needs and in spaces that allow for explicit and directed teaching.

In 2018, the school appointed some experienced teacher leaders to support student learning and staff professional capacity. They included:

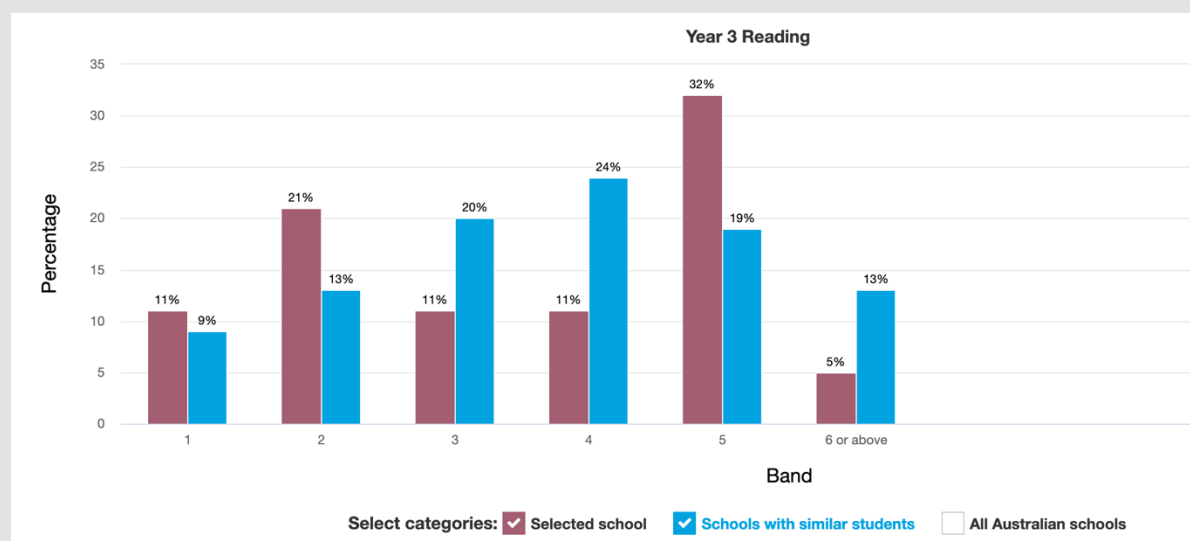
- F – 2 Literacy Leader
- Learning and Teacher Leader
- Learning Diversity Leader
- Speech Pathologist
- Religious Education Leader
- Student Wellbeing Leader

We also continued initiatives such as:

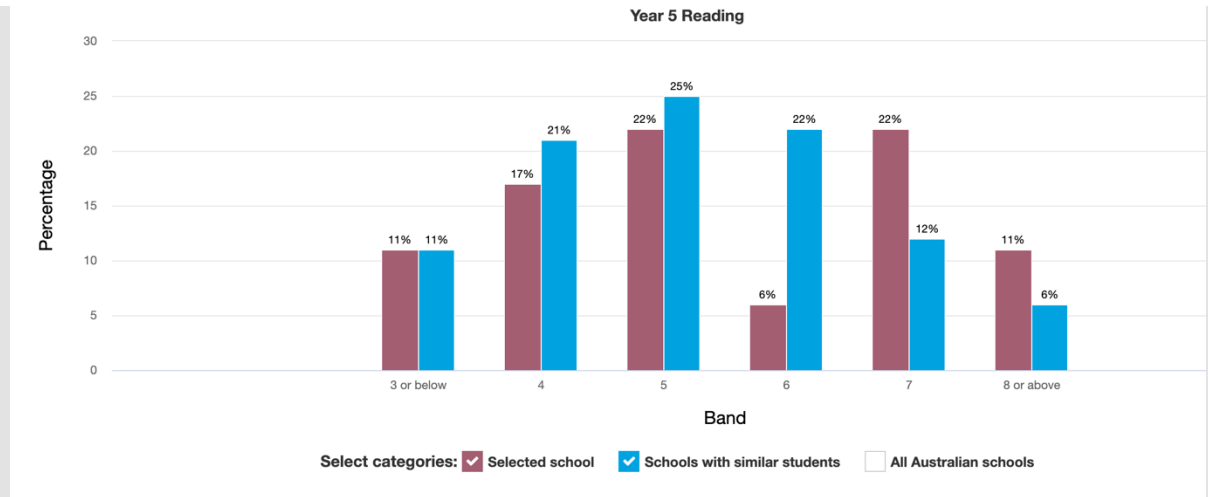
- Sustaining of the St Thomas Aquinas Mentoring Program (STAMPS) to our junior children. This is an individual literacy assistance and early intervention program using volunteers from our parent's body and community three mornings a week.
- Continued implementation of LLI (Levelled Literacy Intervention). This program is aimed at years 2, 3 and 4 students who require additional literacy assistance.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

