



2024

Annual Report to the School Community



Damascus College

1412 Geelong Road, MOUNT CLEAR 3350

Principal: Steven Mifsud

Web: www.damascus.vic.edu.au

Registration: 265, E Number: E2075

Principal's Attestation

I, Steven Mifsud, attest that Damascus College is compliant with:

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

Attested on 03 Apr 2025

About this report

Damascus College is registered by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). The Annual Report to the School Community (ARSC), provides parents and the wider community with information about the school's activities and achievements throughout the year including information about various aspects of school performance. The Report is supplementary to other forms of regular communication to the school community regarding initiatives, activities and programs which support the learning and wellbeing of its students. Further information about the contents of this Report may be obtained by contacting the School directly or by visiting the School's website. Information can also be obtained from the [My School website](#).

Governing Authority Report

Reflecting on 2024, we have much to be proud of, with DOBCEL demonstrating our dedication to ensuring the highest quality student outcomes in a safe, affordable, faith-based and nurturing environment. There was significant ongoing investment in new learning facilities and refurbishments through the Australian and state Government Capital Grants Program and school community funding continued across our schools, enhancing learning spaces and amenities for the benefit of students and staff.

In 2024, I visited all our Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) schools from the Murray to the Sea. DOBCEL governs 51 primary schools, one F-8 school, and five secondary colleges, educating approximately 13,500 students and employing over 2,200 teachers and staff across the diocese. These visits highlighted the spirit of harmony and sense of community, along with the cultures of care for students and staff.

During 2024, I had the privilege of meeting with all Principals along with leadership colleagues and staff. Demands on schools continue to grow, as the communities they service undergo change and face challenges such as devastating bushfires and cost of living challenges.

During the year DOBCEL commenced the development of its future DOBCEL Strategy 2035. Our strategy is focused on ensuring fullness of life for all in our school communities and particularly our students. With our Catholic Identity foundational to our mission our focus will be on:

- Collaborative Cultures
- Engagement and Belonging
- School as Community
- Rich Pedagogical practices for deeper learning and wellbeing
- Sustainable Stewardship

I recognise the extraordinary work, exceptional dedication and professionalism of staff in our schools and offices in providing education services to the families and communities they serve. I particularly acknowledge the commitment of our school leadership teams and their staff in nurturing and empowering the students in our care, as together we work to bring to life our vision: As partners in Catholic Education and open to God's presence, we pursue the fullness of life for all.

Tom Sexton

Executive Director DOBCEL

Vision and 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, established in 1995, has a long and rich tradition of more than 140 years, with its origin in three foundation Colleges, dating back to 1881: Sacred Heart College (1881) and St Martin's in the Pines (1967), which were owned and administered by the Sisters of Mercy, and St Paul's Technical College (1948) which was a diocesan school conducted by the Christian Brothers at the invitation of the Bishop.

Damascus College formed when these three schools amalgamated in 1995 and is now governed by Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL). As Ballarat's only Catholic co-educational secondary college, Damascus College offers innovative and progressive learning and teaching that inspires and challenges students to be their best and to contribute confidently to the global community.

Offering a diverse curriculum that caters for various post-secondary pathways, providing young people with a solid foundation on which to build their lives, the college offers an education that focuses on the development of the whole person.

The College understands that each student has individual learning needs, with the aim to provide classroom activities that differentiate their abilities and learning styles. Students are encouraged to participate in all activities available at the College, regardless of their skill level, as we firmly believe that a well-rounded education provides young people with the agency to be their best.

A co-educational setting reflects real-world communities and workplaces, setting students up to thrive and succeed after their Damascus education. Catholic co-education cultivates mutual respect, inclusiveness, understanding and support for one another, and it grows an understanding of the human dignity of every individual. At Damascus, learning programs are designed to assist the way students think, learn, and collaborate. Students can realise and appreciate their own individual style and values, as well as those around them.

Damascus College offers students a contemporary learning environment only 7km from the Ballarat CBD, with access to innovative technology, flexible and modern classrooms, and ample open space and bushland. Students graduate from Damascus College with a strong sense of their own identity and worth, and an appreciation of Christianity in the Catholic tradition.

Principal's Report

As I reflect on another year at Damascus College Ballarat, I do so with gratitude and pride for the many ways our school community has grown, celebrated and deepened its commitment to the values that guide us. This past year has been marked by meaningful initiatives, shared celebrations and a deepening of our Catholic identity and mission.

