

Damascus College

Mount Clear

2020

Annual Report to the School Community



Registered School Number: 0265

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Minimum Standards Attestation

I, Matt Byrne, attest that Damascus College 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.

11/06/2021

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

Our College Vision & Mission

Damascus College is a dynamic Christ-centred learning community that values each member and is committed to inspiring and challenging students to reach their potential and contribute confidently to the global community.

College Overview

Damascus College is Ballarat's only Catholic co-educational Secondary College providing education for the whole family. Damascus is co-sponsored by the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) and the Parishes of Greater Ballarat to serve the community and surrounding areas.

Damascus College was established in 1995 from the amalgamation of its three predecessor Colleges: Sacred Heart College, St Martin's in the Pines and St Paul's College.

At Damascus College, our Catholic faith tradition is at the core of who we are and is reflected in our motto, 'To live by the light of Christ'. Our school is a Christ-centred learning community committed to a culture of excellence that values each member. We are committed to inspiring and challenging our students to reach their potential and to contribute confidently to the world around them.

Damascus College has a shared vision and values inspired by the Catholic tradition, and there are numerous opportunities to explore your faith, whatever that may be. We are proud of our Mercy heritage and traditions and are mindful of our place in the global community, and we will continue our commitment to helping people less fortunate.

We offer progressive and innovative learning that maximises educational outcomes. Our students are inspired by high expectations to become self-directed and motivated global citizens. Our diverse curriculum caters for various post-secondary pathways, providing young people with a solid foundation on which to build their lives by providing high quality, well-rounded education that focuses on the development of the whole person.

Our students and staff enjoy modern facilities in an inspiring 20-hectare bush setting, only 7km from the Ballarat CBD, and we are committed to providing a safe and sustainable environment cared for by all.

The Damascus community is a strong and vibrant one, where the contribution of all is optimised. We genuinely nurture respectful relationships that value all members in an inclusive and welcoming community. We have great commitment and pride in contributing to our College, and we celebrate diversity in a safe and supportive school.

Our parents are engaged in College life, and they contribute confidently to the growth of the College, our students and the broader community.

We are confident of a bright future for all the young people of Damascus College, and we will continue to inspire our Damascus community to reach our potential and place in the world.

Students graduate from Damascus with a clear sense of their own identity and worth and an appreciation of Christianity in the Catholic tradition.

Learning & Teaching at Damascus College

Damascus College strives to provide a dynamic, engaging, challenging, and supportive learning environment for its students. We understand that each student has individual learning needs, and we aim to provide classroom activities that differentiate the abilities and learning styles of our students.

At Damascus College, we encourage our young people to become flexible, creative and analytical thinkers. Our central goal is for students to reach their full academic, emotional and social potential, and we do this by providing them with the tools and support they need to achieve this outcome.

Damascus College students progress to a wide range of post-secondary pathways and, as such, the curriculum opportunities offered, reflect this diversity. Commencing in Years 7 and 8, the academic program exposes students to an extensive variety of subject matter. In these junior years, students will study Religious Education, English, Mathematics, Humanities, Health & Physical Education, Science and Languages (French or Indonesian) for the entire school year. They will also undertake a semester of Food Technology, Textiles, Wood, Metal, Art, Visual Communication, Drama and Music in both Years 7 and 8.

When students progress to Years 9 and 10, they continue to follow the core subjects of Religious Education, English, Mathematics, Humanities, Science and Health & Physical Education alongside a range of pathway choices. In addition, students have the opportunity to enrol in vocational courses that link to and enhance employment opportunities.

In the senior year levels of 11 and 12, students can choose to complete the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) in conjunction with Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) courses or School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs).

Principal's Report

2020 was a year of amazing achievement! Congratulations to every member of the Damascus community.

The students, staff, families and friends of Damascus College have much to be proud of in their collective and individual response to continuing quality learning and teaching in the face of the adversity that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our students and staff adapted quickly to an online learning environment as a requirement of remote learning. At times this presented challenges for everyone engaged with learning and teaching, but the capacity of Damascus students, staff and families to learn new things and pivot to a new way of doing things was nothing short of remarkable.

"Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8) was the College theme in 2020. The Damascus community worked hard to ensure a just response to the pandemic - kindness and empathy were evident, lived daily in the interactions between the school and home and flowed in both directions. Finally, we were invited to walk humbly with our God, and as we reflected upon a time of substantive disruption, it was acknowledged that we owed a prayer of gratitude; for the relative safety of Australia; for the people who love us and; for the education and care offered by the Damascus community in times of challenge.

The College Leadership Team of Chris Grant, Sarah Boswell, Ashwin Pillai, Tony Haintz, Tina Munro, Andrew Robertson, Paul Jans, with the support of Lynda Calistro, Human Resources Manager, were extraordinary in their professionalism in supporting me as College Principal. This team came together for hours, both face to face and remotely, depending on the restrictions. The team determined a series of principles that framed the College response, which included;

- Maintaining the safety of the entire Damascus community
- Ensuring we remain connected and support one another
- Ensuring continuity of quality learning and teaching
- Being willing to adapt, change and try new things, recognising that we will make mistakes at times.

By testing decisions against these principles throughout the year, we were proud of the response the College was able to achieve.

The College was able to progress a number of key strategic initiatives, including the consolidation of a revised Career's function, the advancement of support for Diverse Learners including the commencement of the 'Hands on Learning Program (HoLP)' and 'Content Learning in Languages (CLIL)', preparation for the celebrations in 2021 of 140 years of continuous Catholic Education, the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for staff and significant Board deliberation of future governance arrangements and strategic planning. All of these were very significant pieces of work alongside the critical incident management that the pandemic response demanded.

Paulene Barton led the Board early in 2021 and transitioned the leadership to Brendan Maher throughout the year. Paulene, Michael Myers and Joseph Cahir all concluded their time on the Board after significant individual contributions to directorship for which the College is grateful. Governors, Sr Berenice Kerr (RSM) and Fr Kevin Maloney again provided wonderful support to the Principal and the Leadership Team with the Board.

The Damascus College Board and staff continued to maintain an absolute focus on child safety in 2019, reiterating the importance of solid employment practices, ensuring students were empowered to speak up and continuing to keep a focus on restorative practices as a means of respecting the inherent dignity of each person within this community. Managing child safety in an online environment was particularly significant in 2020. Staff completed training in mandatory reporting, anaphylaxis, first aid, and teaching and learning remotely.

As a school community and despite the many challenges of the year, we were able to substantially progress our College Master Plan with the construction of the Damascus Events Centre (DEC). The DEC was first used by the graduating students of 2020 for their final exams and graduation event. It is a facility that will provide a place of gathering and pride for our community for generations to come, and we are fortunate to enjoy such beautiful spaces and grounds. I acknowledge the work of College Business Manager, Paul Jans with the support of the College's Leader of Development and Marketing, Sarah Boswell, in bringing this project to life.

Amongst the most resilient of our community in 2020 were the graduating class. The rites of passage and the preparation that sits alongside the students' final year of schooling in either the VCE or VCAL programs were severely compromised in 2020. These young men and women worked through these changes and challenges stoically and showed enormous gratitude for the experiences and memories that they were able to forge. The College community demonstrated enormous pride in all student achievement in 2020, but the appreciation of the attainments of the final year students was rightly immense. College Dux Grace Young Harvey achieved an ATAR of 99.5, a wonderful affirmation of the development of her gifts and her efforts throughout her schooling.

College Captains William Smith and Hannah Mroczkowski were committed School Captains, using their well-developed communication and social media skills to ensure the student population were connected and engaged. The College is very grateful for their contribution.

McAuley were consecutive Ron Mathews Shield Champions in 2020 in a fiercely contested competition. Congratulations McAuley!

Damascus College is very lucky to have such a hard-working and committed staff team. Their willingness to embrace change in 2020 was extraordinary. The Damascus staff team led the Damascus community response, and I acknowledge with gratitude their professionalism as they juggled their personal circumstances with the needs of the College. Among the many extraordinary contributions in 2020 were the efforts of the Information Technology team, who kept our community connected and ensured the infrastructure supported best practice, and we thank them. I also acknowledge the Grounds and Maintenance Team for their work to support infection control with regular hygiene and cleaning of the College. I also wish to acknowledge First Aider, Simon Carroll, for his presence every day during the lockdown period to support students onsite. His friendly and caring presence provided a constant for our student population.

Four exceptional servants concluded their time at Damascus in 2020.

Deb Larsen, a French and English teacher, concluded after 26 years delivering Mercy education here at Damascus College- a wonderful effort. Deb played many key roles within our community over those 26 years. Her contribution to the Languages team in more recent times was well publicised, and she was a key contributor to international trips and French language immersion experiences. Deb has always had an enthusiasm for students who have struggled with their learning, and she has played a significant role within the House leadership of St Martin House. Students and colleagues have always respected Deb, and we celebrate and thank her for her contribution to this community as she retires from the teaching profession at Damascus College.

Liz Sarah was a critical member of the St Martin's Resource Centre team — always supporting students in the library and with the resources needed. Liz worked in the library both at Victoria Street and then at Mount Clear. Liz's eight years on staff at Damascus have been characterised by her good humour, her commitment to education and her care for the young people of this community. We thank and acknowledge Liz for her work at Damascus College.

Ryan Docking concluded his teaching of Damascus students after a five-year commitment. Ryan has been respected by his colleagues and English students for his commitment to their best outcomes. Ryan also provided invaluable support to understanding the Microsoft Teams platform as 2020 unfolded, and we acknowledge his generous contribution to the College.

Brendan Doyle retired after a career that began with some casual work with Damascus College in the year 2000. Over the last 20 years, he has been a committed and hard-working member of the staff team, who has always kept a concern for student wellbeing and achievement at the core of his vocation. Brendan has taught many students Humanities, English and Religious Education, and amongst these, he has had a particular influence on the students of McAuley House. We acknowledge and thank Brendan for his commitment and contribution to Damascus College.