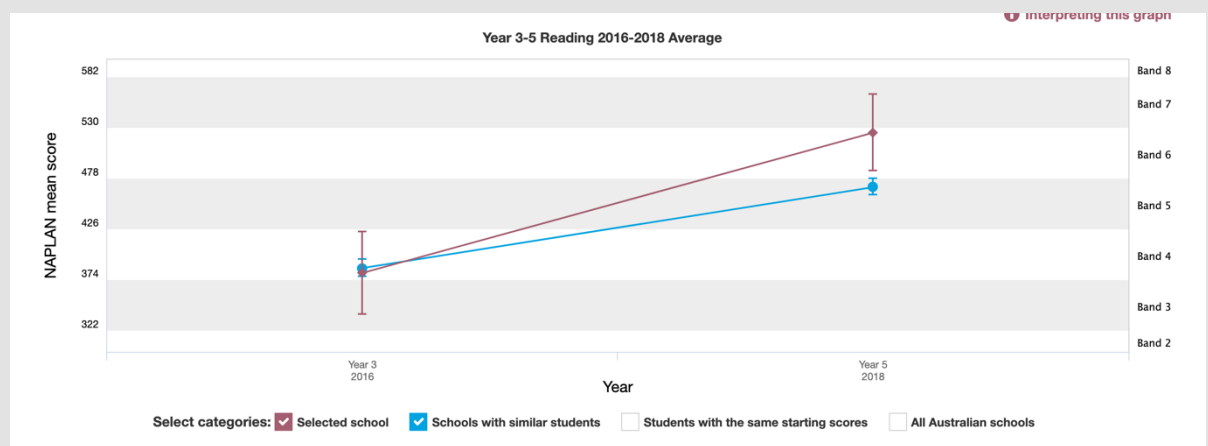
PROPORTION OF STUDENTS MEETING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS					
NAPLAN TESTS	2016 %	2017 %	2016 - 2017 Changes %	2018 %	2017 - 2018 Changes %
YR 03 Grammar & Punctuation	85.7	93.8	8.1	93.8	0.0
YR 03 Numeracy	94.4	75.0	-19.4	89.5	14.5
YR 03 Reading	93.8	85.7	-8.1	88.2	2.5
YR 03 Spelling	85.7	81.3	-4.4	81.3	0.0
YR 03 Writing	93.3	100.0	6.7	100.0	0.0
YR 05 Grammar & Punctuation	100.0	78.9	-21.1	64.3	-14.6
YR 05 Numeracy	66.7	78.9	12.2	88.2	9.3
YR 05 Reading	90.0	88.9	-1.1	87.5	-1.4
YR 05 Spelling	66.7	84.2	17.5	78.6	-5.6
YR 05 Writing	100.0	66.7	-33.3	71.4	4.7



2018 Percentage of Year 3 Children in Reading Bands



2018 Percentage of Year 5 Children in Reading Bands



2016 – 2018 Student Gain in Reading (matched cohort of students)

Student Wellbeing

Goals

To further develop a positive school and classroom environment conducive to student wellbeing and learning.

Intended Outcomes

- Embed a consistent approach to the management of student behaviour
- That students engagement in learning: learning confidence, student motivation and connectedness to peers will become more positive

Achievements

At St Thomas Aquinas School we believe that the best relationships are respectful ones. Through Social and Emotional Learning all students recognise the importance of individuals having awareness of their own emotions and the impact these emotions can have on themselves and others. Behaviours of individuals can affect the emotions of self and others. We endeavour to build up a strong sense of understanding and empathy by encouraging our students to make responsible choices about personal and social behaviour.

Our school is also a partner school in helping educate students on the importance of Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships. We recognise that all students have individual strengths and challenges.

Additional support is provided for students whose day to day learning is influenced by the existence of one or more challenges. In implementing Social and Emotional Learning our school strives to build a respectful culture and develop practices to enhance the knowledge of healthy relationships, respect and equality for all individuals of the community.