A cornerstone of our identity is our rich Catholic tradition, which continues to be celebrated and strengthened throughout the year. Liturgical life remains central to Damascus College, offering students and staff opportunities to gather in prayer, reflection and celebration. Through Masses, retreats and social justice initiatives, we have continued to foster a sense of spiritual growth and moral purpose in our young people. Our Religious Education curriculum and mission work have been enhanced to better integrate faith with action, providing meaningful engagement with Gospel values in a contemporary world.

Damascus Day was again a powerful celebration of our heritage, community and shared values. This special day united students, staff, alumni and families in a vibrant display of school spirit and gratitude for the legacy of our founding orders. The day's liturgy, activities and festivities served as a reminder of our shared mission and the strength of our collective identity.

In a significant step towards reconciliation and cultural awareness, we were proud to announce the appointment of our First Nations Liaison Officer. This role is central to our commitment to recognising and valuing the deep cultural heritage of the Wadawurrung people and other First Nations communities. The First Nations Liaison Officer works to support Indigenous students, build cultural competence across the College and ensure that Indigenous perspectives are embedded meaningfully within our curriculum and community life.

This year has also seen a deepening of our commitment to Inclusive Education. Damascus College continues to lead with compassion and integrity in supporting students with diverse learning needs. We have expanded our learning support programs and invested in staff professional development, ensuring every student has equitable access to educational opportunities. Our commitment to inclusion ensures that all students feel valued, respected and empowered to achieve their personal best.

The continued growth of our VCE and VCE Vocational Major (VM) programs has also broadened opportunities for senior students. These pathways provide the flexibility and relevance students need to pursue their individual goals—whether those lead to university, employment, apprenticeships or further training. Our Careers and Pathways team continues to work closely with students to ensure informed and supported decision-making.

Supporting the wellbeing of our students also means supporting the adults around them. We recognise the dedication of our educators and have seen continued growth and change in leadership, with several new leaders bringing fresh perspectives and renewed energy to our team. We remain deeply grateful for the commitment and care of all our staff, whose professionalism and passion create the conditions for every student to thrive.

We have strengthened our connection with families through community-building events that honour and celebrate their role in our shared mission. Grand Friends Day, along with the Mothers' and Fathers' Day Breakfasts, were warmly received and well attended, creating beautiful moments of connection and gratitude. These gatherings affirm the importance of intergenerational support and the unique contributions of every family member to the life of the College.

The College's co-curricular program continues to flourish, offering students a rich variety of opportunities to grow, compete and collaborate beyond the classroom. Our involvement in Ballarat Associated School (BAS) sport and the Damascus Rowing Program provided many students with valuable experiences in teamwork, discipline and achievement. Meanwhile, a wide range of lunchtime clubs and activities—from performing arts to social justice, chess to gardening—have helped ensure that every student can find a place to belong and explore their passions.

The College School Advisory Council (SAC) led by Mrs Lucy O'Beirne, has been a great support to me as College Principal and has provided guidance, advice and counsel. I thank Emily Clarke, Fr Marcello Colasante, Sr Marie Davey, Chris Grant, Brett Holloway, Jo McInnes, Mark O'Brien, Michelle Kasbach and Lisa Mitchell.

As we look to the future, we do so with confidence and hope, knowing that our shared commitment to faith, learning and community will continue to guide Damascus College in nurturing compassionate and courageous young people who are ready to shape a better world.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

In 2024, Damascus College continued to deepen its commitment to growing and enhancing our Catholic Identity through the strategic priorities established in 2023. These include:

- Extending a contextualised and joyful exploration of the encounters that lead to and express, faith.
- Developing a merciful embrace of our global responsibilities, including sustainability, First Nations people and multiculturalism.
- Building life-giving relationships of integrity, justice and peace.

Achievements

The College explored our Annual theme - Living Mercy which refocussed our communities understanding of Christ's Mercy. Encouraging each community member to explore the values of Mercy: Respect, Courage, Compassion, Hospitality, Justice and Service.

Damascus College launched the Prayer Renewal Project in 2024, supported by DOBCEL. This initiative invited parents, students and staff into a collaborative process to explore and reimagine prayer life at the College. The project is designed to foster prayer experiences that are authentic, nuanced, and engaging, with the aim of helping each member of our community build a deeper and more personal relationship with God.

