



Penola Catholic College

2024 Annual School Report



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Catholic Schools
Parramatta Diocese

Introduction

About the Annual School Report

Penola Catholic College is registered by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) as a member of the Catholic system of schools in the Diocese of Parramatta.

The Annual School Report provides parents and carers and the wider school community with fair, accurate and objective information about various aspects of school performance and development. The Report describes the achievement of school development priorities in 2024 and gives information about the next years priorities.

This Report is a legislative requirement under the Schools Assistance Act 2008 and the Education Amendment Act 2004.

The information in this Report is complemented by the school website where other school publications and news can be viewed or obtained from the school.

Key Messages

From the Principal Mrs Peta Sparkes

I am delighted to present to you the 2024 Annual School Report for Penola Catholic College, Emu Plains.

Penola Catholic College's mission is to uphold, reflect and promote Catholic gospel values based on Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, Australia's first saint. At Penola Catholic College we are an educational community that is built around quality learning and teaching, founded on positive relationships and high expectations to enable all students to excel. Our mission is to develop a culture of high expectations and encourage students to achieve beyond their expectations and successfully gain entry to university, along with a full range of post school career possibilities.

The 2024 school year saw the college continue to take significant steps forward academically, where our student achievement continued to improve.

The 2024 school year also saw the college continue to build a culture of high expectations, as well as enhancing student engagement, student wellbeing, motivation, independent learning and self-confidence. Feedback from the Tell Them From Me survey clearly outlined many commendations to the college in areas of community engagement, social justice initiatives, collaboration, technology and staff commitment to improving student learning outcomes. All of these strengths make us a school of choice for students and families and we are proud of our growing positive reputation as a contemporary learning community that empowers students to fulfil their life aspirations.

The Annual School Report is a government initiative that allows our parents and carers to gain information about some of the structures and performance of our school and its role in the wider community. It is, however, a written document that cannot replace that very real and human need for personal interaction. We invite all parents and carers who wish to discuss any aspect of this report to make contact and work with us collaboratively.

From the Parents/Carers

At Penola Catholic College we encourage and promote parental engagement through participation in the life of the college through celebrating key liturgies, carnivals and other significant events. In 2024, parents were invited onsite for semester academic achievement award ceremonies held at the end of each semester. A parent forum called the Parents as Partners Hub was held each term to discuss our Learning Framework and implementing strategies to further engage parents. Agendas for these were published through social media and information letters. All community events were an opportunity to engage with our parents regarding the learning vision for our college. Parent Engagement Forums focused on building positive parent partnerships, looking for creative opportunities for parents to be involved in community events at the college and ideas as we continue to build a strong learning culture at the college. As well as this, parents were briefed on the importance of school attendance at all information evenings and information documents were shared to support parents to work alongside the teachers at Penola on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for their child.

Parents and carers were formally surveyed in a centrally administered feedback system that provided information to staff about their child's experience and their own experience of college. The results will be used to look at further improvements at the college.

From the Students

Penola Catholic College encourages students to live the gospel values, to be lifelong learners, to contribute to the needs of the school and the global community, and always to strive for personal excellence. There were many opportunities for students to become involved in the life of the school such as: media teams, reading club, study support, sporting teams, mock trial teams, gifted and talented and agriculture show teams. The Careers Advisor also planned many opportunities for students to engage and build university and TAFE links, whilst offering careers education excursions. All students at Penola Catholic College have the opportunity to become Student Leader members. The SRC and the college leaders were involved in, and ran, many activities such as prayers, assemblies, liturgies, mentoring in the junior years, catechist work in the state primary schools, coaching sporting teams, and Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) projects. Students in Years 7 to 10 voted for a three Student Representative Leaders who are part of the school leadership team.

Students at the college were formally surveyed in a centrally administered feedback system that provided information to staff about the students and their experience of school.

