

DIOCESE
OF
BALLARAT
CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
LIMITED



2025

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 2025 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 06 May 2026

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

From the Murray to the Sea, DOBCEL aims to realise a vision of the 'fullness of life for all' for more than 18,600 students across a community of 63 Catholic primary and secondary schools.

We began 2025 with an uplifting Mass led by Bishop Paul in a packed St Patrick's Cathedral. In his homily, Bishop Paul highlighted our mission as Catholic educators to pursue the fullness of life for every child in our care, reminding us to keep students, staff and mission at the centre of our work.

The January 2025 publication of the DOBCEL Strategy 2035 represents a pivotal moment for the DOBCEL community and marks an important phase in our ongoing development.

The main purpose of this 10-year strategy is to inspire the whole system to commit to and move towards a high performing system of Catholic schools. The system is strong and well-performing, but we can do better.

Underpinned by our Catholic Identity, the strategy identifies five strategic pillars that reflect primary areas of focus.

- Collaborative Cultures
- Engagement and Belonging
- School as Community
- Rich Pedagogical practices for Deeper Learning and Wellbeing
- Sustainable Stewardship

The strategy was co-designed with teachers, school leaders, non-teaching staff, students, parents and those working in Catholic Education Ballarat offices.

I had the great privilege of participating in these co-design sessions, which showcased the professionalism and passion of all those in our system that devote their working lives to provide a great education for our children and young people.

Therefore, it is only fitting that I record my sincere thanks to all of you. These are exciting times of opportunity for our community of schools, but it is only possible because of your extraordinary work and dedication.

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, draws on a rich educational heritage spanning more than 140 years. This legacy is grounded in three foundation colleges: Sacred Heart College (1881) and St Martin's in the Pines (1967), both established and led by the Sisters of Mercy, and St Paul's Technical College (1948), a diocesan school conducted by the Christian Brothers at the invitation of the Bishop. Together, these traditions continue to shape the College's enduring commitment to faith, learning and service.

Formed through the amalgamation of these three schools, Damascus College is now governed by the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL). As Ballarat's only Catholic co-educational secondary college, Damascus offers a contemporary and future-focused education that both challenges and supports students to grow into confident, capable and compassionate contributors to their communities. This commitment is underpinned by the Damascus College Vision, which calls each learner to flourish through faith, excellence in learning, and a deep sense of wellbeing.

The College provides a broad and inclusive curriculum designed to support diverse post-secondary pathways. Grounded in a holistic approach to education, Damascus seeks to nurture the intellectual, spiritual, social and emotional development of each student. In alignment with the Vision, learning experiences are intentionally designed to form young people who are reflective, resilient and responsive to the needs of others.

Recognising the uniqueness of each learner, Damascus College is committed to inclusive and differentiated teaching practices that respond to individual strengths, abilities and learning styles. Students are encouraged to actively engage in the full life of the College—academic, co-curricular and faith-based—fostering a sense of agency and belonging. This reflects the College's commitment to Mercy hospitality, where all are welcomed, valued and supported to reach their full potential.

As a Catholic co-educational community, Damascus reflects the diversity and interdependence of the wider world. It cultivates mutual respect, inclusivity and an authentic appreciation of the dignity of every person. Learning programs are designed to deepen students' capacity to think critically, collaborate effectively and act with integrity, enabling them to understand both their own values and those of others.

Damascus College offers a contemporary learning environment that integrates innovative technologies, flexible learning spaces and expansive natural surroundings. Graduates of Damascus College leave with a strong sense of identity, purpose and self-worth, grounded in the Catholic tradition and inspired to contribute positively to an ever-changing global society.

Principal's Report

In 2025, Damascus College continued to live out its Vision with purpose and hope, marked by a deep commitment to faith, learning and community. As we celebrated thirty years as Damascus College, we also honoured more than 140 years of Mercy and Catholic education that underpin our identity. This milestone provided an opportunity not only to reflect on our rich history but to renew our collective commitment to forming young people who are grounded in faith, inspired in learning and connected in community. The spirit of Mercy hospitality was evident in the way our community came together in gratitude, recognising those who have shaped the College and embracing the responsibility of carrying this legacy forward.