The Prayer Renewal Project will progress through four key stages:

1. Professional learning for staff in partnership with Communities of Respect and Equity
2. Analysis of the school context to inform development
3. Creation of diverse prayer activities reflective of our community
4. Celebration and future planning to sustain growth and impact

This work affirms Damascus College's enduring mission to be a vibrant Catholic learning community, rooted in the Gospel and committed to faith in action.

This year, Damascus College has taken deliberate steps to embed Indigenous perspectives across curriculum, prayer and community events. Key highlights include:

- Engagement with local Elders and community leaders in the planning and delivery of educational programs
- The celebration of significant dates such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, with student-led reflections and cultural experiences in partnership with the other Catholic School's in Ballarat

- Continued development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), with broad consultation and reflection on our College's role in promoting equity and respect

A standout initiative in 2024 has been the investigation of the IGEN (Intergenerational Learning) project, which fosters meaningful connections between Damascus students and Mercy Health and providing service to our community. This project will offer rich opportunities for shared storytelling, cultural exchange and mutual learning. Through our work in establishing IGEN, students will gain a deeper appreciation of generational wisdom and the value of listening—core to Catholic and local traditions.

In 2024, Damascus College demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering a culture of respect, equity, and inclusion through active participation in the Communities of Respect and Equality (CORE) initiative and the Respectful Relationships program. The College's Diversity and Equity Policy underscores its dedication to creating a safe and inclusive environment where all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their backgrounds or personal attributes.

As part of the Respectful Relationships program, Damascus College engaged in various activities aimed at promoting positive and respectful interactions. The College's involvement in this initiative is evident in its efforts to embed the program's principles across all aspects of school life, fostering a supportive environment for students and staff alike.

In addition to these programs, Damascus College actively participated in events that celebrated and honoured First Nations cultures. On 24 May 2024, the College collaborated with Loreto College Ballarat and St Patrick's College to mark National Sorry Day. The event featured an official Welcome and Smoking Ceremony, a Sorry Day Service with a VIP guest speaker, and a morning tea for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community members, students, and their families.

Furthermore, during National Reconciliation Week, the College encouraged students to participate in local events such as "Facing Up" at the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts on 28 May 2024. This powerful event aimed to deepen understanding and commitment to reconciliation within the community.

This year has also seen the development and implementation of the Walking in Mercy Footsteps framework, a values-based initiative that brings the Mercy tradition to life in our daily school culture. Grounded in the core Mercy Values of compassion, justice, respect, service, hospitality, and courage, this framework provides a shared language and set of expectations that guide how we interact, learn and grow as a community. It has been woven through pastoral care, curriculum and student leadership, supporting students in reflecting on their choices and responsibilities and inspiring them to live out these values in both word and action.

Through these initiatives and events, Damascus College in 2024 exemplified its dedication to promoting respect, equity, and cultural understanding within its school community and the broader Ballarat region.

The College remains committed to growing these partnerships and creating learning experiences that reflect our core values of compassion, justice, and respect for all cultures.

Value Added

- Reflection Days at all year levels
- Youth Ministry
- Melbourne Experience with the Big Issue
- Exploration of First Nations
- Students participated in Ballarat's Youth Coalition exploring Respectful Relationship

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The College remains firmly committed to the Strategic Plan of 2021 - 2025 on building learner agency, assessing for deep understanding, using data to provide targeted support and enrichment and facilitating quality professional learning for our educators.

Achievements

In 2024, Damascus College Ballarat celebrated a year of academic achievement and educational innovation. A total of 144 students completed the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), with standout performances such as VCE Dux Zoe Newman, who achieved an impressive ATAR of 96.35, and VCE/VM Dux Ryder Hill. These results reflect the college's commitment to academic excellence and the effectiveness of its teaching strategies.

The planning of the St Brendan's Program, located in Dunnstown, 12 km from Ballarat, continued to provide a unique project-based learning environment for our staff to curate a program to build connections and experience an alternative education style for our Year 8 students. This program is designed to empower students through real-world learning experiences, focusing on personal growth, wellbeing workshops and community engagement projects. It embodies the college's dedication to fostering compassionate, engaged leaders who positively impact the world. The College looks forward to the delivery of the program in 2025.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at Damascus College played a pivotal role in enhancing teaching practices. By fostering collaboration among educators, PLCs contributed to continuous improvement in instructional methods, directly benefiting student learning outcomes. This collaborative approach underscores the College's commitment to professional development and educational excellence.