The following staff commenced at Damascus College in 2020;

- Finian Augustin joined the Languages and Maths teams
- Belinda Dwyer joined the VCAL team as the Applied Learning Coordinator
- Matthew Edwards joined the English team, and the role of Assistant House Leader Rice
- Sharon Hayes joined the SMRC team as Education Resources (Library) Leader
- Lisa Meade joined the Technology team as a Food Technology Assistant
- Naomi O'Brien commenced working with the Diverse Learning Team providing specialist support
- Anna Rowland joined the Languages team as Specialist Support for Indonesian classes
- Nicole Saleta joined the Science team as a Laboratory Technician;
- Lauren Stirling joined the Wellbeing Team as a Provisional Psychologist Intern
- Michelle Tapera joined the Careers team as Careers Officer
- Mary Vanderlinden joined the Technology team as a Food Technology Assistant
- Tony Van Der Ploeg joined the Maintenance team as a Maintenance Officer
- Kristiana Withers joined the Arts team as a Music Teacher
- Carley Young joined the Maths and Science teams

2020 was a year like no other. I was very grateful to have the privilege of the role in this caring and committed environment, which is centred on Christ and on learning. This dual foundation meant that we were able to face the challenges that 2020 created with optimism. I am proud to have been part of what was achieved, and I thank all members of the College community for the trust in Damascus and the many expressions of care and support extended throughout the year.

Thank you!

Church Authority Report

The Church Authority report has not been provided

Catholic School Culture

Goals & Intended Outcomes

In the area of Catholic Identity, the Strategic Directions of the College 2016-2020 state that:

At Damascus College, we are committed to a shared vision and values inspired by biblical and Damascus College traditions, demonstrated by -

- providing leadership-in-faith opportunities for students, staff and the broader community;
- ensuring that the Gospel and Catholic traditions are understood as guidance and support for life;
- personal and community responses to God's call in today's world expressed as social justice.

In the first years of the Strategic Directions for Damascus College, 2016-20 focused on Leadership-in-faith, which is about the ongoing formation of our Christian faith community. Leadership-in-faith is about the joy of the Gospel, and it is our point of difference. Leadership-in-faith is about encountering Christ, growing spirituality and responding in mission. In 2019 the focus was on the good news as the college considered Jesus' question, "But who do you say that I am?" Luke 9:20. In 2020 attention turned the final aspect of the plan: *personal and community responses to God's call in today's world expressed as social justice*. The prophecy of Micah was the College theme.

do justice,

love kindness,

and walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

Spoken eight centuries before Jesus' time in the dangerous context of the imminent invasion of first temple Jerusalem by the Assyrian army of Sennacherib and recorded for us in the ancient Hebrew text, the prophecy insists that justice, kindness and humility must prevail. These are the hallmarks of what is required. According to Micah, they were qualities sadly missing in ancient Judah. By Jesus' time and in his life and teachings, they retained their urgency. There would be few today who would not agree that the world is still in need of them in good measure. This human challenge was also the stuff of the Damascus College approach to 2020, the year of the coronavirus pandemic. In prayer and reflection, in social justice, and in faith development and sustainability, God's requirements were attended to.

Achievements

The achievements of the College are listed under the appropriate element of the strategic directions.

Shared Vision and Values inspired by biblical and Damascus College traditions

The vision of the College and the values that underpin it are critical to the life of the College and need to be named, proclaimed, understood and strategically worked toward.

The annual themes are taken from the sacred texts of the Catholic Church are a clear expression of the biblical underpinnings of the college. In the period of this strategic directions statement, they have reflected our foundations in Christ, in mercy, in justice and in good works.

2016 God's Mercy endures forever (Psalm 136)

2017 To Live by the Light of Christ (College Motto)

2018 Never Become Tired of Being Good (2 Thess 3:13)

2019 Who do you say that I am? (Luke 9:20)

2020 Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

2021 Be strong and courageous, for God is with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

The themes provide focus for liturgy, study and reflection and a footing from which to move strategically to becoming an authentic Catholic school.

The College has inhouse longitudinal data collection processes in the area of Catholic Vision and mission that is in itself a strong indicator of commitment to valuing data in the expression of achievement.

Our data from the Year 7 Parent Survey continues to be positive in relation to the core values of the college. Parents are asked to rate the College on how well it fosters relationships based on respect, responsibility, honesty, truth and inclusion. These parents are able to acknowledge that Damascus College is authentic in its teaching of Catholic values.

Religious Education

The Religious Education curriculum invites all students to enter into a process of encounter and dialogue with the God of the Catholic Tradition in a manner that is respectful and authentic to all who attend the College. Units of work are planned and implemented according to Diocesan expectations, the Awakenings Curriculum, and work is assessed and reported on appropriately.

Providing Leadership-In-Faith Opportunities for Students, Staff and the Broader Community

Toward Youth Ministry in Schools

In the Year of Youth 2018, the College chose to invest in research into Youth Ministry in Schools processes. We are hopeful that a Youth Ministry in Schools program can evolve in this space and that it will have an impact for staff and the broader community as well. In 2019 a position description for a Youth Ministry Implementation Project Officer was developed and filled in readiness for the 2020 school year. The pandemic put a hold on any plans for a 2021 class program. An adequate promotion and introduction to the program with students was not possible in remote learning. Even the plan to introduce the preferred Youth Ministry Model from CSYMI (Catholic Schools Youth Ministry International) as part of the College's Staff Faith Development Day was a COVID cancellation.

In 2020 the Project Officer, Sally Murphy, worked tirelessly on presentations to the principal, the Religious Education Faculty and the Catholic Vision and Values Sub-committee of the Damascus College Board and the general staff. Contacts were maintained with CSYMI and Australian Catholic University's La Salle Academy for Faith Formation and Religious Education. This concerns the concept of New Evangelisation. New Evangelisation is about re-proposing the Gospel to a world that no longer sees it as relevant or important. It is about forging new paths in response

to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today. During this time of the papacy of Pope Francis, it is as much about inspiration as it is about exhortation. Their program, Spiritus, was chosen as the vehicle for training Damascus College staff in readiness for the development of the launch in 2021. On 19th and 20th November 2020, seven staff members, including College leadership, RE teachers and those interested in the Youth Ministry program, attended online sessions. The launch will consist of a program in Year 9 classes in second term of 2021 and a Reflection Day planned with Fr Rob Galea of the Sandhurst Diocese. (FRG Ministries)

Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic Prayer experiences

Our Lady of Mercy Chapel was blessed by Bishop Paul Bird at the conclusion of the opening Mass on Friday 14th February 2014, and since then, the chapel has become a focus for significant liturgy and prayer experiences. This includes Staff prayer on Thursday mornings in the chapel using the Lectio Divina prayer form based on the gospel reading for the following Sunday as well as year level Masses and class prayer. But 2020 would prove to be different. The regular programs for worship and reflection were not possible in a pandemic lockdown.

The year formally began Friday 14th February 2020 at 11:30am with Mass in the John Shannon Centre celebrated by Bishop Paul Bird. The words of the prophet Micah that were to be our theme for 2020: Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8) were proclaimed. In the prayers of intercession, we prayed: that during 2020 we come to understand more deeply your call to justice, to kindness and to humility. May we accept and appreciate the challenge of our education and pray that you help us to be our best. We pray to the Lord. The prayer was prophetic for the year that was to follow. The Opening Mass was the only full school Mass of 2020.

Christian Prayer and Leadership-in-Faith

In 2020 the Damascus College Prayer Book continued to be made available for all staff members as a resource to support prayer in the Catholic Christian Tradition. The Prayer Book was used to enhance staff gatherings and in TA times, even when learning was only online. At Damascus College, all meetings begin with a prayer that reflects the faith underpinnings of the College. The Prayer Book supports this.

In 2020 TA teachers were asked to be proactive about having students lead the prayer in TA time. By developing a weekly prayer cycle, prayer was modelled from the biblical and liturgical prayer traditions. A richer daily prayer experience has been the result. The general pattern for TA prayer was as follows:

- a) Monday: Weekly Prayer Theme: Forgiveness; Gratitude; Grit; Praise (On the Bulletin; maybe from the Prayer Book)
- b) Tuesday: From the Damascus Prayer Book (Chosen by TA)
- c) Wednesday: From the Bible's Prayer Book, the Psalms (on the Bulletin)
- d) Thursday: Meditation (Focus indicated on the bulletin)
- e) Friday: Prayer from the Lectionary or Missal - Sunday's Prayer at Mass (On the Bulletin)

A Culture of Mercy

In 2019 Faith, Life and Ministry Education (FLAME) Coordinator was appointed by the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua and New Guinea, and programs have emerged in 2020 for Damascus College staff to engage in. These went online following the shutdown. International Mercy Immersion programs were cancelled. The Mercy Education group offered professional learning that was taken up by senior leadership members. Psychologist, Dr Aimee Maxwell presented in the zoom environment on strategies for managing mental health and resilience in times of crisis or conflict.

Accreditation

The last three years have seen a significant intake of teachers new to Catholic education and the retirement of some longer-term staff members. In 2020 a change in the Accreditation Policy to a more ongoing approach to professional learning in the critical area of Catholic identity. The new policy is named "Accreditation to Teach or Teach Religious Education or Lead in Catholic Schools in Victoria." In 2020 saw one staff member complete study through the Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP) program. Another fourteen have been assisted to apply for their accredited status. The longer-term efforts in the area of staff faith development are coming to fruition.

Ensuring That the Gospel and Catholic Traditions Are Understood As Guidance and Support for Life

Other than the Year 12 Retreat and the massively trimmed Year 10 CPDA Introductory Program, the retreats and reflection days, visitation to the elderly, and some social justice activities were COVID-19 wipe-outs.