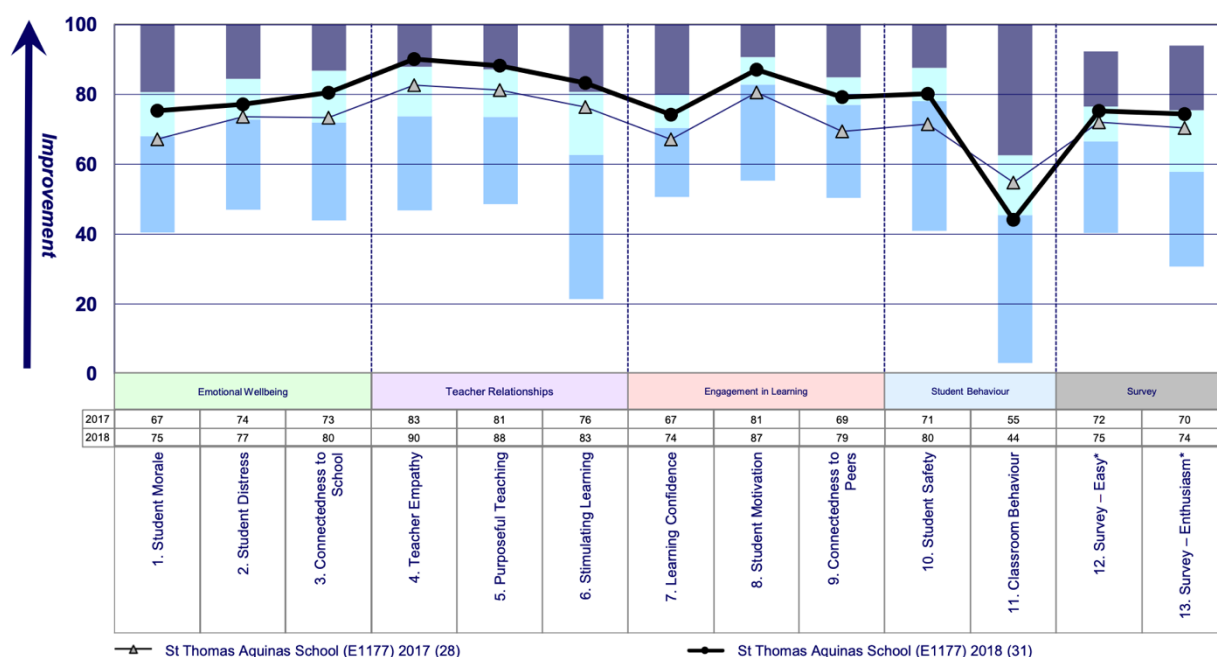
VALUE ADDED

Other positive ideas we have implemented in 2018 to assist with the wellbeing of our students:

- Continued appointment of a Student Wellbeing Leader;
- We employ a Catholic-care Counsellor for 1 day a week to work with children and families
- As part of our cycle of staff meetings/PLT's we have at least 1 meeting a term explicitly focused on Student Wellbeing and Child Safety
- PSGs and ILPs form an integral part in how we deal with students who need extra assistance.

Engagement of Berry Street to deliver targeted professional learning over 2017 - 2018

STUDENT SATISFACTION



2018 Insight SRC Student Experiences – Actual Scores

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

School Attendance is monitored on a regular basis. Meetings are arranged with parents when teachers or the principal is concerned about attendance - either for late arrivals or whole days. The school's electronic roll sends out SMS messages to parents/carers if there is an unexplained absence. Parents/carers who do not contact the school are followed up.

AVERAGE STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE BY YEAR LEVEL	%
Y01	88.0
Y02	91.5
Y03	89.0
Y04	92.2
Y05	92.3
Y06	94.3
Overall average attendance	91.2

Child Safe Standards**Goals and Intended Outcomes**

To provide an environment that is safe for all children and reduces the risk of injury or abuse

To ensure that all staff practise child safe procedures

That children will feel safe and be safe while attending St Thomas Aquinas

Achievements

Throughout 2016, leadership attended professional learning opportunities provided by VRQA and CEM to prepare for the introduction and implementation of the Child Safe Standards. This provided the basis for the school's response to government, VRQA and CEM requirements. St Thomas Aquinas takes Child Safety seriously and recognises that some people in our community have difficulty managing their behaviour. This foundation has carried through into 2018.

As a school, we have close working relationships with agencies that support children and families in our community such as DHHS, Child Protection and Barwon Child Youth and Family. All staff members are required to undertake training in mandatory reporting and are encouraged to make formal reports and inquiries. Staff are supported throughout the reporting process. Extensive notes are taken and filed with the student's information.