School Context

History of the college

Penola Catholic College was established in 1986, firstly as a senior secondary college. In 1999, it became a Year 7 to 12 co-educational college serving the greater Penrith and lower Blue Mountains areas. The history of the College is grounded in local history. James McCarthy was emancipated in 1802 and shortly after this he married Mary Rigney, the daughter of a free settler, whom James had met through his association with Father Dixon, one of the colony's first priests. James McCarthy excelled as a farmer and was given a land grant of 100 acres in 1804 in the Castlereagh region. In 1819, their property obtained another fifty acres, alongside the Nepean River, which was known to the local indigenous people as Deerubbin. In 2010, the McCarthy Trade Training Centre (TTC) was built for those students who wished to remain at school to gain their Higher School Certificate (HSC) and undertake the first year of a School Based Apprenticeship (SBAT). A range of apprenticeships were offered whilst students worked to achieve the award of the HSC in conjunction with other qualifications that were achieved at the same time. In 2018, the school underwent significant building transformation by upgrading and refurbishing bathrooms and learning spaces. We now have the MacKillop Learning Centre, and a Junior and Senior Inquiry Hub enabling student-centred learning to be contemporary and engaging at McCarthy Catholic College in Years 7 to 12. At the end of 2019, the Trade Training Centre (TTC) officially decoupled from the college forming the new CathWest Innovation College McCarthy Campus, based at Emu Plains. In 2020, the College enjoyed its first year renamed as Penola Catholic College, named after Penola which was where St Mary MacKillop, Australia's first saint, started her first school in South Australia. In 2022, the college has continued to grow the Charism of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop promoting the Josephite values of courage, compassion, integrity and hope.

Location / Drawing Area

Penola Catholic College is located in Emu Plains and draws on students from the Greater Penrith area, including the lower Blue Mountains region. It serves the parishes of Our Lady of the Way Emu Plains, St Nicholas of Myra Penrith, Holy Family Luddenham and Padro Pio Glenmore Park. Our Catholic primary feeder schools are Our Lady of the Way Primary School Emu Plains, Holy Family Primary School Luddenham, St Nicholas of Myra Primary School Penrith, St Mary MacKillop Primary School South Penrith, Bethany Catholic Primary School Glenmore Park and St Joseph's Primary School Kingswood. The School draws enrolments from the suburbs of Emu Plains, the lower Blue Mountains, Mulgoa, Warragamba, South Penrith, Cranebrook and Kingswood. Students in Year 7 generally come from a wide range of primary schools from all sectors of education.

Workforce Composition

Staffing Profile

Staffing Profile	
Total Number of Staff	91
Number of staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	0
Number of full time teaching staff	48
Number of part time teaching staff	23
Number of non-teaching staff	20

Total number of teaching staff by NESA accreditation level

Teachers at the college are either accredited as conditional, provisional or proficient as defined by the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 (NSW). Accreditation at the levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher is voluntary.

The contracted number of accredited teachers within Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) are as follows:

Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) accredited teachers	
Conditional Teachers	458
Provisional Teachers	102
Proficient Teachers and/or above	3258

Teacher status at Penola Catholic College can be sourced directly from the college.

Professional Learning

The ongoing professional development of each staff member working within CSPD is highly valued. Professional learning can take many forms including: whole of school staff days, subject-specific engagements, conferences, meetings and a range of professional learning opportunities provided by CSPD.

The college takes responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and tracking its staff's professional learning and individual staff members take responsibility for their ongoing professional development. All teachers have been involved in professional learning opportunities during the year related to improving student outcomes.

Specific and focused Professional Learning for the staff of the college this year has included:

- Staff participated in professional learning focused on deepening their understanding of Explicit Teaching as a high-impact instructional strategy.
- Teachers participated in professional learning that supports them in establishing safe, respectful and responsible classroom environments.
- Middle Leaders engaged in professional learning to implement strategies that enhance their capacity to drive improvement through the effective use of explicit teaching strategies.

Catholic Identity and Religious Education

Prayer, Liturgical Life and Faith Experiences

Education within the Diocese of Parramatta is a ministry of the Catholic Church, walking with humility in the way of Jesus, serving all of God's people. The Gospel messages of love, forgiveness, tolerance and compassion are lived experiences that are visibly evidenced at college. We offer families high-quality accessible education that challenges each student to discover a meaningful, hope-filled and flourishing life. Our caring teachers share faith and learning with students, including through their own example. Every day, be it in the playground, at an assembly or in the classroom our students experience a genuinely religious way of understanding the world. The invitation to meaningful prayer and liturgy, as well as participation in the Sacraments, nurture and give expression to the religious dimension of school life in the context of the Church's celebration of the liturgical year.

Social Justice

All students at the college are encouraged to regularly engage in activities to support Catholic Mission with fundraising and awareness-raising initiatives. Students are encouraged to work closely with their local parish, community groups, support local charities and participate in outreach or immersion experiences for the benefit of the whole community and the student's personal development.

This year students and staff from the college engaged in the following initiatives and activities:

- The College led students in donating Woolworths Gift Cards to the St Vincent de Paul Society for their annual Christmas Hamper Appeal.
- Year 7 students attended an excursion to St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney to learn about the Catholic Church in Australia.
- Students across year groups collected food items to donate to Ignite Food Store Emerton to assist in the current cost-of-living crisis.