Infrastructure developments in 2024 marked a significant milestone for the college. The initiation of the Senior Learning Precinct project introduced a contemporary three-storey building designed to support and enhance the learning needs of senior students. Additionally, the development of the Design, Arts and Technology building, along with the enhancement of the blue courts, provided state-of-the-art facilities that enriched the educational environment. These projects reflect Damascus College's strategic vision to provide innovative and supportive learning spaces for its students.

In our ongoing commitment to providing a relevant and engaging curriculum, Damascus College undertook a comprehensive review of the elective program, ensuring offerings align with student interests, emerging industries and contemporary learning needs. This process has helped to refine subject choices that support student agency and future readiness. Our annual Subject and Careers Expo continues to be a key event in guiding students and families through subject selection and pathway planning, showcasing the broad opportunities available at Damascus and beyond. Meanwhile, the continued development of the Year 8 STEM program has provided students with hands-on, collaborative learning experiences that foster critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving—essential skills for the modern world.

Overall, 2024 was a transformative year for Damascus College, characterised by academic success, innovative programs, collaborative teaching practices, and significant infrastructure advancements. These achievements collectively demonstrate the College's unwavering commitment to providing a holistic and forward-thinking educational experience.

Student Learning Outcomes

2024 NAPLAN Results

A. Grammar & Punctuation, Spelling, Writing, Reading

Overall Trend: Growth has declined or plateaued across all domains, with Damascus College now performing at or below the Victorian state average for most measures.

Lower-Performing Students (P10): The bottom 10% face significant ongoing challenges. In 2024, their growth was minimal or negative, especially in reading and writing, indicating that the most vulnerable students are not experiencing the necessary progress.

Higher-Performing Students (P90): The top 10% showed isolated strong results, particularly in Grammar & Punctuation and Writing, but results remain volatile and lack consistency.

Domain Summaries:

Grammar & Punctuation: Median and P10 results continued to decline or saw only a slight recovery. Growth remains below historic highs.

Spelling: After several years of outperforming the state, growth narrowed and fell to similar or lower levels in 2024.

Writing: Gains from 2023 were not sustained, with 2024 seeing a drop below the state median and instability for struggling writers.

Reading: Significant decline in 2024, particularly among P10, with the median dropping further behind state averages.

B. Numeracy

Median Growth: Numeracy growth has steadily declined, with the 2024 median now only marginally above zero and well below earlier years (e.g., from 11.86% in 2015 to just above 4% in 2024).

Lower-Performing Students (P10): There has been a sharp decline for the lowest-performing students in Numeracy, with growth dropping to just above 2% in 2023, and only a slight

recovery to 4.3% in 2024. This group mirrors the struggles seen in English.

Higher-Performing Students (P90): Volatile and inconsistent, with growth swinging from negative in 2021 to a slight positive in 2024 (3.7%), but still far below historical peaks.

Overall Pattern: Both school and state have seen downward trajectories in numeracy growth since 2015, with no signs of a significant turnaround in 2024. The data highlights ongoing systemic issues requiring urgent attention.

2. Strategic Recommendations for 2025 Interventions

A. Year 7 Focus: Literacy and Numeracy

Comprehensive Diagnostics: Conduct robust entry assessments for both literacy and numeracy in Year 7 to pinpoint individual and cohort learning gaps immediately.

Tiered Support: Expand targeted intervention for students identified in the bottom 10%, including additional small-group work, in-class aides, and specialist intervention programs for literacy and numeracy.

Integrated Approach: Where possible, combine literacy and numeracy interventions for students who require support in both, to build their foundational skills in tandem.

B. Teaching and Curriculum Renewal

Explicit Instruction: Embed explicit, structured teaching in both English and Maths, ensuring core skills (e.g., reading fluency, number sense) are taught consistently across Years 7–9.

Curriculum Audit: Review both English and Maths curricula to ensure alignment with current ACARA and VCAA standards, with an emphasis on core skills and high-impact strategies.

Skill Reinforcement: Integrate literacy into Maths (and vice versa), such as through numeracy word problems, reading for meaning in STEM, and structured writing in Maths explanations.

C. Data-Driven Culture

Regular Monitoring: Track progress every 6–8 weeks in both English and Maths, using internal and external tools. Share actionable data with teaching teams for rapid intervention.