The school developed a Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct for Staff, Volunteers and Contractors. This is revisited regularly with these groups to ensure compliance and safety of children.

The school has a Code of Conduct for Students that emphasises the need for safety. Parents and carers are also subject to a Code of Conduct that regulates unacceptable behaviour from adults in our community.

All volunteers are required to attend an induction session prior to their entry to the school. They are required to sign the Code of Conduct and return to the school. References for all new volunteers are checked. The school works closely with the Ardoch Foundation in sourcing volunteers who meet these requirements.

Human resource practices have changed to ensure that employment processes are consistent with the Child Safe Standards and recommendations of CEM. References of prospective employees are checked and any areas of concern are flagged. Given the challenges many of our children face, the employment of the right staff is essential.

Our response to the Child Safe Standards are in line with our obligation under the law, our commitment to our communities and are designed to minimise the risk of harm to our children.

The school recognises its ongoing commitment to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children in the immediate school community and in the greater community.

School staff are familiar with the issue of Reportable Conduct and take proactive steps to ensure that they are always in safe situations.

All staff have been inserviced about the PROTECT protocol and are able to seek support from the principal, deputy principal and senior staff.

Leadership & Management

Goal

To further develop and sustain a professional learning community characterised by a shared vision, strategic leadership, a strong sense of teamwork and focus on continuous improvement of learning.

Intended Outcomes

- That the staff climate will improve
- Ensure multiple sources of feedback to inform individual, team and collective practice

Achievements

Because of our belief in personalising the learning of all our students, we allocated three hours each week to planning in teams. This planning is facilitated by the F- 2 Learning & Teaching Leader and the 3 – 6 Learning & Teaching Leader and focuses on the use of data collected in the areas of Literacy, Numeracy and Inquiry to plan the future learning of the students. The F – 2 Literacy Leader has an important role in leading literacy and literacy intervention in the school. This has been a positive improvement and is showing benefits to both staff in their collaboration and the student learning outcomes.

Keeping up to date professionally is important for our staff. Therefore, we encourage each member of staff to attend relevant Professional Development activities. Our staff models our belief of being life- long learners through continuously improving our knowledge and skills in education. Teachers have been encouraged to set goals relating to AITSL standards, aimed at refining their practice. These goals are reviewed at annual review meetings and new goals set or existing goals refined.

With changes in school leadership and staff, the leadership team recognizes that having clear role descriptions and expectations of colleagues, students and parents will assist with lifting the performance of the school. The school worked on these throughout 2017 and these were put into place during 2018.

EXPENDITURE AND TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

DESCRIPTION OF PL UNDERTAKEN IN 2018

- Berry Street Education Model – whole school
- Literacy Leaders Network
- Mathematics Leaders Network
- Learning and Teaching Leaders Network
- NCCD

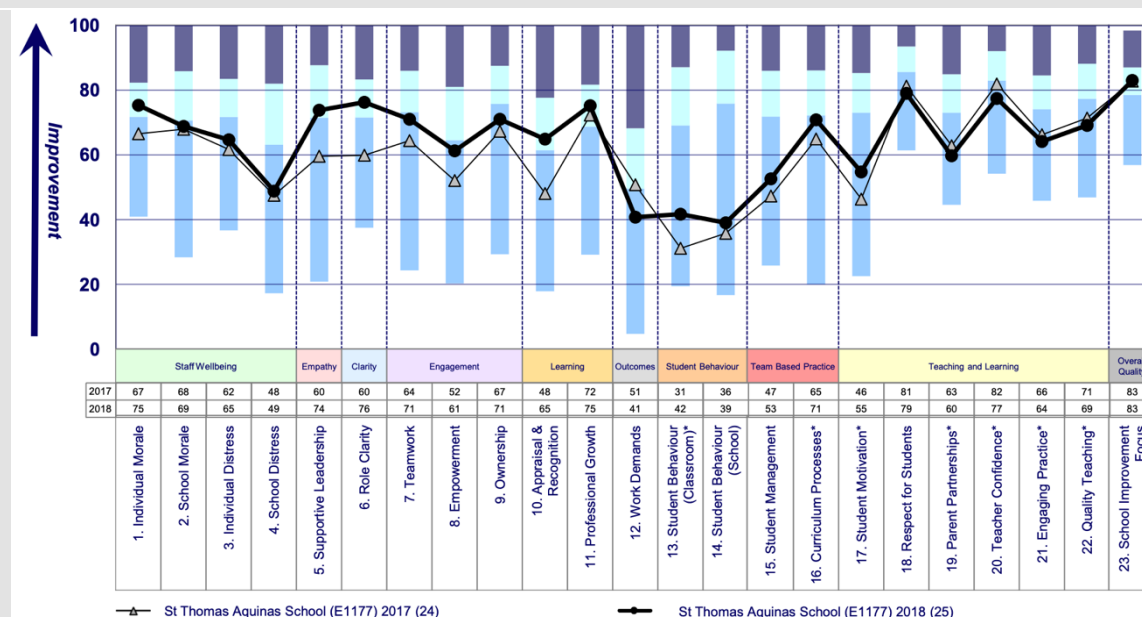
NUMBER OF TEACHERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PL in 2018