A defining strength of Damascus College is its vibrant Catholic culture, which continues to be expressed in both tradition and innovation. In 2025, this was powerfully evident in the inaugural Lake Mungo Immersion experience. This significant initiative invited students to engage deeply with the spirituality, history and wisdom of First Nations peoples, fostering a profound respect for Indigenous culture and its enduring connection to land and story. This immersion experience enriched our understanding of faith through a broader lens, inviting reflection on stewardship, reconciliation and the sacredness of creation. It stands as a meaningful expression of our commitment to walking together with humility and respect.

Our Catholic identity was further celebrated through the final production of Final Hours, a long-standing and deeply valued tradition within the College. This powerful reflection on the Passion of Christ has, for many years, provided students and staff with an opportunity to engage with the central story of our faith in a profound and creative way. Witnessing the final performance was both a moment of pride and reflection—an acknowledgement of the generations of students who have contributed to its legacy, and a reminder of the importance of continually renewing how we express and encounter faith within our community.

Throughout the year, significant work was undertaken to shape the future direction of Damascus College through the development of a new Vision and Mission statement. This process brought together staff, students and representatives from the Diocese in a collaborative and discerning dialogue. Grounded in prayer, consultation and shared wisdom, the emerging Vision seeks to articulate clearly who we are and who we are called to be. It places faith at the centre, while affirming our commitment to excellence in learning, authentic relationships and the holistic development of each student. This work ensures that Damascus remains both deeply rooted in its Catholic identity and responsive to the contemporary context of education.

In response to continued growth in student enrolments, 2025 also saw the implementation of a renewed middle leaders structure. This structure has been intentionally designed to strengthen clarity, accountability and connection across the College. It reflects a commitment

to high expectations for both staff and students, while ensuring that pastoral care, faith formation and learning remain deeply interconnected. By placing relationships at the heart of leadership, the College continues to foster a culture where individuals are known, supported and challenged to grow.

Teaching and learning remain central to the mission of Damascus College, and 2025 has been a year of significant achievement. The College celebrated its largest cohort of students completing both the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the VCE Vocational Major (VM), reflecting a commitment to diverse and meaningful pathways for all learners. Notably, Damascus achieved a historic milestone with its first entry into the 30+ study score club in the state. This accomplishment is a testament to the dedication of our students, the expertise of our teachers and the strength of a learning culture that values both effort and excellence.

A strong focus on professional growth has underpinned these academic achievements. Staff have engaged in targeted professional learning, including the implementation of Teach Like a Champion strategies, supporting consistent and high-impact classroom practice. Alongside this, there has been an increased emphasis on the use of data to inform teaching and learning. Through careful analysis of student progress, teachers are better equipped to respond to individual needs, ensuring that each student is both supported and extended in their learning journey. This reflects a culture of continuous improvement, where evidence-based practice drives decision-making.

The opening of the Xavier Flood Senior Learning Centre has been a significant development in enhancing the learning environment at Damascus College. This contemporary facility provides senior students with flexible, purpose-designed spaces that support independence, collaboration and focused study. It stands as a visible commitment to excellence in learning and to providing students with environments that reflect the demands and opportunities of contemporary education. The Centre has quickly become a hub of senior learning, fostering both academic growth and a sense of shared purpose among students.

In 2025, the College also undertook a review of the Teacher Advisor Program, recognising the critical role of relationships in student wellbeing and success. This review reaffirmed the importance of strong, consistent connections between students and staff, ensuring that each young person is known and supported. Morning gatherings have continued to be a valued part of the College day, providing a regular opportunity for connection, reflection and the nurturing of community. These moments, while simple in structure, play a significant role in fostering belonging and reinforcing the relational culture that defines Damascus.

A significant and forward-looking initiative in 2025 has been the development of the St Brendan's Program at Dunnstown. This program reflects the College's commitment to innovative and inclusive educational pathways, designed to engage students in learning that is both meaningful and transformative. Grounded in the values of the Damascus Vision, St Brendan's represents a willingness to take considered risks with fidelity—remaining true to our Catholic identity while responding creatively to the diverse needs of young people. It is a

powerful example of how Damascus continues to evolve, ensuring that all students are supported to flourish in environments that recognise their strengths and potential.