Personal And Community Responses to God's Call in Today's World Expressed as Social Justice.

The social justice processes continued in new ways after lockdown, while the Board Subcommittee for Catholic Vision and Values worked in online meetings and concluded a revised Social Justice in Action Policy. Year 7 Mercy and Eucharist Program, the Year 8 Justice and Eucharist Program, The Seeds of Justice Programs, including the Streetwise Sleepover and the Timor Leste Immersion, were all abandoned in 2020. The student-based Justice Action Group developed an online concert using student talent to promote the St Vincent de Paul Winter appeal. The collection for Catholic Mission occurred in early fourth term after an online awareness raising program, Soctober, and the Christmas Lunch Appeal in association with Vinnies was a great success at the end of the year. Letters Against ISO was a positive venture in kindness, linking our students with people locked in elderly care during the pandemic. Students' volunteer letter writing was an act of solidarity with those in significant need.

The sustainability team grew in numbers, with the College applying successfully for a grant to build a glasshouse near the environmental garden. It is intended to use the construction to support the propagation of native plants, especially the Murnong, which is native to the area. Working bees in preparation for the glasshouse were acts of kindness in line with the aspirations of young people to address the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (Pope Francis, Laudato Si).

Of special note was the abandonment of the 10th Timor Leste Immersion in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown. The College continues to keep our friends in mind by looking to support through other Ballarat connections. It is unclear where the future of the relationship lies. To a great extent, this has led to the significant downturn of fundraising in 2020.

Christian Personal Development Award

The Christian Personal Development Award (CPDA) began at Damascus College in May 2003. The 36th Year 10 CPDA Introductory Program concluded in November 2020. The program introduces the students to a certificate that they can aim to achieve in their final years of schooling at the college. In 2020 the program only included a reflection day based on the corporal works of Mercy.

Some creative thinking and some humility about what CPDA could mean was required in 2020. With regular activities curtailed, a plan to assist students was needed. Students in Year 12 were given hours enough to achieve the award for their efforts: Regular social contact in COVID-19; Adopting mental health strategies in COVID-19, and Regular Physical Activity in COVID-19. The same hours were given to all Year 11 students so that their CPDA year could progress. The week-long Year 10 CPDA Introductory Program was cut to one day later in the year as the corporal works of Mercy were introduced to the next cohort.

In November, the Year 12 class of 2020 were the sixteenth group of graduating students to have the opportunity to achieve the Christian Personal Development Award (CPDA). The CPDA is awarded to students who have completed 120 hours (in COVID, just 60 hours) of personal development activities balanced across the four categories: Action for Social Justice / Community Service; Spiritual Development; Physical Pursuits, Other Personal Development Activities. The CPDA has become the backbone to extra-curricula experience in the senior school. The Awards were presented to all Year 12 students at Graduation.

VALUE ADDED

The inability of the College to gather even in smaller groups was a challenge to the ways in which faith was expressed. All on and off campus Masses, retreats and reflection days were cancelled after lockdown began. Justice demanded that the celebrations that were possible become humble and online in character. There was a need for flexibility and adaptation. Kindness demanded that the prayer events be limited in length. Staff and community prayer were maintained in online formats, albeit in quite different forms. For example, the graduation event could not be Mass and dinner. The new Damascus College Events Centre had become available in time for exams, and the lessening of restrictions on school gatherings was just enough to allow a significant event. At 5:30pm on 3rd December, a live-streamed occasion themed, Let Your Light Shine, acknowledged the end of thirteen years of schooling in a prayerful way.

The experience of remote learning in 2020 was complex and challenging for Religious Education. However, once students and teachers adapted, joy and strength emerged from this

new experience. Teachers found new ways to enjoy the gift that is our students and reflect on what it is that gives our lives true meaning. All learned valuable life lessons in gratitude and appreciation by not taking family, education, friendship and work for granted.

Areas of ongoing focus

The College Strategic Directions

- Acknowledgement of Indigenous Heritage
- SIF Survey 2021
- Youth Ministry in Schools
- Growing the Sustainability profile in the College
- Plenary Council
- 140 Years of Catholic Education in Ballarat East
- 200 Years of Catholic Education in Australia
- Accreditation offerings for staff
- Induction and Faith Formation Processes for Staff
- Staff Formation: on-boarding and ongoing
- Awakenings Religious Education Curriculum Development: File Location
- VCAL Religious Education Program refinement
- Family Faith Formation and the ECSIP and SIF data
- Be My Best and Catholic School Culture

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal 1: Confident and clear communication processes giving voice to the wisdom of all

- Implement the DC Marketing & Communications Plan. Promote the College within the Ballarat community and to oversee the production of all advertising and promotional material. Reinforce the Be My Best marketing campaign that was developed in 2018 to further consolidate the brand. Introduce new online advertising for Info Evenings and Open Mornings
- Reinforce the Damascus brand with staff, enforcing the Communication Style Guide
- Communicate with local media to promote events, achievements and activities on an on-going basis
- Regular posts and engagement on Damascus College Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages
- Develop and introduce the new website to be mobile friendly and a new enhanced look and feel
- Communicate regularly to DC Alumni, e.g. Facebook, advertisements, emails, newsletter
- Increase Alumni engagement and events throughout the year - host a special reunion
- Expand the Be My Best campaign to incorporate extra-curricular filming to create new TVC
- Manage the organisation of College archives to be moved to the new site
- Develop promotional material for the new Strategic Plan 2021-2025
- Conduct a new photoshoot to update marketing and promotional photos of students

Goal 2: Engaged parents who contribute to the growth of students, the College and broader community

- Engage parents in established school events and ensure opportunities for participation are communicated via a range of methods Eg. Guest Speaker, Mother's & Father's Day liturgies, Morning Teas, Academic Assembly
- Communicate regularly with current and prospective parents through a range of mediums, including the College Facebook page, Instagram, YouTube, College Newsletter and SMS messages
- Communicate volunteer opportunities to parents and grow the volunteer database
- Communicate to current parents to join DC Alumni via email, Facebook, Instagram, newsletter, LinkedIn
- Conduct an online survey with Year 7 parents about why they chose Damascus College
- Respond to parent enquiries in a timely manner, e.g. within 24 hours
- Consolidate the Parent Ambassador program with the College, at Info Evenings and other opportunities

- Increase alumni activities and ensure current parents are invited, as they are also past students
- Communicate effectively with parents regarding upcoming College event opportunities
- Develop and organise key events for prospective parents and families

Goal 3: Strong links to the global community

- Lead the working party for the 140-year anniversary celebration of Catholic education in 2021
- Host all 17 Catholic primary schools for a transition visit
- Conduct a Maths Games Day for Grade 4 students from key catholic primary schools - St Alipius, SFX and Emmaus
- Host Guest Speaker event and invite catholic primary staff, parents and local community to guest speaker event in May
- Build connections with past students and staff by growing the alumni database to maximise their engagement in College life
- Host five class reunions and introduce target area reunions once every five years, e.g. Performing Arts, Rowing, EBT, Rowing, St Pauls
- Host two giving events per year - Bright Futures fundraising events
- Develop strategy to increase giving within the community, e.g. sponsorship tiers
- Communicate College events and activities regularly to catholic newsletters, such as Catholic Diocese of Ballarat - Our Diocesan Community and Sisters of Mercy - just Mercy e-newsletter
- Host more outside events at Damascus, inviting the community
- Invite Grade 5 students from target Catholic Primary School's to performing arts production, limited space available at venue
- Maintain positive relationships with key local media personnel
- Represent Damascus at Catholic Development Network
- Engage Alumni artist each year for the Alumni Art Prize
- Promote the Bright Futures scholarship to the Primary School community
- Seek and apply for government grants where possible to support College activities
- Continue to develop the Inspiring Alumni Awards to honour alumni, members of our community and to inspire current students.
- Regularly promote Damascus to wider community using key messages, building on the brand
- Build and strengthen relationships with businesses and organisations in the local community
- Explore fundraising and sponsorship opportunities for the College with the local community

Achievements

Goal 1 Achievements

Throughout 2020 Damascus College was promoted in line with the Strategic Directions 2016 - 2020, where the key strategic directions were promoted consistently as key messages, including

the development of new Be. My. Best creative incorporating the extra-curricular footage that was developed for the 2019 Awards & Achievement evening. The main messages in this campaign that align with the strategic directions were:

- Be the best I can be
- I'm ready to take on anything
- Find my calling
- It's what I have inside...and what's around me
- I'm part of something greater
- I'm supported
- Be. My. Best.

Reinforcing our key messages and tagline consistently throughout the year in all forms of promotion to the community aims to improve and strengthen the overall perception of Damascus by the wider community. All marketing promotion undertaken within this campaign has been clear and confident, with the aim of building a strong, confident and easily recognisable brand in the community.

The Be. My. Best. campaign continued to gain momentum throughout 2020 with the new creative engaging with prospective students and families. Due to COVID-19 and remote learning throughout the bulk of 2020, the small working party made up of myself and the three Assistant Principals were to continue to work together to further embed the Be My Best messaging into the culture of the College. We had done some work in late 2019 and early 2020 prior to going into remote learning, where the Be My Best messaging was embedded to become a holistic framework for the College, incorporating Social and Emotional Learning characteristics and gave it meaning to our Catholic culture by developing a narrative of 'Beyond the Road'. The aim is still for 2021 implementation, but it might be to the end of 2021.

Marketing, Promotions and Advertising

The Be. My. Best. campaign was again rolled out throughout 2020 in line with the key student recruitment events, promotions included the following mediums:

- TV advertisements
- Regent cinema advertisements - cancelled due to COVID-19
- Newspaper advertisements
- Facebook advertising
- Instagram advertising
- General online advertising
- Website
- Road Sign
- Printed collateral

In addition to the Be My Best advertising strategy, throughout 2020, we also invested in online advertising to build our alumni database, which proved successful. The online ads on Facebook and Instagram have increased our exposure but also enabled past students to reconnect with the College.