23

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER TEACHER FOR PL

\$ 600

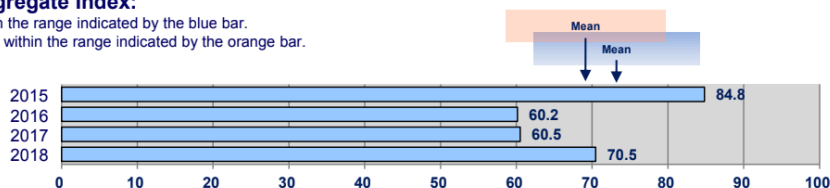
TEACHER SATISFACTION



2018 Insight SRC School Climate – Actual Scores

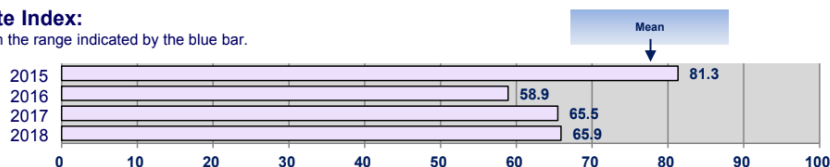
Organisational Climate Aggregate Index:

68% of Australian schools fall within the range indicated by the blue bar.
 68% of Australian organisations fall within the range indicated by the orange bar.



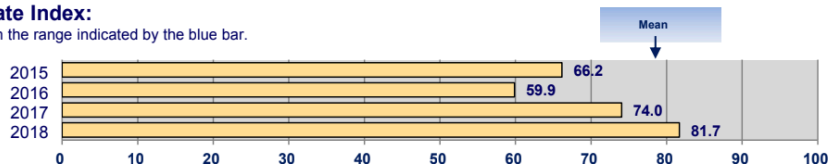
Teaching Climate Aggregate Index:

68% of Australian schools fall within the range indicated by the blue bar.



Student Wellbeing Aggregate Index:

68% of Australian schools fall within the range indicated by the blue bar.



2018 Insight SRC Aggregate Indices

Results from the 2017 Insight SRC School Improvement Survey show that teachers were dissatisfied with student behaviour and the impact that it has had on their ability to teach. This improved in the 2018 survey Staff recognised the work the school had undertaken around roles and role clarity in 2018. It is interesting to compare staff opinions to the opinions of students who, overwhelmingly are more positive about behaviour and recognise the improvement in behaviour and learning.

Work demands have increased for all staff. This could be attributed to the extra work required for NCCD purposes.

Staff appreciate that the school supports their professional learning and provides opportunities to increase their knowledge and develop their skills.

STAFF RETENTION RATE

Staff Retention Rate	86.4%
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TEACHING STAFF ATTENDANCE RATE

Teaching Staff Attendance Rate	95.3%
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TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	18.8%
Graduate	31.3%
Graduate Certificate	6.3%
Bachelor Degree	75.0%
Advanced Diploma	18.8%
No Qualifications Listed	6.3%

STAFF COMPOSITION

Principal Class (Headcount)	2
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	31
Teaching Staff (FTE)	22.5
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	19
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	18.7
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	1

School Community

Goals

To engage parents as active partners in their children's education.

Intended Outcomes

- That parents are more actively engaged and have a greater understanding of their child's learning and current approaches to learning and teaching.
- Ensure that the skills and talents of parents are utilized to support student learning

Achievements

As a Family-School-Partnership school, we not only understand that effective schools have high levels of parental and community involvement, we value the role of parents as the first and ongoing educators of their children. It is for that reason we have many opportunities for parent engagement in student learning and parent involvement in school community life.