Professional Learning: Provide ongoing staff development in using data to inform instruction and in evidence-based intervention methods for both literacy and numeracy.

D. Engagement, Wellbeing, and Community

Wellbeing Integration: Recognise that ongoing COVID and learning loss effects persist—address them by integrating SEL (social-emotional learning) into core English and Maths programs.

Family Partnerships: Offer workshops and resources for parents to support reading, writing, and numeracy at home, especially for at-risk Year 7 students.

E. Leadership and Sustainability

Ambitious but Realistic Targets: Set clear growth targets for Year 7–9 in both English and Numeracy for 2025. Make success visible and part of school culture.

Sustainable Systems: Document what works in intervention and teaching so that successful

strategies can be scaled, maintained, and passed on as staff change.

Moving Forward

The 2024 data makes it clear that without significant, targeted action, learning gaps, particularly for the lowest performers, will persist or widen. Damascus College will prioritise early identification, targeted intervention, curriculum renewal, and a strong, data-driven culture to deliver real and lasting improvement in both English and Numeracy.

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards			
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 7	522	54%
	Year 9	540	46%
Numeracy	Year 7	527	64%
	Year 9	550	61%
Reading	Year 7	530	69%
	Year 9	554	60%
Spelling	Year 7	508	55%
	Year 9	538	60%
Writing	Year 7	532	65%
	Year 9	563	60%

*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2024 due to participation not meeting these criteria or no students were assessed. Participants include students who were assessed, including non-attempt, or those exempted from the test.

Senior Secondary Outcomes	
VCE Median Score	29
VCE Completion Rate	99%
VCE VM Completion Rate	100%
VPC Completion Rate	*

*Data not reported for 2024 due to insufficient data i.e. less than 4 student enrolments for VCE/VCE VM/VPC or none of the students in a school received study scores.

Post-School Destinations as at 2024	
Tertiary Study	40%
TAFE / VET	11%
Apprenticeship / Traineeship	14%
Deferred	0%
Employment	33%
Other - The category of Other includes both students Looking for Work and those classed as Other	2%

Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The Damascus College strategic plan 2021-2025 reflects the intended outcomes and goals for student wellbeing through pillar three - Wellbeing in Action.

Well-being in Action's aspiration is to create an environment where students flourish and can manage their well-being effectively, enriched by a holistic learning and teaching program and the development of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills.

The aspiration is addressed by working towards the following strategic priorities:

- Promoting a community where SEL can help students learn the competencies and skills they need to give them agency over their lives.
- Ensuring that everyone has access to a meaningful and purposeful curriculum that allows them to positively engage in their learning pathway.
- Nurturing an environment where active care and compassion to others is embedded into school culture and traditions.

Achievements

A strong focus this year has been placed on nurturing respectful relationships across all aspects of Damascus College life. This commitment is foundational to creating a safe, inclusive and compassionate school environment where every student can thrive. Through education and action, we continue to foster a culture that promotes understanding, empathy and mutual respect.

Students actively engaged in a range of programs to deepen their understanding of these values, including participation in CORE (Communities of Respect and Equality) workshops and local student forums focused on respecting difference. These initiatives provided opportunities for students to explore identity, inclusivity, respectful communication, and the importance of standing against discrimination. Through reflection, dialogue, and real-world application, students built essential skills for positive relationships both in and beyond the school community.

In parallel with our values education, Damascus College continued to strengthen its tiered response to student behaviour, with an emphasis on restorative practices and early intervention. This approach supports the wellbeing and personal growth of each student while maintaining high expectations for conduct. Staff have engaged in professional learning to implement consistent, compassionate strategies that focus on support, accountability and learning from behaviour choices.

Our work with MacKillop Education and the embedding of Reframing Learning and Teaching Environments (ReLATE) ensured that our classroom pedagogies meet the needs of young people. We will continue to focus on building authentic relationships through our Teacher Advisor Program and classroom experiences will ensure each learner is named and known promoting personal excellence and challenge.

Student voice and agency have also been at the forefront of College improvement initiatives. A significant example this year was the consultation process on uniform policy, where students contributed thoughtfully to discussions about identity, comfort and consistency. Their perspectives were central to shaping a community-informed outcome that reflects the values and needs of our student body.

Student leadership continues to be a strong and visible presence at Damascus. From formal leadership roles to informal acts of initiative and advocacy, students have shown great pride and responsibility in contributing to school life. Leadership programs have empowered students to represent their peers, initiate positive change and model the College's values through service and action.