Social media Analysis

Advertising on Facebook and Instagram is proving successful in reaching our key target marketing, being prospective families. The October event outperformed the September event, which is usually the case as it is the last key event prior to enrolments closing.

For the last two years, we placed an alumni general campaign on social media (Facebook and Instagram) to build our alumni database, with the call to action being to Update Your Details. In 2019 we ran three months of advertising when compared to one month in 2020. The results of the July 2020 campaign was very successful and can be attributed to the development and deployment of the 'Together We are Damascus' campaign. The alumni social media campaign included a more specific series of pictures of past students in uniforms from the foundation colleges in certain eras, so they told more of a story, which was then put on to a video. The 'Together We are Damascus' campaign was developed throughout 2020 with the aim to bring the three foundation colleges together to identify as one, Damascus College. It also included the development of a new hashtag which was used on all alumni posts and advertising throughout the year - #TogetherWeAreDamascus. This campaign is now used on all alumni marketing and communications and will also be enhanced as we have commenced promoting the 140 year anniversary for 2021 throughout 2020.

In addition to social media advertising, we also engaged in online advertising that targets users looking for Education on different websites. Due to COVID-19 in 2020, our event pivoted to be an Online webinar, so the target audience for this advertising was adjusted to target those that more closely align with online products and usage, so this accounted for the drop in statistics. That said, attendance at the event was still strong, even though the ad has a reduction in clicks, impressions etc.

Damascus advertises and engages regularly on social media, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn. These varieties of platforms target different audiences, including current parents, students and prospective families.

This year we discontinued the Damascus Twitter page as it was generating limited results, and instead, we put more time and energy into our YouTube channel, with engaging video content that is getting great results.

At the end of 2020, there were 3,742 followers of the Damascus Facebook page, compared to 3,454 followers at the end of 2019, which is a healthy annual increase of 8.34% (288 followers) which is a slight decrease compared to 2019 (52 followers). The below graph shows consistent growth in Facebook likes throughout the year. The second graph below shows the growth in Facebook page likes from 2015 to 2020. There has been steady growth throughout each year which is important.

2020 proved to be a very different year for engaging our community with social media and, in particular, video content. With the pivot to two rounds of remote learning, the Development team adapted and developed 45 videos to engage our community and assist in keeping everyone connected. Consequently, the amount of Facebook posts that generated 2500 + in reach grew by 25% to 35, when compared to 28 in 2019. Thus proving that video content increases engagement on social media.

As part of our social media strategy, we engage heavily in Instagram, which predominantly reaches our younger audience, our students, which was introduced to the Damascus College community in 2018 as a communication platform, and we now regularly post on Instagram to reach our younger student audience. At the time of doing this report (May 2021), we have 1,596 followers on Instagram, which is a 31% increase on the previous year.

In 2020 the two highest posts for Reach were:

22 May at 6:00pm, where we held a live stream back to onsite learning, with Principal and two Assistant Principals which generated 9,100 in reach, an excellent result and a fantastic way to inform our community.

The second highest post for reach with 6,100 was the Find MND Ice bucket challenge with raised funds for Motor Neurone Disease. This was a really fun video where students and staff dressed up for a cause.

Media Coverage

In order to build the Damascus brand within the community and celebrate the Damascus story, it is also important to provide consistent, clear and constant communication to local media, building local community links. Due to COVID-19 and remote learning, there was limited opportunity to engage with our local media as students weren't doing as much to celebrate, and we weren't located at the campus to welcome the media.

As a result, only 12 media releases were developed throughout 2020 that generated positive media coverage throughout the year; however, we still generated 22 articles throughout the year in the Ballarat Courier newspaper, which is an excellent result.

Media coverage:

- Ballarat Courier - 22 articles
- WIN News and 9 News
- ABC Radio and Power FM
- Our Diocesan Community
- Just Mercy

New website

To become a school of first choice, it is important for the College to have a strong, consistent and professional digital presence that is current and up to date with the 21st century. Throughout 2019 and 2020, the Damascus website we re-designed and successfully implemented in September 2020. The content was reviewed, and the functionality, look and feel was to be updated to be more impactful, cleaner and more user friendly, especially on mobile devices.

Website Re-design Goals Achieved:

- Optimised for mobile devices, so images look more impactful when viewed via a mobile device
- Minimise the amount of clicks on all pages
- Include consistent calls to action (Visit Us, Register for Event etc.) with impactful images throughout the website
- Homepage to be cleaner and more simple, and include a Hamburger menu with drop down menus, instead of drop down menus horizontally across the homepage
- Visit Us link to be prominent on homepage
- Use images to create impact and tell a story
- Include a social media feed and Latest News on the homepage
- Updated CMS for ease of use behind the scenes

- Ability to incorporate video into the homepage
- Redesign the newsletter to be more impactful, more inviting and to offer different view options to suit the reader
- Enable accessible archive of each weekly newsletter

The new website has numerous functions, which makes the user experience a more pleasant experience. The homepage is now mobile friendly, so it is scrollable, allowing for multiple pieces of items to be housed on the homepage. We now have the ability to have the following on the homepage:

- Hamburger menu for navigation
- Video header
- My DC for navigation for parents and staff
- Welcome from Principal
- 2 call to action videos
- Feature News
- Newsletter news
- Social media news - direct feed from Facebook

The hamburger menu is the key piece of navigation on the website, which has been introduced to allow the website to be clean and fresh, free of menus at a first glance. 'My DC' was introduced to house the login pages for our parents and staff, and this is working extremely well. It is video enabled so that any page can now incorporate video within the header. The templates and CMS used for the new website are very intuitive and easy to use, making updating the website much easier.

When the College pivoted to remote learning due to COVID-19, we weren't able to host School Tours or Open Mornings. So in order to be innovative and continue to engage with our prospective families, we introduced a Virtual Tour facility, which is accessible on our website. This has proven invaluable during remote learning and is a fabulously professional showcase of our facilities.

The College newsletter was also redeveloped in line with the new website so that the layout and functionality is much more engaging. Viewers have the ability to view it in multiple ways, thus increasing its readership.

2020 TV advertisements

The Be My Best TV advertisement had a refresh for 2020 where the video footage was changed to use the extra-curricular footage taken in last 2019 for the Award & Achievement evening. The messaging remained the same, but the visuals were different and engaging. These videos were used to promote the Information Webinars in September and October, as Open Mornings were cancelled due to COVID restrictions. These were again broken up into 30 sec and 15 sec advertisements.

The TV advertisements were placed with Prime 7 and Channel 9, and the demographic for these ads were defined as Grocery Buyers throughout Western Victoria. These TV ads were successful in raising the profile of Damascus College, as well as promoting the events to increase attendance.

Due to COVID-19, Information Evenings became Information Webinars that were streamed live and Open Mornings were cancelled and replaced with Guided Virtual Tours.

As Open Morning was cancelled in 2020, we offered Guided Virtual Tours from the end of July 2020, which were very popular. This service offered an opportunity for prospective families to tour the campus from the comfort of their homes. Throughout 2020 the registrar engaged with 41 families through the virtual tour function.

The 2020 above statistics show that attendance at the two Information Webinars decreased by 15%, which although it is a decrease from 2019 attendance, given the COVID restrictions it is still an excellent result. It is important to realise that prospective families gather their information on a school from a variety of different mediums. It is also evident in our enrolment statistics that many of our incoming Year 7 2022 families are return families (siblings) that already have students at Damascus; therefore, they may not choose to attend these events as they are already familiar with the College. Our application numbers were again strong for 2022 commencement, with a slight decrease of 1.25% on the previous year.

The second Open Morning in February was again well attended, as it is the final event prior to the application close date on 14 February 2020. Our online database, Enquiry Tracker, also shows that those attending our events are also applying for future years, including 2022 - 2028 commencement. This reinforces the notion that prospective parents are doing their research early, with the aim of wanting to apply years in advance in order to secure a position, an encouraging result.

After each student recruitment event (Info Webinar and Virtual Tour), these contacts are followed up with an email to thank them for their attendance and to see if there is anything further we can assist them with. This increased contact after an event is aimed at increasing engagement, communication, and ultimately enrolments.

The College received 373 (473 in 2019) enquiries received via the online system throughout 2020 for a variety of commencing years (2022-2028), which is broken up by year levels and months. 294 (260 in 2019) Enrolment Packs were sent out throughout 2020, which is broken up by month.

Alumni

In 2020 planned activities for Damascus College Alumni were greatly impacted by the COVID worldwide pandemic. Class reunions were re-scheduled twice but were not able to be held in 2020 due to restrictions and guidelines. It did, however, bring other opportunities for the past students and staff of Damascus College with the development of the "Together. We are Damascus." campaign.

To engage the community, a one-minute video was developed; this was then shared on social media as well as posted to our website. Its message is, "Together, we celebrate our proud history and recognise and celebrate our foundation schools; Sacred Heart College, St Paul's Technical College, and St Martin's in the Pines. Past students and staff of these foundation Colleges and Damascus College form our alumni."

With events cancelled or rescheduled, it was possible to focus on refining and updating the content on the College website related to Alumni and to launch the web-based Alumni newsletter.

The Damascus College alumni data was refined throughout 2020. Alumni engagement in 2020 included various alumni communications, publications and advertising that sought contact information. Alumni with contact information has grown from 5,145 in 2015 to 8,017 at the end of 2020, an increase of 8%. Alumni with a verified email address is 56% of individuals contained within the Damascus College Alumni database.