Finally, we acknowledge with deep gratitude the collective efforts of all who contribute to the life of Damascus College. We thank the School Advisory Council (SAC) for their guidance and stewardship, our students for the energy and spirit they bring each day, and our parents and carers for their ongoing partnership and trust. We are especially grateful to our dedicated and professional staff, whose commitment to excellence in faith, learning and wellbeing shapes the daily experience of our community. We also acknowledge the valued support and collaboration of the representatives of Catholic Education Ballarat. Together, we continue to build a community that is faithful to its mission and hopeful for the future.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The College priorities for the next four years are:

1. Demonstrate a contemporary understanding of Catholic culture so that Damascus College can be a flourishing faith and learning community.
2. Empower all to contribute to the positive learning culture of Damascus College.
3. Provide excellence through a culture that demands a safe, inclusive and collaborative learning community.
4. Provide staff formation opportunities to assist staff in working together to develop a shared understanding of Catholic Culture and a deeper understanding of the renewed College vision.
5. Staff formation Day to explore the 30 year history of Damascus College.

Achievements

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present this Catholic Culture and Mission Report, celebrating a year of growth, reflection, and achievement across our College community. Throughout the year, our 2025 theme, Living Mercy Respect, has been the foundation upon which our decisions, relationships and learning have been built. This theme has not simply been a statement of intent; rather, it has been a lived reality, shaping the way we engage with one another and respond to the needs of our community with compassion, dignity, and integrity.

Central to our work has been a deep and authentic commitment to reconciliation. We were honoured to host the Ballarat Catholic Colleges Reconciliation Day, welcoming over four hundred and fifty students from across Ballarat. This significant gathering provided a powerful opportunity for collective learning and reflection, as students engaged with a First Nations author Brenda Matthews, author of *Last Daughter* whose voice and story challenged and inspired all present. The experience reinforced our shared responsibility to actively pursue reconciliation, grounded in truth-telling, respect and meaningful action. In alignment with this commitment, the College introduced the role of a First Nations Worker, a vital initiative aimed at strengthening support for our First Nations students and ensuring their cultural identity is affirmed and celebrated within our community. This initiative reflects our ongoing dedication to Living Mercy Respect through inclusion, advocacy and culturally responsive practice.

Strategic development has also been a defining feature of the year. A representative Working Team was established to collaboratively develop a new College Vision Statement. This process was marked by authentic consultation and discernment, resulting in a vision that

speaks clearly to our identity and purpose: Inspired by Christ's Mercy, a welcoming community, transforming self, others and the world. This vision encapsulates both who we are and who we aspire to be and it will guide our future direction with clarity and purpose. Complementing this work, our Mission Statement was thoughtfully realigned with a renewed emphasis on curiosity as a driver of learning. This work stands as an excellent example of key stakeholders—staff, students, and community members—working together in partnership, embodying Living Mercy Respect through shared ownership and collective responsibility.

Our commitment to formation and identity was further enriched through our Damascus Formation Day, where we reflected on thirty years as a College community. This day was a profound opportunity to listen deeply to the stories of those who shaped our foundation, including staff from our founding schools: Sacred Heart, St Paul's Technical School, and St Martin's in the Pines. These stories not only honoured our heritage but also strengthened our sense of belonging and continuity. By acknowledging our past, we are better positioned to move forward with confidence and fidelity to our mission, continuing to Live Mercy Respect in ways that are both authentic and transformative.

In the area of Religious Education and student wellbeing, staff engaged in professional exploration of our curriculum, ensuring alignment with contemporary frameworks such as Respectful Relationships. This work reflects our commitment to holistic education—one that nurtures the spiritual, emotional and social development of each student. Through this lens, Living Mercy Respect becomes both a pedagogical approach and a relational framework, guiding how we teach, support and accompany our students in their growth.