In partnership with Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre, education and training opportunities are offered to parents and extended family. These include barista training, computer literacy skills, and the safe food handling certificate. These certificate courses are offered on school premises and within school hours at no cost to our families.

Through a partnership with City of Greater Geelong, positive parenting programs are offered to support families in building good relationships with their children. In partnership with the school, these parenting opportunities assist parents through the sharing of positive strategies to help raise healthy and happy children.

Our 'Parents and Friends' Association is a friendly social group of parents and guardians who meet regularly to help the school in a variety of ways. This help comes in many forms and includes initiating and organising fundraising opportunities for the school community, school fete, Mother/Father's Day stalls, parent social events and much more.

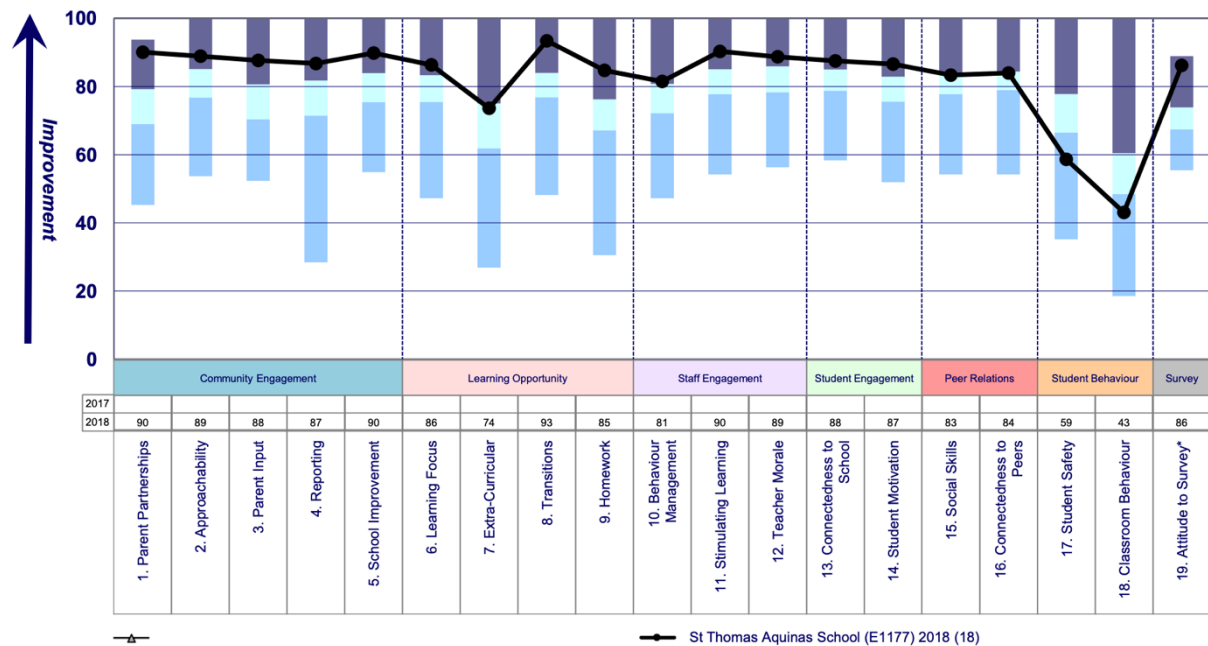
Additionally, we welcome and encourage our parents and families to become involved as active members of our school community through being a classroom, canteen, garden, café or any type of volunteer. We value the rich and diverse skills and knowledge that make up our parent and school community.

We have important partnerships with a range of external organisations, including:

- Ardoch Youth Foundation
- Bluebird Foundation Inc
- Cotton on Foundation
- Deakin University
- City of Greater Geelong
- St. Vincent De Pauls
- St. Josephs College
- Melbourne Arts Centre

- Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre

PARENT SATISFACTION



2018 Insight SRC Parent Opinion – Actual Scores

In 2018, 18 parents completed the School Improvement Survey. This is approximately 20% of families. All parents were invited to participate. We will continue to encourage parent feedback in order to improve the experience of children in our school. Parents have recognized that behaviour has improved and that opportunities for learning have been enhanced.

Our students of Maori background have had the opportunity to work with some leaders of the local Maori community on an on-going basis. This has helped these children to feel more connected to their culture, traditions and our school.

We continue to look for opportunities to engage our parents in the learning process and to help feel connected to the school.