The accuracy and relevance of the data for alumni continued to be improved in 2020. The sustained marketing and communication efforts with the alumni community is successfully shown

in these numbers. The Damascus College Alumni Facebook Closed Group has also grown by 18% in 2020. It is a way to re-connect with past students of Sacred Heart, St Paul's, St Martin's in the Pines and Damascus. It is another avenue that we can share information relevant to our alumni as well as stay connected and form new connections.

The increase in members is related to the number and variety of alumni events, communications, publications and advertising that took place throughout the year. Alumni actively sought out ways to stay connected and have found the Facebook groups offer a variety of information to them. Posts throughout 2020 included notice of upcoming events and activities, death notices, alumni in the news and regular posts, including pictures, from items uncovered in the archives.

On 25th June, a post celebrating the Feast of the Sacred Heart engaged with our alumni resulting in more than 40 comments of shared memories and reflections of this event from their time at school.

The Alumni Art Project was revamped in 2020 and rebranded as the Alumni Art Prize. New and exciting promotional advertising was used to spark interest and excitement by alumni in this activity that seeks to engage Damascus College Alumni in the life and community of Damascus College through producing a piece of art that explores the school's motto 'To Live By the Light of Christ'. Launched in 2014, the College has engaged the services of an alumni each year to create a piece of artwork to be displayed in the Visitor Reception area of the College for a 12-month period. At the end of the initial 12-month period, the College will retain the artwork for display or storage in another location within the College. The artist is chosen from a selection of nominations by the College Leadership Team. The submissions for the 2020 Prize were of a very strong calibre, with Class of 1974 member Dr Maria Stratford being chosen, a photograph on archival paper. Her piece can be seen hanging in the Mercy Wing Administration Building.

Year 7 Enrolment data analysis

It is important to understand that Damascus College engages in promotion two years in advance of the Year 7 enrolment year. So the work done in 2020 affects the application and enrolment data for the 2022 Year 7 Enrolment year.

An overall goal for Damascus College each year is to increase the Catholic applications and enrolments from year to year.

Total application numbers have been consistently around 250 from 2010 to 2015, and from 2016 to 2020, total application numbers have been growing closer to and above 300 per enrolment year. In 2020, for 2021 commencement, we had 317 total applications, which is a decrease of 1.25% from the previous year of 321 applications. Interestingly the number of sibling applications has increased for 2021 commencement.

The total number of Catholic (baptism and sacraments) applications is higher from the previous year from 148 to 159, an increase of 7.43%, which is an excellent result. 50.16% of total applications received in 2020 for 2022 commencement are Catholic. Again for the second consecutive year, the College made a decision to not interview all applications as done in previous years; instead, 272 of 317 applicants were interviewed, equating to 85% of total applications.

Of the 317 applications received, 254 offers were sent out in 2020 for 2022 commencement. Of these, 208 offers were accepted, 122 (58.65%) of the 208 accepted offers are Catholic (baptism and sacraments), which is an increase from last year's 106 of the 208 offers or the 2022 enrolment year. The level of Catholic applications received and offers accepted have increased considerably when compared to last year, which is a fantastic affirmation of reaching our goal of increasing catholic enrolments at Damascus College.

An overall goal for Damascus College is to grow our Catholic enrolments, and it is pleasing to see that our Catholic enrolments have grown at an excellent rate when comparing the last five years. As seen above, there was 11% growth from 2018 to 2019, 22% growth from 2019 to 2020 and -1% growth from 2020 to 2021. In 2022 our Catholic enrolments grew 15% from 2021 commencement, with 58.65% of total enrolments being Catholic and 41% being Non-Catholic, which is an excellent result.

Goal 2 Achievements

Due to COVID-19, 2020 was a unique year where most College events that engaged current and prospective parents were postponed, cancelled or moved online due to the move to remote learning. The usual parent engagement events such as Guest Speaker, Awards & Achievement Evening, Mother's & Father's Day Liturgies, Year 7 new parents morning teas, TA interviews, Orientation Day morning tea, and Meet the Teachers evening were reimagined to continue to connect our community albeit from home.

The key recruitment events that are the Information Evenings had moved to live stream events where we adapted quickly to the need to continue to provide information and engagement to prospective families via an online forum. Due to not being able to host school tours, we developed a virtual tour of our facilities, which proved invaluable in continuing to offer prospective families an insight into what we offer as a secondary education provider. Families were able to click on the virtual tour via the website, where they could self-navigate through the various locations, or they could book a guided virtual tour with the registrar. This virtual tour facility will remain a feature of our website moving forward as it is a wonderfully innovative service to offer that enhances the professionalism of the College promotions to our community.

For other key events such as Anzac Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, we adapted again, where the Development team produced numerous videos to engage our community throughout the periods of remote learning. Our social media platforms became a hive of activity where students and staff contributed to engaging content that lifted the spirits and enabled our community to remain connected in an unprecedented time. The types of videos that were produced throughout 2020 included over 30 videos covering topics such as:

- Anzac Day
- College Events including Damascus Day, Year 12 Assembly, Awards & Achievement, Grade 5 Transition Days, Subject Selection, Reconciliation Day
- R U Ok Day
- Fundraising - Ice bucket challenge
- Gathering space
- Exercise
- Mother's/Father's Day
- Gratitude
- In this together
- SRC, student leaders and school captain
- Staff profiles
- Welcome back to campus
- Well-being self-care

TA interviews moved online where all students, staff and families adapted to using Microsoft Teams, which had its pros and cons. A significant advantage of online TA interviews was the increase in attendance, as families could participate from the comfort of their own home, or split families could join the meeting from their separate locations.

The 2020 year commenced with the Academic Assembly, and it was again successful in achieving its aim of inspiring the student body to achieve academic excellence by celebrating the academic achievements of Damascus students in front of the whole school cohort. This event invited parents and families to Damascus to celebrate student achievement, with a total of 65 (83 previous) award recipients, families and special guests in attendance, as well as the whole Damascus student body. In total, we recognised 15 (28 previous) students for their academic achievement throughout 2019, and numerous students received multiple awards, totalling 32 (55 previous) awards.

The mediums used to communicate to parents in 2020 included the College Facebook, Instagram, YouTube page, College newsletter, website, letters by mail, email and SMS messages. SMS and emails remain the most common form of communication to parents, with the front office and Office Manager coordinating these for most staff to ensure consistency.

The alumni database has grown by 6% from 11,903 in 2019 to 12,602 in 2020, where current families have been encouraged to join and register their details via the alumni section on the website or through the Damascus or St Paul's alumni Facebook groups.

An online parent survey was conducted to Year 8 parents, reflecting on their experience as a Year 7 parent the year previous. This data is compiled and used by the Leadership Team to continually improve processes at Damascus College. It is the Damascus philosophy to respond to parent enquiries in a timely manner, which is generally completed as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the enquiry has been made.

Student attendance at College events is extremely important, however, due to COVID-19, the College was only able to host one College event, being 2020 Swimming Carnival, before going into remote learning, and no whole school events were held for the remainder of the 2020 school year. In 2020 attendance at the Swimming Carnival when compared to 2019 was 962 (862 in 2019), an increase of 11%. It is a challenge to reduce the number of absences at these key events, but we continually communicate the importance of these events to parents.

Parent Access Module (PAM) and TA interviews are other events and forms of communication to parents about student progress. Parents attending TA interviews in 2020 grew when compared to 2019. There are four opportunities for parents to attend a TA interview, and for 2020 there was good growth in Term 2, 3 and 4. A growth in attendance can be attributed to the shift to online TA interviews and these suiting families in being able to attend. It could also be attributed to parents working from home during COVID lockdown and had a greater opportunity to engage throughout the day due to a degree of flexibility in their own work practice.

Goal 3 Achievements

In 2021 the Damascus College community celebrates our 140 year anniversary, dating back to 1881 with the commencement of Sacred Heart College. Throughout 2020 a working party was formed to begin the planning process to celebrate and affirm this significant milestone. The working party met numerous times throughout 2020 and devised plans to celebrate the anniversary via numerous internal College events (Opening Mass, Damascus Day and Awards & Achievement Evening) and a significant hallmark community event, now known as the Gala Night. It was the aim of the working party to engage our students, staff and wider community in this anniversary so that they connect with it, understand the significance and are proud of this

milestone. A significant promotional schedule was developed, which centred around digital marketing, incorporating monthly videos being developed in-house and released on social media, website, newsletter to connect and tell our 140-year story to our wider community.

There were some challenges in choosing to celebrate our 140 year anniversary, as in 2014 we celebrated the 20 year anniversary of Damascus College and in 2017 the 50 year anniversary of Mercy Education at Mt Clear, so it was fair to say that our community could get confused with the many dates and celebrations throughout the last 10 years. Therefore, it was and still is extremely important for Damascus College to acknowledge and celebrate our full history, including our foundation colleges, just as much as we celebrate the formation of Damascus College. The rich history and traditions we continue to develop date back to 1881, and so the story of how Damascus came to be was increasingly important to tell our students, staff and wider community.

Our Damascus history:

- Sacred Heart College commenced in 1881.
- St Paul's Technical College commenced in 1948.
- St Martin's in the Pines (Sacred Heart Senior College) commenced in 1967.
- The above Colleges amalgamated in 1995 to form Damascus College

In addition to series of monthly videos, a special anniversary publication will be developed to coincide with the Gala Night in October 2021, which will be distributed to past students, current families, staff and members of the wider community, along with the Spring edition of The Road publication. In addition to this, an anniversary badge will be produced, which will be distributed to students during Catholic Education Week in May 2021 after a build-up of the anniversary celebration throughout the week at TA sessions.