Across all aspects of College life, there has been a strong and consistent focus on fostering a culture of excellence, inclusion and care. Our staff have demonstrated professionalism, adaptability and a deep commitment to their vocation as educators. Their willingness to engage in reflective practice and embrace ongoing improvement has ensured that our learning environment remains dynamic and responsive to the needs of all learners.

Together, we look forward with hope and confidence, continuing to build a community where Mercy is lived, respect is evident and each individual is empowered to flourish.

A significant priority throughout the year has been our commitment to fostering Communities of Respect and Equality. In partnership with Grampians Health, the College has actively engaged in initiatives that promote respectful relationships, inclusion and the dignity of every person. This collaboration has strengthened our capacity to respond to contemporary social challenges with informed, proactive strategies that support the wellbeing of our students and the broader community. Through education, dialogue and shared practice, we continue to embed a culture where respect is not only expected but explicitly taught and modelled. This partnership reflects our College theme of Living Mercy Respect, ensuring that our

engagement extends beyond the classroom and contributes meaningfully to the common good.

Equally, the development of our Intergenerational Learning program (IGEN) has been a defining and innovative initiative this year. In collaboration with Mercy Health Ballarat and in the spirit of our ongoing partnership with the Sisters of Mercy, this program has created rich opportunities for connection between our students and older members of the community. Through shared experiences, storytelling and mutual learning, students have developed a deeper appreciation for wisdom, empathy and human connection. IGEN exemplifies our commitment to authentic community partnership, where learning is relational and transformative. It is a powerful expression of Living Mercy Respect, honouring the dignity of all generations and strengthening the bonds that unite us as a faith-filled community.

Our students have also embodied the spirit of Living Mercy Respect through authentic, service-focused learning initiatives. Through Religious Education, students led the establishment of a College Food Pantry, responding directly to the needs of those experiencing hardship within our local community. This initiative fostered a strong sense of social justice, agency and compassion, as students moved from awareness to meaningful action. Complementing this work, our Food Technology students prepared meals for the Ballarat Soup Bus, contributing to outreach efforts that support vulnerable members of the community. These experiences have provided powerful opportunities for students to live out the Gospel values in tangible ways, reinforcing the importance of dignity, generosity and service. In doing so, our students are not only learning about Mercy—they are actively living it with respect and purpose.

Value Added

- Reflection Days at all year levels
- Youth Ministry
- Melbourne Experience with the Big Issue
- First Nations Worker
- Students participated in Ballarat's Youth Coalition exploring Respectful Relationship
- Hosting the Ballarat Reconciliation Gathering
- Lake Mungo Immersion
- IGen Program
- Food Pantry
- Year 12 Retreat

- College Opening Mass, Damascus Day Liturgy and Ash Wednesday Liturgy
- Mother's Day and Father's Day Liturgy

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The College priorities for the next four years are:

1. Demonstrate a contemporary understanding of Catholic culture so that Damascus College can be a flourishing faith and learning community.
2. Empower all to contribute to the positive learning culture of Damascus College
3. Provide excellence through a culture that demands a safe, inclusive and collaborative learning community.
4. Embed the Damascus Instructional Model across all learning areas to prioritise consistency of teaching practices.
5. Co-create and communicate agreed and consistently applied classroom and behaviour expectations to ensure a safe and respectful learning culture and environment.

Achievements

The teaching and learning sphere of the College has continued to evolve with purpose and coherence, grounded in our commitment to excellence and shaped by our theme, Living Mercy Respect. A key focus this year has been the investment in high-quality staff professional learning, most notably through our engagement with Teach Like a Champion. This work has provided staff with a shared repertoire of evidence-informed strategies to strengthen classroom practice, enhance student engagement and ensure clarity and consistency in instruction. The deliberate and sustained focus on instructional practice reflects our collective responsibility to create learning environments where all students are supported to thrive and where Mercy and respect are evident in both expectations and relationships.