All of these initiatives enabled the students and staff to practise their faith through action as Jesus demonstrated in the Gospels.

School, Home and Parish Partnerships

Parents and carers have been actively encouraged to engage in a variety of school activities including parent forums, information evenings, parent/teacher/student meetings, liturgies, social events and opportunities to provide feedback. Regular communication with parents and carers occurred through phone calls, meetings and the Compass information platform.

Religious Education

At the heart of our college is the Religious Education program. It is through this area of study that students learn to value the Catholic identity, traditions, values and Christ's teaching. Our Religious Education program is embodied by the quality of our relationships and how we deal with the daily issues of life.

CSPD schools use Sharing Our Story, a Religious Education curriculum that has been used for more than 20 years. In all subject areas, we offer an education completely consistent with the teaching of the Church on the dignity of all aspects of the human person. We also appreciate the need to provide age-appropriate learning opportunities.

Professional Learning of Staff in Religious Education

Professional Learning in Religious Education offered to staff this year included:

- Staff engagement with various forms of prayer for implementation in classrooms (e.g. labyrinth meditative walk).
- Engaged with local clergy to learn what it means to teach at a Catholic school, for example Catholic Education for all.
- All staff Formation Day at Benedict XVI Retreat Centre to discuss what it means to belong to a Catholic school community.

Learning and Teaching

National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia participated in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The purpose of NAPLAN is to provide information to parents and carers and teachers about the achievements of students in literacy and numeracy. Questions are based mostly on the literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills students have learnt from previous years of schooling.

Each year the results are analysed by the school to inform teaching and learning with a view to improving student performance. Commencing in 2023, NAPLAN test results are reported using proficiency standards. Students' results show how they performed in each of the NAPLAN assessment areas against 4 proficiency levels:

- Exceeding: The student's result exceeds expectations at the time of testing
- Strong: The student's result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing
- Developing: The student's result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing
- Needs additional support: The student's result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

The percentages of students achieving at Exceeding and Strong proficiency levels are reported in the table on the next page.

NAPLAN Results Year 7 2024

Year 7	Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
	School	Australia
Reading	67%	67%
Writing	67%	65%
Spelling	70%	72%
Grammar and Punctuation	62%	61%
Numeracy	74%	67%

NAPLAN Results Year 9 2024

Year 9	Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
	School	Australia
Reading	63%	63%
Writing	59%	61%
Spelling	73%	72%
Grammar and Punctuation	53%	55%
Numeracy	63%	63%

Record of School Achievement (RoSA)

Eligible students who leave school before receiving their Higher School Certificate (HSC) will receive the NSW Record of School Achievement (RoSA). The RoSA has been designed to provide grades for all Stage 5 (Year 10) and Stage 6 (Preliminary) courses completed during secondary education.

In 2024:

- The number of students issued with a RoSA in Year 10 was 2.
- The number of students issued with a RoSA in Year 11 was 8.

Higher School Certificate (HSC)

Percentage of students in performance bands 4, 5 and 6 (trend data) in select courses as compared to the state.

HSC Results						
HSC Subject	Percentage of students in top 3 bands					
	2024		2023		2022	
	School	State	School	State	School	State
English Standard	56%	67%	38%	59%	34%	56%
English Advanced	100%	96%	94%	95%	85%	94%
Studies of Religion 1	0%	80%	0%	84%	67%	79%

Total number of Year 12 students engaged in either a VET or NESA endorsed courses: 14.

NESA endorsed courses and or VET courses undertaken by Year 12 students include: Design Fundamentals, Fitness, Hair or Beauty Services, Workplace Skills.

School HSC Highlighted Performances

Percentage of students in performance bands 4, 5 and 6 (trend data) in highlighted courses as compared to the state.

HSC Results		
HSC Subject	Percentage of students in top 3 bands	
	2024	
	School	State
Mathematics Advanced	100%	77%
Music 1	100%	89%

HSC Results Comment

Twenty two percent of courses were above state average. The best performing courses were Ancient History (+10.65%), Community and Family Studies (9.32%), Mathematics Extension 1 (+12.86%), Retail Services (8.49%) and Mathematics Extension 2 (+7.82%). Music 1 also performed above state average.

Student Profile

Enrolment Policy

Penola Catholic College follows the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) Enrolment Policy Procedures and Guidelines. The full text or a link to the full text of the school's enrolment policies, including all prerequisites for continuing enrolment, can be obtained from the school office or can be accessed on the school's website.

Student enrolments

Student enrolments 2024	
Number of Boys	Number of Girls
365	302
Total Enrolments: 667	

Student attendance

Student attendance rates 2024			
Year	Attendance Rate	Year	Attendance Rate
7	90%	10	89%
8	88%	11	89%
9	88%	12	92%
College Average: 89%			

Managing non attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents and carers, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students.