The Bright Futures Scholarship has been promoted throughout 2020, primarily to Primary School Principals, as to be eligible, they are encouraged to endorse one applicant from their community. Applications close in line with the enrolment close date of 5 Feb 2021, and applications were much lower than the inaugural year, so more promotion needs to occur in future years. This scholarship gives 50% tuition relief for one Year 7 student for the duration of their time at Damascus, so in order to be able to offer this scholarship to more than one student per year, we have set an ambitious fundraising target so that we can offer two scholarships per year. To raise funds for this scholarship, we again hosted the Bright Futures Fundraising Breakfast on Thursday, 12 March. The College was thrilled to welcome a large contingent of attendees with 78 guests, which is 73% growth from the 2019 event. Attendees consisted of alumni, staff and community members and was held at the Ballarat Golf Club. Other special guests included several Sisters of Mercy, leaders from the Catholic Education Office Ballarat (CEOB) and the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat offices.

The assembled crowd were welcomed to the breakfast by Assistant Principal, Tony Haintz who opened the festivities with a simple prayer of welcome. Sarah Boswell, Leader of Marketing & Development, then shared details about the Bright Futures Scholarship, its benefactors and the need to support the scholarship through fundraising before welcoming to the stage Year 10 student Megan O'Beirne. Megan spoke from the heart about what receiving the 2018 Sporting Scholarship meant to her and how it has impacted her life.

The special guest speaker for this event was Judy Brewer, Order of Australia. Judy, from the Class of 1979 is Chair of the Autism CRC since its inception in 2013. In 2017 she became Pro-Chancellor of Charles Sturt University. In 2019 Judy received a Churchill Fellowship and was named one of the inaugural Shining Light, Inspiring Alumni Award winner. She is the mother to

two amazing boys Harrison and Dominic, and widow of the former Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer.

This Bright Futures event is beginning to gain momentum, and we look forward to hosting more of these fundraising events in 2021 and beyond.

Judy spoke openly of her time as a boarder at Sacred Heart, the loss of her beloved husband Tim and her work with Autism CRC. Judy shared her journey as the mother of an autistic son with all its bounties and challenges. Judy then engaged with the audience during a lively and very entertaining Q&A session. She discussed the significance and importance of her personal motto, "bloom where you are planted", and her journey to create a more inclusive and welcoming world for everyone, including autistic people. In holding this fundraising event, Damascus College seeks to extend the Bright Futures Scholarship to more than one Year 7 student.

The Bright Futures Scholarship was created in 2018 to enable a Grade 5 student to access Catholic education, who may not have otherwise been able to access it, by reducing the tuition fees by 50%. This scholarship offered one student each year the opportunity to receive this scholarship, so it was decided that financial giving would contribute to this worthy cause to enable more than one student to be awarded the scholarship per year.

Due to COVID-19, the usual primary school transition visits and Maths Games Day weren't possible, so we quickly pivoted to offer an innovative option to our Catholic Primary Schools during a challenging year, where we developed an interactive Science Video and Campus Tour Treasure Hunt, that Primary teachers could run at their school. This innovative approach was very well received within the community and enabled grade 5 students to experience what a Science class was like at Damascus College, rather than miss the entire experience.

Due to COVID-19, many of the annual community events were cancelled; this included the Performing Arts Production, Primary School Performance of Production and the Guest Speaker Night. The speaker that was engaged has been postponed to 2021.

Throughout 2020 Damascus continued to nurture a strong and positive relationship with local media, as a result increasing Damascus reach and links to the global community. Due to COVID, there were less opportunities to showcase Damascus stories, and therefore the amount of media releases developed dropped from 23 in 2019 to 12 in 2020 (63% decrease). Damascus also regularly communicates to Catholic media and contributes regularly to Catholic newsletters, including Our Diocesan Community and Just Mercy e-newsletters. This ongoing connection strengthens the Damascus profile and relationship with other Catholic ministries and organisations, thus increasing reach to the global community.

Damascus continued to distribute a newsletter to parish primary schools; however, this was reduced to Term 1 and 2 only due to remote learning and COVID-19. This regular communication and information sharing assists to build closer links with the parish community. Promotional flyers were also distributed to each parish primary school, inviting their communities to Virtual Info Evenings and Virtual Tours, thus reinforcing relationships within the local community.

Many of the additional events that connect with the wider community were cancelled; however, the below were able to continue in a different format:

- College partnerships with the Shower Bus, Caritas, St Vincent de Paul, Soup bus, Timor Leste community
- Bright Futures Fundraising Breakfast
- Virtual Visual Arts Exhibition & Next Gen exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ballarat

- Rowing regattas in the local community, throughout the state of Victoria and Sydney for the national event
- Sustainable Racing Team sponsorship and engagement in the local community

For the last four years, Damascus has commissioned a past student or staff member to produce an art piece interpreting the Damascus motto 'To Live By the Light of Christ.' In 2020 we welcomed the painting that was commissioned in 2019 by past student and current staff member Rachael Beardall, Class of 2014 and commissioned the 2021 piece by Maria Stratford, Class of 1974. This innovative prize enables Damascus to reconnect with past students wherever they are located by encouraging them to re-engage with the College and acts as great promotion to the wider community, showcasing the talents of Damascus alumni.

Considerable work was also conducted throughout 2020 to rebrand the Alumni Art Project to be the Alumni Art Prize, accompanied with an innovative new look and feel to stand out to our alumnito reach a younger market. The artwork is shown below. In addition to this, a significant alumnicampaign was also developed, which included the development of the slogan 'Together. We are Damascus.' This slogan will now be used whenever we communicate to alumni so that no matter which foundation school they come from, they are all recognised as members of the Damascus community.

The Shining Light Award was introduced to the Damascus community throughout 2019, which recognises two inspiring alumni biannually for their achievements and contributions to the wider community. In 2020 we continued to promote these awards with the view of attracting submissions for 2021 inductees.

Throughout 2020 we continued discussions with St Vincent de Paul with the view of assisting Damascus families in need, and we identified the unsuccessful applicants of the Bright Futures scholarship as potential families in need of assistance. Consequently, St Vincent de Paul were very generous and offered a \$500 donation to each of the seven families and two additional families were subsequently identified as being in need. This relationship with St Vincent de Paul is continuing to grow and prosper, which then bears fruit for Damascus families in need.

Our commitment to exploring new fundraising and sponsorship opportunities for the College continues to build each year, with the rewards assisting our Damascus community in a variety of worthy ways.

VALUE ADDED

Extra curricular opportunities available at Damascus College include:

- Performing Arts program—drama and music productions
- Drama Club
- Rowing Club
- Social justice groups—Justice Action Group and Making a Difference Group
- College Choir

- Debating and public speaking
- Leadership opportunities—SRC, Peer Mentoring Program, Digital Ambassador Program and Wellbeing Group
- Volunteering
- Photography
- Book Club
- Chess Club
- Music lessons
- French & Indonesian language trips
- Timor-Leste Immersion Program
- Environment & Sustainability Group—The Green Group
- Energy Breakthrough Team—design and build energy efficient vehicles
- After-school sports—basketball, football, soccer, netball, athletics, swimming, cricket, tennis and volleyball
- Fundraising and social justice activities
- Visual art exhibitions
- Interschool Sporting Association (Ballarat Associated Schools)

PARENT SATISFACTION

Has been addressed within the data collected for the various portfolios reported in other areas of this Annual report

Leadership & Stewardship

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Leadership and the stewardship of resources are integral to the strategic delivery of:

- Catholic School Culture
- Community engagement
- Learning & Teaching and
- Student wellbeing

at Damascus College. Leadership and stewardship are addressed within specific portfolios identified above.

Achievements

The College has a responsible and well documented approach to the development of leadership and the stewardship of resources as addressed in other areas of this report.

EXPENDITURE AND TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	
Description of Professional Learning undertaken in 2020	
Professional Practice Days Learning Area specific training	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2020	93
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$2175

TEACHER SATISFACTION
Throughout the year, the College has worked through a process of redefining the leadership structures and accountabilities of staff. Staff review processes "My Plan" were distributed within the middle and senior leadership structure of the College.
Staff Voice was introduced at the College to provide a forum of collaboration for staff on matters of improvement. These sessions have been well attended by staff at all levels of the College.

TEACHING STAFF ATTENDANCE RATE	
Teaching Staff Attendance Rate	94.7%

ALL STAFF RETENTION RATE	
Staff Retention Rate	92.8%

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	17.0%
Graduate	50.0%
Graduate Certificate	3.4%
Bachelor Degree	84.1%
Advanced Diploma	19.3%
No Qualifications Listed	4.5%

STAFF COMPOSITION	
Principal Class (Headcount)	2.0
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	106.0
Teaching Staff (FTE)	94.3
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	58.0
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	49.4
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0.0

Learning & Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Original 2020 Goal:

To improve student achievement by using what we already know about our learners and supporting them to improve literacy and numerical literacy outcomes through an explicit pedagogical focus on 'higher-order thinking skills.

Of which has led to the development of our driving questions;

- Why is it important to foster a learning community that has a common language of instruction?
- How can we create a common language that focuses on the explicit teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills and Processes?
- How can we differentiate for the learning needs of individual teachers?
- How will we anchor highly effective teaching practices and strategies into our learning programs?

Achievements

In 2020, COVID19 had an almost immediate and profound impact on learning and teaching. As waves of physical distancing restrictions and public health measures constrained face to face teaching, Damascus College quickly pivoted to online learning, in our case literally overnight. The unprecedented events led many College staff members struggling to reorient, reskill and support their students during a particularly stressful and disrupted time. Our goals quickly shifted to building staff technological capacity, adapting curriculum and teaching practices for remote learning and creating new structures to curate and disseminate curriculum material.

Aspects of the curriculum changed, and the implications of the coronavirus pandemic became a key feature of a number of lessons. A remote learning manual was created for students, staff and parents/guardians and team leaders were added to curriculum teams to assist with curating of additional resources. Professional Learning Communities focused on high impact teaching strategies in a remote environment, and key video tutorials were introduced to staff and students to assist students, teachers and parents to the Microsoft Teams learning environment.