Complementing this work has been a series of Professional Learning workshops designed to embed and deepen a shared understanding of the Damascus Instructional Model. Through collaborative dialogue, modelling and reflection, staff have continued to refine their pedagogical approach, ensuring alignment between our College vision, curriculum design, and classroom practice. The Damascus Instructional Model has provided a clear and cohesive framework for teaching and learning, enabling staff to respond to the diverse needs of learners while maintaining high expectations. This shared language of practice has strengthened professional collaboration and reinforced a culture of continuous improvement across the College.

The academic achievements of our students this year have been a source of great pride for our community. The College's recognition as a member of the 30+ study scores cohort in Victoria reflects a sustained commitment to academic excellence and the high aspirations we

hold for all learners. This accomplishment, acknowledged across local and state media outlets, affirms the quality of teaching and the dedication of our students. In particular, we celebrate the outstanding success with 12% of our VCE students achieving an ATAR above 90, a testament to their perseverance, discipline and commitment to their studies. These achievements exemplify what is possible when high expectations are coupled with strong support and a culture that truly embodies Living Mercy Respect.

Our Vocational Major (VM) program has continued to grow in both scope and impact, providing students with meaningful and flexible pathways that align with their strengths, interests and future aspirations. Through increased access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) opportunities, students have engaged in authentic, hands-on learning experiences that prepare them for life beyond the College. The success of this program is reflected not only in student outcomes, but in the confidence and sense of purpose demonstrated by those pursuing these pathways. This work highlights our commitment to valuing diverse definitions of success and ensuring that every student is supported to achieve their potential.

Innovation in curriculum design has also been evident through the launch of the St Brendan's Year 8 Program, a significant initiative that reflects the College's willingness to take strategic and informed risks in the pursuit of improved learning outcomes. This program has been designed to respond to the developmental needs of young adolescents, providing a tailored learning environment that fosters connection, engagement and growth. Early indicators point to strong student engagement and a positive sense of belonging, reinforcing the importance of responsive and student-centred approaches to learning within our community.

The College's NAPLAN results in 2025 further demonstrate the strength and consistency of our teaching and learning approach. Across year levels, students achieved strong growth, with a significant proportion performing at or above expected benchmarks in literacy and numeracy. These results reflect not only the diligence and commitment of our students, but also the effectiveness of targeted teaching strategies, data-informed practice and timely intervention. Importantly, the growth achieved highlights our focus on ensuring that every student makes meaningful progress, regardless of their starting point. In this way, our NAPLAN outcomes are a clear expression of Living Mercy Respect—honouring each learner's journey while maintaining high expectations for all.

A further priority within the teaching and learning sphere has been the implementation of a structured literacy intervention program for students in Years 7–9 requiring additional support. Through the targeted use of Corrective Reading, the College has adopted an evidence-informed approach to explicitly teach foundational literacy skills, with a strong focus on decoding, comprehension, and fluency. This program has enabled staff to utilise data-driven practices to identify student needs and monitor growth over time, ensuring that intervention is both timely and impactful. Students have responded positively to the structured and supportive nature of the program, demonstrating increased confidence and

measurable improvement in their literacy capabilities. This initiative reflects our unwavering commitment to Living Mercy Respect, ensuring that every learner is supported with dignity and precision to achieve meaningful progress.

A significant milestone in the life of the College this year has been the opening of the Xavier Flood Senior Learning Centre. This purpose-built facility reflects our commitment to providing senior students with a learning environment that acknowledges their growing maturity and prepares them for life beyond school. Designed to mirror the expectations and structures of higher education, the Centre fosters independence, collaboration and self-directed learning. Within this space, students are treated as young adults, encouraged to take ownership of their learning, engage in meaningful dialogue and work collaboratively with peers and staff. The Xavier Flood Senior Learning Centre stands as a tangible expression of our belief in the capacity of our students to flourish when provided with an environment that is both respectful and aspirational—an authentic embodiment of Living Mercy Respect in action.

Finally, the continued growth of the Hands On Learning program has provided additional pathways for students to engage with their education in meaningful and practical ways. This program has supported students to build confidence, develop teamwork and problem-solving skills and experience success through applied learning. By valuing different ways of learning and recognising the strengths of each individual, the program reflects our commitment to inclusive education. In all of these initiatives, the teaching and learning sphere of the College remains firmly anchored in Living Mercy Respect, ensuring that academic rigour is always accompanied by care, dignity and a deep respect for the learner.