Value Added

- 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
- Year 8 Camp: A two-night, three-day experience where students enjoyed a rotation of activities including surfing, canoeing, hiking and overnight camp experience.
- Inter-House Swimming, Athletics Sports Carnivals and the Lap of the Lake
- Year 9 Camp: A five overnight experience where students enjoyed hiking through the bush.
- Year 10, 11 and 12 retreat program allowed students to explore aspects of their faith development.
- Sustainable Racing Team (SRT) Program which supports students in Years 7-12 in the construction of sustainable racing machines and compete in a number of competitions, for example energy breakthrough in Maryborough. The students rode from Broken Hill to Ballarat raising over \$10,000 for the Elysie Foundation
- Ballarat Associated Schools (BAS) after school sports programs.
- Justice Action Group (JAG) where interested students promote and support local, national and international social justice activities.
- Damascus Sustainable Group where interested students promote and support local, national and international environmental issues. This also includes recycling initiatives at the College.
- Various House activities including speaking at assemblies, leading prayer and inter-house sports.

- Pride Group - initiated by the school counsellors this group provided an opportunity for students interested in the LGBTIQA+ community to gather and provide input on how the College can address student inclusivity.
- VCAL/VM camp as a culmination of an activity where they are required to organise and run an excursion.
- Public Speaking opportunities. The College continues to compete in the local South Street Public Speaking Competition and Debaters Association of Victoria (DAV) debating.
- College Performing Art and Music Productions were very successful in 2024. Culminating in the College production of *The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night time*. Over 100 students were involved in the two productions.
- Annual Christmas Concert showcased the incredible talents of our music students
- Annual Awards Evening celebrated the achievements and successes of students throughout the year

Student Satisfaction

There were opportunities for students to provide feedback on their experience in school community and home through the Acer Wellbeing survey. This survey was offered to all students in the college with over a 90% completion rate.

The wellbeing survey is intended to provide a snapshot of responses at the time and overtime provides some longitudinal data exploring opportunities in successes some key findings from the survey highlight that:

75% of all Damascus Students indicated that they have Developed to Very Highly Developed Social and Emotional Skills.

Year 9 students were identified as a Cohort that had the lowest indicator of Social and Emotional wellbeing with over 30% of students having low-emerging social and emotional skills

Some observations in the Survey indicated that:

30% of year 12 boys agreed and 25% of girls, that I could do better in my school work

31% of Year 12 girls and 37% of year 11 girls indicated that, I feel lonely

53% of year 12 boys and 76% of girls indicated that at time, I feel very stressed

Above 85% in all year levels including high 90% for year 7s indicated that, I am a happy person

75% all year 8 students indicated that I get along with my classmates. This contrasted with 90+% in other year levels.

An average of 70% of student indicated that, I get along with my teachers. This was in contrast with year 12s where scores were above 95%.

I feel like I belong in my school. Boys tended to score higher in this statement with 85% of

students agreeing. Girls in contrast averaged at 76%. The data indicated that the lowest responses in general were coming from our year 8 students. Paralleled with social behaviour reports provided impetus for the introduction of the St Brendan’s Program in 2025. Specifically at reviewing and providing an alternative learning experience that meets the needs of their social and emotional skills.

Student Attendance

Student attendance is overall high, reflecting a positive school culture and strong engagement across year levels. This is further supported by targeted initiatives such as the Re-engagement Program and the Intervention Program, which play a key role in maintaining and improving attendance. These programs provide tailored support for students facing barriers to regular attendance, ensuring they feel connected to their learning and the school community. Through early identification and responsive strategies, the school continues to foster a supportive environment where all students are encouraged and enabled to attend consistently

Years 9 - 12 Student Retention Rate	
Years 9 to 12 Student Retention Rate	[ASR_Years9To12StudentRetentionRate.retentionrate]

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y07	[ASR_AttendanceRatesByYearGroup.year7]
Y08	[ASR_AttendanceRatesByYearGroup.year8]
Y09	[ASR_AttendanceRatesByYearGroup.year9]
Y10	[ASR_AttendanceRatesByYearGroup.year10]
Overall average attendance	[ASR_AttendanceRatesByYearGroup.average]

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Damascus College leadership and the stewardship of resources are integral to the strategic delivery of:

- Catholic School Culture
- Community Engagement
- Learning and Teaching
- Student Wellbeing

Leadership and stewardship are addressed within these specific portfolios.