In 2020, a few important initiatives were introduced into the Learning and Teaching program based focused on continued engagement of all learners and maximising their outcomes. COVID-19 did not overshadow these initiatives, in fact, more, so they became an increasing priority and balancing. These initiatives include:

1. Functional Space for Diverse Learners

The Diverse Learning Team (Rebecca Anderson, Kirsten Phyland, Patricia Brown and Matthew Hallowell) launched the Diverse Learning Hub. The Diverse Learning Teams used the space to implement a more targeted and flexible approach to supporting students at Damascus College. These approaches include literacy and numeracy interventions, supported study periods for some students and lunchtime and outside hours school supported programs.

2. Careers

Introduced to meet the challenges of the changing world of work, Damascus College, in particular, the Careers Team (Georgia Shillito, Jo Lawrence and Michelle Tapera), work at transforming career education from variable and largely transactional practices to a professional service for students that supports them through a decision-making journey. Year 11 and 12 students had 1:1 career counselling. Applications for university and ranking of students with the assistance of VCE teachers assisted our Year 12 students in achieving their success in a year of uncertainty.

3. Hands-on Learning Program

The HoL program is unique in that delivered an alternate Year 10 program for eleven students and focused on those students developing critical skills and abilities to succeed in work and life. The Social Emotional Skills included.

- Collaboration
- Problem-solving
- Communication
- Resilience
- Empathy

The main HoLP Guiding Principles were to:

- Bridge the gap between middle school and senior school
- Provide familiar processes and expectations for assessments in VCAL
- Engage lifelong learners through real-world context and authentic purpose.
- Provide additional support in areas of literacy and numeracy

1. Year 12 Excel Program

The 'Excel' program as part of the Year 12 student suite introduced common periods (Blocked) for students in Year 12 in order to undertake key College priorities, i.e. Careers, Academic, Catholic Faith and Wellbeing Initiatives. The opportunity for students to complete English and Further Mathematics SAC was also made available in this time to maximise class time in other subjects and reduce disruptions.

- VCE Support Group
- Holistic Health Guest Speaker
- English Workshops
- Elevate Sessions
- Resilience Presentation

Year 12 student directions

Total 141 Year 12 students were enrolled at Damascus College. 100 students applied for Higher Educations or VET. 93 students received an offer, and 4 students did not receive an offer.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

On Demand and PAT R/M-

- 1. On Demand for Mathematics and English were introduced at the end of 2020, and Rod Mathews (Data Analytics Leader) showed that, on average, students' growth was six months to a year in growth comparison at the same time a year before.
- 2. PAT R/M have shown that students, on average, has achieved a year's growth on year's effort.

It is important to note that the results from both PATR/M and On Demand were promising, considering the impact on learning through COVID-19. Interestingly if results were not averaged, it was clear that some students clearly did not have sufficient growth as intended. These results are pertinent in our analysis as they provided guidance to teaching outcomes for the 2021 year.

MEDIAN NAPLAN RESULTS FOR YEAR 9 *

- Year 9 Grammar & Punctuation
- Year 9 Numeracy
- Year 9 Reading
- Year 9 Spelling
- Year 9 Writing

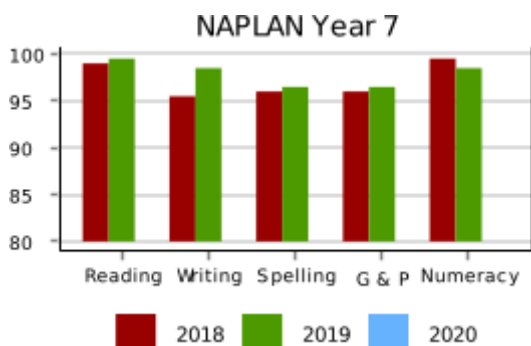
* There are no NAPLAN results to report in 2020 as the Australian Government decided that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NAPLAN Assessments would not take place.

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS MEETING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS					
NAPLAN TESTS	2018	2019	2018 – 2019	2020	2019 – 2020
	%	%	Changes	%	Changes
			%	*	*
YR 07 Grammar & Punctuation	96.0	96.5	0.5		
YR 07 Numeracy	99.5	98.5	-1.0		
YR 07 Reading	99.0	99.5	0.5		
YR 07 Spelling	96.0	96.5	0.5		
YR 07 Writing	95.5	98.5	3.0		
YR 09 Grammar & Punctuation	95.1	92.1	-3.0		
YR 09 Numeracy	99.4	98.9	-0.5		
YR 09 Reading	96.7	94.2	-2.5		
YR 09 Spelling	91.9	91.6	-0.3		
YR 09 Writing	88.0	85.5	-2.5		

* 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.



Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Respectful relationships that value all members in an inclusive and welcoming community which celebrates diversity in a safe and supportive school. By;

1. Reviewing the recording of student Behavioural Tracking ensuring that it follows the language and procedures of Restorative Practices.
2. Introducing uniform options that are available to both genders- specifically the availability of shorts and pants for female students.
3. Ensuring that our students remain connected with their school and teaching and learning program throughout the period of remote learning.

Achievements

1. Reviewing the recording of student Behavioural Tracking ensuring that it follows the language and procedures of Restorative Practices.

The recording of Behavioural Tracking incidents were modified under the Social Behaviours module in Simon. This provided us with the opportunity to revisit recorded entries moving from punitive responses to an educative restorative practices approach. The aim was to support students and staff working through a process of an understanding the harm caused through behaviours, resulting in an empathetic response in dealing with behaviour management. It was also hoped that there would be a reduction in the recording of incidents as staff support students in behaviour management through a restorative approach.

One of the key aspects of restorative practices is for the perpetrator to be aware of the harm that their actions have on others, themselves and the environment. The Social Behaviours module in SIMON now reflects the language of restorative practices by identifying the harm caused by the perpetrator. While details of the incident are still critical, for example, 'graffiti in boy's toilets', the incident title would be Harming Damascus College Grounds and Environment. The conversation and follow up is directed on the harm the perpetrator's actions have caused which guide students to acknowledge other's that have been impacted by their action.

Recording are now followed up using the following categories.

Harming the learning of self and others; Harming student/ staff relationship; Harming School property/environment; Harming the Safety of others; Harming college values and traditions; Harming personal health and wellbeing; Inappropriate use of digital media.

It is difficult to compare how results have shifted in terms of teachers recording. One of the outcomes of this process was to encourage staff to work restoratively in addressing students management. Term 1 2019 data indicated that there was a decrease in recording of **21 percent 1st February 2010 - 30th March 2019 to 1st February 2020 to 30th March 2020**. These figures are very promising as staff move from recording incidents to restorative discussions. Of interest is that the main item of recording is based on harming through social media and Harming the Learning of Self and Others- (this includes student management issues such as arriving to class late, not completing Homework and inappropriate classroom behaviours).

2. Introducing uniform options that are available to both genders- specifically the availability of shorts and pants for female students.

The development officer and the assistant principal of student wellbeing addressed ongoing concerns about the limited options for uniform, especially for girls. This concern stemmed from Primary Schools providing shorts and pants as an option for girls. It was also acknowledged that there was a requirement to address gender diversity as the school moved toward supporting a 'community that celebrates diversity.' This process involved the establishment of a uniform committee with input from parents, students and staff. Students, in particular, took on a vital role as they 'road tested' options in relation to comfort, cut and style. The two preferred unformed suppliers, Dobsons and Noones, were also used to support and guide uniform options.

Uniforms are one of the most complex issues to deal with in a school environment. They potentially touch on history, tradition, values of the school, values of society and are viewed as a facade of the school itself. Hence the addition of options for girls, dress shorts and pants as options for the summer dress and winter skirt was indeed a thorough and transparent process. Anecdotally it appears that pants have been stronger in the uptake than shorts; however, this option has only been available for a short period of time.

3. Ensuring that our students remain connected with their school and teaching and learning program throughout the period of remote learning.

One of the challenges school's faced was keeping their students connected through the period of remote learning. School connectedness is one of the key indicators of student mental health, and so it was critical that we kept our students connected during the various period of lockdown.

A breakdown of figures indicates that

- 923 Students engaged in Learning from home
- 10 Students engaged in Learning at School
- 5 students engaged in a combination of Both.

Noted above was the demand that the school had in supporting students in remote learning from home with only a very small cohort requiring school support. Given that well over 900 students were learning from home added a complexity to ensure they remained connected to their learning environment.

Using data from the student survey, the school was able to reach out to individual students that had indicated their struggle during remote learning.

When students were asked; Have you felt particularly low or down during this period of remote learning students responded with

Never/ Very Rarely	242
Occasionally/ Sometimes	449
More than Usual	149
Regularly	78
Always	20

This data identified 20 students that were feeling particularly low during the period of remote learning, which allowed the school to put into practice some intervention models to reach out to specific students. In some cases, this resulted in students being offered on-campus learning,

House Leader Intervention and access to school councillors. Staff were also able to identify challenges that impacted on students learning.

When asked, What tips/advice regarding remote learning do you have for your teachers? (Please do not make reference to the teacher's name in this response)

934 Responses included;

"Talk to us more about how we are going"

"Please use teams to communicate to us"

"Don't send us work all at once"

From these responses, Damascus was able to alter its teaching and learning program- specifically working towards a common preferred platform (MS Teams), modify work programs and introduce a weekly timetable that was aimed at reducing screen time and promoting physical activity.

VALUE ADDED

1. Year 7 Camp; All Year 7 students experienced an overnight camp as part of their transition into Damascus College. Students attended camp in their House Groups where they were able to mix with other students in activities such as canoeing, archery, flying fox, the 'leap of faith' and 'giant swing'.

2. Inter-House Swimming Sports: a wonderful rate of participation. This inclusive event allows students to compete in across the pool events, croquet, basketball and synchronised swimming.

3. Year 9 Camp: A two night overnight experience where students enjoyed camping, surfing, canoeing, bush cooking, hiking and team building activities/challenges.