Student Learning Outcomes

As non-select entry secondary College our student NAPLAN data indicates disparity and underperformance in each of the key domains in Reading, Writing, Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation, however data in Year 9 indicates a strong steady growth providing testament to the learning and teaching program and intervention programs introduced.

1. 10th Percentile – Lower Performing Students

Damascus students at the 10th percentile are consistently below both State and National levels in nearly every domain:

- Reading: 8 points below State, 9 above National.
- Writing: 4 points below State, 19 above National.
- Spelling: 39 points below State, 35 below National — largest deficit.
- Grammar and Punctuation: 19 below State, 5 below National.
- Numeracy: 5 below State, 9 above National.

The Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation domains show a significant gap at the lower end.

2. Median (50th Percentile)

The median student at Damascus is consistently behind State and National peers:

- Reading: 23 points below State, 13 below National.
- Writing: 13 below State, equal to National.
- Spelling: 35 below State, 33 below National.
- Grammar & Punctuation: 20 below State, 14 below National.
- Numeracy: 19 below State, 10 below National.

Across all domains, Damascus students are underperforming compared to State medians, especially in Spelling and Reading.

3. 90th Percentile – Higher Performing Students

Even Damascus' top performers are lagging:

- Reading: 32 points below State, 26 below National.
- Writing: 24 below State, 16 below National.
- Spelling: 24 below State, 22 below National.
- Grammar and Punctuation: 32 below State, 29 below National.
- Numeracy: 32 below State, 25 below National.

The most capable students at Damascus are underachieving relative to their peers.

1. 10th Percentile – Lower Performing Students

Performance of Damascus College students at the 10th percentile is generally close to State and National benchmarks:

- Reading: 2 points above State, 17 above National.
- Writing: 1 below State, 21 above National.
- Spelling: 16 below State, 12 below National.
- Grammar & Punctuation: 11 above State, 24 above National.
- Numeracy: 4 below State, 8 above National.

Spelling is the only domain where the 10th percentile is significantly below benchmarks.

2. Median (50th Percentile)

The median performance of Damascus students is comparable in some areas, but slightly behind State medians:

- Reading: 4 points below State, 4 above National.
- Writing: 10 below State, equal to National.
- Spelling: 19 below State, 17 below National.
- Grammar & Punctuation: 14 below State, 9 below National.
- Numeracy: 19 below State, 12 below National.

Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation and Numeracy medians show noticeable gaps from State benchmarks.

3. 90th Percentile – Higher Performing Students

Top-performing Damascus students are somewhat behind their State and National peers:

- Reading: 7 points below State, 1 below National.
- Writing: 18 below State, 14 below National.
- Spelling: 31 below State, 29 below National.
- Grammar & Punctuation: 21 below State, 17 below National.
- Numeracy: 33 below State, 24 below National.

The largest deficits are in Spelling and Numeracy.

VCE Data 2025 Summary

- Number of Year 12 students 159
- Number of VPC Completions 8
- Number of VCE-VM completions 38
- Number of students completing a VET course 79 second year students
- Number of students completing a school assessed VCE 19
- Number of Year 12 students who sat exams 95

English Study

There has been significant improvement over the past two years, with a +4 point increase since 2023. This suggests recent instructional work in English, targeted literacy strategy, intervention in earlier years and the enrichment program is having an impact.

ATAR Statistics

- In 2025 we had 11.7% with 90+
- In 2024 we had 9% with 90+
- In 2023 we had 4.5% with 90+
- In 2022 we had 6.5% with 90+.