Achievements

In 2024, Damascus College proudly continued its commitment to excellence in Catholic education through alignment with the Catholic Education Ballarat School Improvement Framework. Guided by the principles of faith, learning, student wellbeing and leadership, the College undertook an extensive process of self reflection and review designed to strengthen our learning environment, build a more inclusive culture and shape the future direction of our community.

A central achievement of 2024 was the extensive consultation process involving students, parents, staff, and community members. This deep engagement ensured that a broad range of voices informed the development of a School Improvement Plan for the next five years (2025–2029). This collaborative effort will underpin the continued growth and vitality of Damascus College, focusing on student outcomes, Catholic identity, leadership development and community engagement.

In line with our mission to foster equity and justice, Damascus College established a Gender Equality Working Team. This group has led the College's commitment to unpacking and promoting gender inclusion and leadership, engaging with current research and best practice to ensure all staff have the opportunity to flourish and participate in the work of the College.

Recognising the importance of collaboration and innovation in school leadership, 2024 saw the launch of an exciting Middle Years Program in partnership with Loreto College Ballarat. This collaboration strengthens learning opportunities and community across our Catholic schools and reflects our shared commitment to student-centred education. A number of our staff participated in workshops with leaders from Loreto and facilitated by Paul Larkin supported our leaders to be both reflective and outward facing.

A few staff completed to Country Diocesan Leadership Program facilitated by Catholic Education Ballarat, Sandhurst and Wagga Wagga.

Our staff undertook significant professional learning in 2024, including participation in Courageous Conversations training—building capacity to engage meaningfully with issues of race, identity and culture in the school setting. In addition, a deeply enriching Staff Formation Day was held, focused on exploring the stories and contributions of Women of the Church, aligning with our Catholic identity and values of dignity and inclusion.

These achievements reflect Damascus College's steadfast dedication to the holistic development of our students and the continual growth of our school community. As we move forward, the outcomes of 2024 lay a strong foundation for future-focused, faith-filled education.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2024	
During 2024, staff engaged in a range of professional development opportunities aimed at enhancing both leadership capacity and classroom practice. Key initiatives include participation in Courageous Conversations, which supports staff in developing the skills to engage in open, honest, and respectful dialogue, particularly around sensitive or complex issues. The Middle Leaders Program has provided emerging and current leaders with tools to strengthen their leadership effectiveness and build collaborative teams. Additionally, the ReLATE Program (Relationship-Based Learning and Teaching Environment) has supported staff in creating trauma-informed, relationally rich learning environments. Collectively, these professional learning experiences have contributed to a more reflective, resilient, and connected teaching community	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2024	110
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$2505.48

Teacher Satisfaction

In 2024, the school implemented several initiatives aimed at strengthening teacher satisfaction and promoting a positive, collaborative workplace culture. A key development was the introduction of the new Annual Review Meeting (ARM) process, designed to provide staff with a more structured and meaningful opportunity to reflect on their professional growth and set future goals. The revised onboarding program also ensured that new staff members

felt welcomed, supported and well-prepared as they joined the school community. To enhance communication and planning, feedback surveys were introduced following major events and initiatives, allowing staff input to directly inform future activities. Regular staff voice forums and an active Consultative Committee have provided formal channels for discussion and shared decision-making. Additionally, the launch of the 'Cuppa with the Principal' initiative—a relaxed, informal drop-in session—has offered staff an open space to chat with the principal, share feedback, raise concerns, or suggest new ideas. These combined efforts reflect the school's commitment to valuing and empowering staff, and fostering a culture of respect, collaboration and continuous improvement.

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0
Masters	30
Graduate	42
Graduate Certificate	7
Bachelor Degree	90
Advanced Diploma	14
No Qualifications Listed	16

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	7
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	122
Teaching Staff (FTE)	110.2
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	77
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	64.59
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	2

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The Damascus College Strategic Plan 2021-2025 list the community connection pillar key priority as ' A proud school community of members that is confident, connected and value links with the local and global community'.