4. The Great Aussie Adventure: An 'adventure' used to promote physical activity across the entire school community - students and staff, during remote learning. Students and staff uploaded their distance travelled during walking, riding and jogging. This was to encourage house competition during lockdown. Below represents the uptake from students engaged in this event.

Did you participate in the Circumnavigating of Australia Challenge?

107 students; Yes, at least four sessions a week

135 students; Yes, a few sessions a

week 213 students; Yes once or twice

300 students; Not at all

5. Sustainable Racing Team Challenge: In lieu of the cancellation of the Maryborough challenge, a virtual event was set up involving the SRT team measuring distances and times.

6. Virtual Rowing: Using ergos, the rowing squad was able to continue its training regime in an online format.

7. Term 4 BAS Sports: A limited number of BAS sports were made available for our students to engage in during term 4.

8. Virtual House Competitions: These student competitions ranged from dancing, photography and singing.

STUDENT SATISFACTION

Throughout the period of remote learning, students were monitored in relation to support mechanisms that had been initiated to ensure their wellbeing and academic needs were being addressed. These surveys were conducted during the first and second lockdown. This information provided opportunities to address individual concerns to ensure appropriate interventions. Some key points of these surveys are indicated below.

Has Damascus College provided adequate advice/ opportunities to support your wellbeing? This includes keeping connected, promoting self-care and offering wellbeing support.

- 88 students: Yes definitely
- 367 students: Yes
- 251 students: Not sure
- 49 students: No

How would you describe your mood during this period of remote learning. You may select more than one option here.

- 208 students Bright
- 272 students: Lonely
- 199 students: Cheerful
- 188 students: Lost
- 315 students; Confused
- 386 students: Calm
- 227 students: Hopeful
- 120 students: Angry
- 74 students; Upbeat
- 264 students; Tense
- 49 students: Fearful
- 189 students: Gloomy

How do you feel about returning to campus in term 4?

- 142 students: Extremely excited
- 229 students: Excited
- 282 students: Slightly excited
- 63 students: Worried
- 8 students: Very worried
- 31 students: Highly anxious

How would you rate your remote learning experience so far in phase 2? (1 is very difficult and challenging to 10, which is excellent)

755 Responses.
5.79 Average Score

Overall are you managing the volume of work that has been given to you? (1 represents barely enough, 5 represents the right amount, 10 represents excessive)

755 Responses
6.16 Average Score

- The data presented was a wonderful indicator that allowed our teaching staff to address the volume of work that was being prepared for students. As indicated, student response of 6.16 reflected slightly above the 'right amount of work'. Given that this survey was conducted mid-lock down, the school was able to slightly modify work demands for students.
- The experience of remote learning was challenging. Students generally indicated a score around 5 which suggests that they were mildly challenged by remote learning. It should be noted that where there were cohorts of students that were scoring 1-3, House Leader intervention would take place. There was also a cohort of students that indicated their experience was 'excellent'.
- Support also was offered to a cohort of approximately 40 students who indicated that they were 'very worried'- 'highly anxious' about returning to school. The range of moods experienced was cross-referenced to these students in order to support their return to school.
- Approximately 6% of students felt that the school could have been doing more to support wellbeing, keeping connected and promoting self-care.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Students Attendance at Damascus College

The administration of student attendance at Damascus College is maintained through 'Student Reception'. Daily reports are provided to each House Leader and Teacher Advisor to ensure appropriate follow up. This is specifically important for unexplained absence. Student movement off campus throughout the day is monitored and recorded through student reception.

Damascus College records student attendance in every class. To meet the duty of care responsibilities, the school attendance records indicate whether the student was physically present in a classroom or not present but attending a school-approved activity. In the latter situation, the teacher or staff member in charge of the activity records attendance and ensure parents are notified of any absences in the same manner as for regular absences from school.

There are two reportable roles that occur throughout the day. The first is during period 1, the second occurs immediately after the school lunch break. Role marking is completed in order to:

- Meet legislative requirements
- Discharge schools' duty of care for all students
- Assist calculation of the school's funding
- Enable the school governing body (school council in government schools) to report on student attendance annually
- Meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) requirements (for VCE students).

Damascus College records:

- Each enrolled student's attendance at least twice per day in the school's attendance register, including any reason given or apparent for a student's absence
- Whether the reason for the absence is a reasonable excuse for non-attendance within the meaning of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- On the student's file, information about the student's unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes
- An absence is unexplained if no excuse has been given, and change the attendance record once an excuse is provided or established

Students Attendance during Remote Learning.

Students were required to log in to their Teacher Advisor Group for a roll call before period 1 commenced.

Rolls were then taken for each of the lessons throughout the day.

If students were 'absent without reason'- (or parental notification), this would be followed up by the Teacher Advisor.

Where there were consecutive days without parental notification, this would be followed up by House Leader. In circumstances where students were becoming disengaged with remote learning a request was made to support students with on campus delivery.

A statement of unexplained absences for any lesson was provided to Teacher Advisors / House Leaders to follow up at the end of each school day.

All records for student attendance are kept on SIMON.

YEARS 9 – 12 STUDENT RETENTION RATE

Years 9 to 12 Student Retention Rate	70.6%
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AVERAGE STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE BY YEAR LEVEL

Y07	91.5%
Y08	90.7%
Y09	89.9%
Y10	88.6%
Overall average attendance	90.2%

SENIOR SECONDARY OUTCOMES

VCE Median Score	28.0
VCE Completion Rate	99.0%
VCAL Completion Rate	94.0%

POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS AS AT 2020	
Tertiary Study	32.0%
TAFE / VET	12.0%
Apprenticeship / Traineeship	25.0%
Deferred	13.0%
Employment	13.0%
Other – The category of Other includes both students Looking for Work and those classed as Other	0.0%

Child Safe Standards

Goals & Intended Outcomes

All children and young people have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children and young people in the care of Damascus College will always be the first priority with a zero tolerance approach to child abuse. Damascus College aims to create a child-safe and child friendly environment where children and young people are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for the student's own safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children and young people with a disability.

Damascus College commitment to students

Damascus commits to:

1. The safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in the College
2. Providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences
3. Listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking student views seriously and addressing any concerns that are raised
4. Taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm
5. Teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing
6. Seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe College environment.

Damascus commitment to and with parents and carers

Damascus commits to:

1. Communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children
2. Engaging with and listening to the views of parents and carers about College child safety practice, policies and procedures
3. Transparency in College decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people
4. Acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues
5. Continuously reviewing and improving College systems to protect children and young people from abuse.

College commitment to College staff (College employees, volunteers, contractors)

Damascus commits to:

1. Providing all staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities

2. Providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns
3. Listening to all concerns voiced by staff, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm
4. Providing opportunities for College employees, volunteers, contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

Achievements

Damascus College is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students of the College and College community. The purpose of the Child Safe policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Damascus College to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school. This policy takes 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. Damascus College Ltd, as governing authority, and the Principal have direct responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of MO 870 are met within the school. The policy applies to students, College members and directors, school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors, and those in religious ministry.

Damascus College provides employees, volunteers and those in religious ministry with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training, and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect. All mandatory reporters are required to complete the relevant online module.

Students at Damascus College are actively encouraged to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them. The Teacher Advisor program is designed to build trusting relationships between the College, the family and the student to support all aspects of their educational development journey. In our learning and teaching programs, students learn about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss, and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns that students, or their parents or carers, raise with us. The curriculum design integrates appropriate knowledge and skills to enhance students' understanding of being safe and knowing how to report instances when they do not feel safe. Teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student voice are implemented.

Everyone employed or volunteering at Damascus College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. The College Principal, with the support of the Leadership Team, has overall responsibility for monitoring compliance with the Child Safe Standards in the school.

The Child Protection Officer assists the principal to ensure the safety of all students and young people. At Damascus College, this role is fulfilled by the Deputy Principal, and it is a component of that role's position description. The Child Protection Officer works in collaboration with those responsible for Risk Management within the College in identifying and mitigating risks in child

safety. The Child Protection Officer with the Principal is responsible for informing staff, students and College community on policies, procedures and practices and identifying professional learning. The Child Safety team consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal - Student Wellbeing, House Leaders and the College Counselling team.

All children and young people have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children and young people in the care of Damascus College will always be the first priority with a zero tolerance approach to child abuse. Damascus College aims to create a child-safe and child friendly environment where children and young people are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for the student's own safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children and young people with a disability.

Damascus College will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. All teachers are required to have registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct and all child safety policies and procedures prior to commencement of employment. Each job description for staff involved in child-connected work has a clear statement that sets out the requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child protection for those in that role and the occupant's essential qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child protection.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- Confirm the applicant's VIT, Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- Obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications relevant to the position
- Verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- Obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children

Once employed, staff are taken through an induction process that further reiterates the person's duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and child protection. All staff and volunteers are required to read and sign the Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct prior to commencing work. All new staff and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure their behaviour towards children is appropriate and to monitor their compliance with the school's child protection policies.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and teaching staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration. The ongoing suitability of staff for child-connected work is monitored and assessed as a part of the Annual Review Meeting process.

Damascus College is committed to proactively identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our school environments and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor, and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

At Damascus College, the Deputy Principal undertakes risk management assessments for camps excursions and international trips; the Compliance Officer supports the Deputy Principal in risk assessment. The Compliance Officer develops strategies for the risk register and works with the Principal and Deputy to ensure that staff are informed of strategies to mitigate risks as well as policy, procedures and practices to support child safety. All staff are responsible to consider risk management and child safety measures.

Future Directions

The College has commenced the planning for the 2021-2025 strategic directions process with the College Board and Leadership Team and has continued to work on planning for Annual Action plans for the 2021 year.