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards					
	2025 (current year)			2-Year Average	
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 7	523	60%	523	57%
	Year 9	558	54%	549	50%
Numeracy	Year 7	536	71%	532	68%
	Year 9	564	64%	557	63%
Reading	Year 7	532	66%	531	68%
	Year 9	573	70%	564	65%
Spelling	Year 7	515	63%	512	59%
	Year 9	548	63%	543	62%
Writing	Year 7	536	66%	534	66%
	Year 9	574	62%	569	61%

*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2025 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	30
VCE Completion Rate	99.30%
VCE VM Completion Rate	97%
VPC Completion Rate	100%

*Data not reported for 2025 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 2025	
Tertiary Study	*
TAFE / VET	*
Apprenticeship / Traineeship	*
Deferred	*
Employment	*
Other - The category of Other includes both students Looking for Work and those classed as Other	*

Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The College priorities for the next four years are:

1. Demonstrate a contemporary understanding of Catholic culture so that Damascus College can be a flourishing faith and learning community.
2. Empower all to contribute to the positive learning culture of Damascus College
3. Provide excellence through a culture that demands a safe, inclusive and collaborative learning community.
4. Co- create and communicate agreed and consistently applied classroom and behaviour expectations to ensure a safe and respectful learning culture and environment:
5. Review the effectiveness and process of the TA Program and Student Management / Wellbeing Structure Priority Two C & Three

Achievements

Student wellbeing remains central to the life of the College, with our approach firmly grounded in the principles of Living Mercy Respect. Throughout the year, we undertook a comprehensive review of the purpose and value of the Teacher Advisor (TA) Program and family interviews, engaging in broad consultation with staff, students and families. This collaborative process provided rich insight into the strengths of our current practices and areas for refinement. As a result, the Teacher Advisor Program has been strengthened, with greater clarity of role, enhanced structures for pastoral care and a deeper shared understanding of its importance in fostering strong relationships between students, families and the College. This work reinforces our commitment to ensuring that every student is known, valued, and supported.

A continued focus has been placed on establishing clear, consistent and predictable classroom routines to support student engagement and wellbeing. The embedding of consistent entry and exit practices across all learning environments has contributed to a calm and orderly atmosphere, enabling students to transition effectively and maximise learning time. These practices, underpinned by high expectations and relational trust, reflect our commitment to creating safe and supportive classrooms where all students can flourish. In addition, the use of Social Behaviour Tracking has strengthened our capacity to monitor student behaviour, identify trends and implement timely and appropriate interventions, ensuring a proactive and responsive approach to student wellbeing.

Our commitment to Respectful Relationships has remained a key priority, with deliberate and sustained efforts to embed this framework across all aspects of College life. The work of the Gender Action Working Party has been instrumental in promoting inclusion, awareness, and education around gender equity, ensuring that our practices reflect dignity and respect for all. Similarly, the Community Child Safety Working Team has continued to strengthen our safeguarding practices, reinforcing a culture where the safety and wellbeing of every young person is paramount. Central to this work has been the elevation of student voice and agency, empowering students to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes and to shape a College environment that reflects their needs and aspirations. Together, these initiatives exemplify our unwavering commitment to Living Mercy Respect, ensuring that wellbeing is not an adjunct to learning, but an integral foundation for it.

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
- St Brendan's Experience for Year 8 students
- Inter-House Swimming, Athletics Sports Carnivals and the Lap of the Lake
- Year 9 Camp: A five-night 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
- Ballarat Associated Schools (BAS) after school sports programs.
- 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 LGBTIQ+ community to gather and provide input on how the College can address student inclusivity.
- VCAL/VM camp as a culmination of an activity where students 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 2025, culminating in the College production of *Oliver*. Over 100 students were involved in the

two productions.

- Production of *Final Hours*
- Annual Christmas Concert showcased the incredible talents of our music students
- Annual Awards Evening celebrated the achievements and successes of students throughout the year
- Community Celebration 30 Years of Damascus
- Vast array of co-curricula program – Dungeons and Dragons, Textiles, Art Making, Run club, chess

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.

Student participation in whole school events continues to increase.

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	77.83

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y07	89.47
Y08	86.86
Y09	84.62
Y10	85.7
Overall average attendance	86.66

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The College priorities for the next four years are:

1. Demonstrate a contemporary understanding of Catholic culture so that Damascus College can be a flourishing faith and learning community.
2. Empower all to contribute to the positive learning culture of Damascus College
3. Provide excellence through a culture that demands a safe, inclusive and collaborative learning community.
4. Enhance communication practices and channels to provide timely information, build trust through transparency and develop a shared understanding of strategic planning and decision making
5. Enhance staff wellbeing and connections to the College.