Our goals and intended outcomes for this priority are:

- Confident and diverse communication that builds pride, creates dialogue, celebrates our points of difference and enhances our position as a college of first choice
- We aim to consistently promote the College across a variety of mediums, in a positive way that builds pride amongst the student, staff and parent community. The Damascus points of difference will always be part of marketing and creatively promoted, to constantly reinforce our uniqueness, to position ourselves as a school of first choice within the community.
- Strong intergenerational connections that build parent and alumni collaboration
We aim to foster a vibrant community that celebrates and builds connections with parents and past students from each of the foundation colleges, reinforcing the bond with the College. Growing and promoting meaningful alumni and parent engagement is key to enhancing the College perception within the community.
- Quality links to the local, national and global community with partnerships that strengthen capacity, student pathways and experience
- We aim to establish meaningful, successful and ongoing partnerships with local, national and global organisations, to make a difference to others and to build student pathways and experience.

Achievements

- Teacher Advisor (TA) Interviews to discuss student's progress, achievement, well-being and address any areas on concern
- Introduction of Subject Teacher Interviews
- Regular Parent Support Group (PSG) meetings for individual students in conjunction with Teacher Advisor (TA) interviews
- Regular meetings online, phone or onsite with parents
- Child Safe working group, comprising of Students, Parents and staff

- Online resources for Careers and Pathways publications to assist students and families choosing subjects
- Parents invited to large events – Opening Mass, Art and Technology Exhibition, Awards Evenings, Graduations, Masses, School productions, BAS after school sports
- Extracurricular programs provide opportunity for strong parent engagement
Tracking and documentation of school-parent conversation through SIMON for coordinated support

Community Engagement and Fundraising

Damascus College fosters numerous community partnerships that strengthen capacity and add value to student experience and pathways, these being, but not limited to:

- Year 10 work experience and Structured Work Placement – local organisations
University Pre-Service Teachers are placed at Damascus regularly to undertake their teacher training
- Access to external resources: police, Orange Door, psychologists
Fundraising with local charities: Caritas, St Vincent de Paul, Shower Bus, Soup Bus
School-Based Apprenticeship programs
- Transition program (SEED) with local Catholic primary schools
- Engagement with local organisations for learning opportunities - Local Highlands LLEN, Federation University, Australian Catholic University
- Engagement with past students, attendance at reunion events
- Engagement with local organisations for social justice purposes - Sisters of Mercy, Rotary, Legacy, many organisations with Cristian Personal Development Award (CPDA) program
- Strong relationships with local media agencies – The Courier Newspaper, ABC Radio, Win TV, and others
- Engagement with local businesses for fundraising purposes – local cafes, Mars Wrigley, Sovereign Hill, florists, hotels and others
- Strong relationship with Catholic primary and secondary schools in the local area
Retreats, liturgies, prayer, and education in partnership with parish priests
- Relationship nurtured and developed within the parish including members of the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited, the Diocese of Ballarat and the Sisters of Mercy
- Students and staff represent the college at Anzac Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies
- Engagement with local indigenous community – BADAC and Reconciliation Action Team for the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Guest speakers visit the College to speak to classes – Vietnam veterans, health promotion, Victoria Police, Victorian Universities, Elevate Education, Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)

- Engagement with local organisations for student wellbeing: Live4Life, Orange Door, psychologists, Q Hub, (Child and Family Services (CAFs), Ballarat Health Services STEM Expo where past students and members of the community visit the College to speak to students about their occupation in STEM
- The annual Bright Futures Breakfast raises funds to support the Damascus Bright Futures Scholarship

College Community events

Annual events that target key primary schools within the Ballarat region were conducted again in 2023. The grade 5 SEED (transition) days with Catholic primary schools, the Maths Games Day and Performing Arts Production showcase were held on campus, which engaged all Catholic primary schools with Damascus. The aim is for the students to get a taste of what it is like to study at Damascus, to drive future enrolments.

Parent Satisfaction

Continuous improvement and seeking feedback are the key to success. Damascus College sends surveys to parents to evaluate events and activities as needed. Each year a parent survey is sent to Year 8 parents to evaluate their Year 7 experience. The survey covers a range of important questions used to analyse and improve processes where possible. The pastoral care program at Damascus is the Teacher Advisor (TA) program, which gives families one staff member as a central point of contact and allows parents to voice their concerns and queries, with a consistent member of staff throughout the six years at the College.

Financial Performance

The school's financial performance information and a report of the financial activities of the school's boarding premises (if applicable) have been provided to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and will be available for the community to access from their website at www.acnc.gov.au.

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at www.damascus.vic.edu.au