Achievements

Leadership and management at the College has been characterised by reflection, renewal and a clear commitment to strengthening a culture where every individual is known, valued and supported. In partnership with members of our community, we undertook a comprehensive review of leadership roles and structures across the College. This process of discernment and consultation has led to the redesign of our leadership model, ensuring a more intentional and relational approach in which all students are “named and known.” This renewed structure enhances clarity, accountability and connection, enabling leaders at all levels to more effectively support student growth and wellbeing, consistent with our commitment to Living Mercy Respect.

A key outcome of this work has been the development of a leadership structure that actively supports the formation of new and emerging leaders. By creating clear pathways and opportunities for leadership development, the College has fostered a culture of professional growth, collaboration and shared responsibility. This approach recognises that leadership is both a service and a collective endeavour and it ensures that staff are empowered to contribute meaningfully to the strategic direction. Through mentoring, coaching and targeted professional learning, emerging leaders have been supported to build confidence, capability and a strong sense of purpose.

The continuation of the Gender Equality Team has remained an important element of our leadership focus, reinforcing our commitment to equity, inclusion and respect. This team has continued to lead initiatives that promote awareness, education and action, ensuring that gender equality is embedded within our policies, practices and culture. In parallel, the College has begun to explore the use of Culture Amp as a tool to support the monitoring and

enhancement of staff wellbeing. This initiative reflects a proactive approach to understanding staff experience, enabling leadership to respond with informed strategies that promote a positive, supportive and sustainable workplace environment.

Middle leaders have also engaged in targeted professional learning, particularly in the area of courageous conversations. This work has strengthened their capacity to lead with integrity, address complex issues with clarity and empathy and foster a culture of open, respectful dialogue. The ability to engage in courageous conversations is critical to effective leadership, supporting both accountability and relational trust. Through these initiatives, the College continues to build a leadership culture that is responsive, reflective and deeply aligned with our core value of Living Mercy Respect, ensuring that leadership is exercised with both conviction and compassion.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2025	
<p>Professional learning at the College has been both strategic and responsive, reflecting our commitment to excellence and our dedication to Living Mercy Respect in all aspects of practice. A balanced approach has been adopted, combining internally designed professional learning that draws on the expertise of our own staff with engagement in external networks and professional bodies. Internally, staff have led and participated in targeted learning opportunities that build collective capacity, strengthen pedagogical practice and promote consistency across the College. These initiatives affirm the professional capital within our community and foster a culture of shared learning and continuous improvement.</p> <p>In addition, staff have actively engaged with subject-specific learning area networks and leading educational organisations such as the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Australian Council for Educational Research and researchED. These partnerships have enabled staff to remain informed by current research, curriculum developments, and best practice, ensuring that our teaching remains contemporary, evidence-based and responsive to student needs. Equally, our non-teaching staff have engaged in targeted professional development aligned to their specific roles, enhancing their skills and capacity to contribute effectively to the overall functioning of the College. This holistic commitment to professional growth ensures that all members of our community are equipped to support student success, reinforcing a culture where excellence is pursued with integrity, collaboration and respect.</p>	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2025	110
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$2505.48

Teacher Satisfaction

In 2025, 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	25
Graduate	39
Graduate Certificate	6
Bachelor Degree	84
Advanced Diploma	11
No Qualifications Listed	25

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	7
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	131
Teaching Staff (FTE)	117.45
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	89
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	72.63
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	1

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

The College priorities for the next four years are:

1. Demonstrate a contemporary understanding of Catholic culture so that Damascus College can be a flourishing faith and learning community.
2. Empower all to contribute to the positive learning culture of Damascus College
3. Provide excellence through a culture that demands a safe, inclusive and collaborative learning community.

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
- 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 2025. The grade 5 SEED (transition) days with Catholic primary schools 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