The compulsory schooling age range is 6-17. Parents and carers are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, explaining the absences of their children in writing within several days to the school, and taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences. They maintain accurate records of students' attendance, follow up unexplained absences through written and verbal communication, implement programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise, and provide clear information to students and parents/carers regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.

The school principal or their delegate may grant permission for late arrival or early departure from school, leave or exemption from attendance only in individual cases, on

written request from parents and carers. For longer exemptions, an application for approval is made through Diocesan authorities. The principal/delegate will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents/carers promptly if an unexplained absence occurs. If truancy is suspected, the principal will contact the parents/carers to ascertain the reason for the absence. If a satisfactory response is not received, the matter will be referred to the relevant staff at CSPD who will follow up unexplained absences as per legislative requirements.

Student retention rates

The retention rate of students for Year 10 to Year 12 was 63%.

Post School Destination

Each year the college collects destination data relating to the Year 12 student cohort. The table below sets out the percentages of students for the various categories.

Post School Destination	
University	42%
Technical and Further Education (TAFE)	15%
Workforce	12%
Other/Unknown	15%

Characteristics of the student body

The table below shows the number of students in each of the categories listed.

Student Body Characteristics	
Language background other than English (LBOTE)	118
Students with disabilities (SWD)	217
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	35

Wellbeing

The wellbeing and safety of all students is central to the purpose of Catholic Education and we acknowledge that healthy relationships and exceptional pastoral care are core to each child's positive experience at school. Penola Catholic College is a place where students are nurtured to grow, to belong and to be safe.

A sense of wellbeing and connectedness promotes optimal development of the person as a whole and contributes to academic success. We have a strong focus on pastoral care and our school has a counsellor to support our students. CSPD provides resourcing for additional wellbeing initiatives and teams to support attendance, behaviour and intervention for students at risk.

Our wellbeing initiatives include:

- Utilising SchoolTV as a means to enhance parent engagement and provide greater support for student wellbeing.
- Targeted design of wellbeing experiences that support the student wellbeing needs of each year group, across emotional, social, physical and spiritual
- Regular morning whole school and year assemblies, to celebrate student success and build student/staff connectedness.

Penola Catholic College bases student wellbeing on the [CSPD Student Wellbeing Policy \(2022\)](#) and the [CSPD Student Wellbeing Framework](#). The guidelines identify the rights and responsibilities of every student in the school and are based on the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. Corporal punishment is expressly forbidden at the college.

Related policies include:

- [Bullying of Students - Prevention and Response Procedure \(2022\)](#)
- [Student Use Of Digital Devices And Online Services Policy \(2022\)](#)
- [Guidelines for Parents and Carers in Raising Complaints \(2023\)](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Policy \(2022\)](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Framework](#)
- [Student Attendance Policy \(2021\)](#)
- [Student Attendance Procedures \(2022\)](#)
- [Bullying of Students - Prevention and Response Procedure \(2022\)](#)
- [Weapons Procedures \(2022\)](#)
- [Banned Substances Student Procedures \(2022\)](#)
- [Family and School Partnership Principles](#)

Actions promoting respect and responsibility

Penola Catholic College actively promotes respect for others and responsibility for self. During the past year, our community has engaged with the following actions and opportunities:

- Student leadership representatives attended launch of Project Compassion.
- Student-led initiatives to collect food and clothing for Jesuit Social Services.
- Peer-support program and initiatives led by both students and staff in order to promote connectedness and wellbeing between and with year groups.

Community Satisfaction

During 2024, CSPD and our college utilised a variety of measures to obtain feedback from parents and carers, students and staff regarding community satisfaction.

Areas of strength from the parents/carers feedback include:

- Parents commend staff on their excellent relationships and care of their children.
- Parents appreciate the excellent communication from their child's teachers using emails, phone calls, social media, compass and newsletters.
- Parents have reported that they know their children will be safe and supported whilst at school and when travelling to and from school.

Areas of strength from the student feedback include:

- Students have reported that they have built and value their positive relationships with staff across the college.
- Students have reported that they feel safe at school and feel that there is always someone to talk to if required.
- Students feel their learning experiences are rigorous, relevant and positive.

Areas of strength from the staff feedback include:

- Staff feel they have trusting relationships and feel positive and energised at work.
- Staff have a strong sense of belonging with a belief that they can succeed to their full potential.
- Staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in the role at our school.

School Improvement and Learning

Priorities

Current Year Priorities		
Priority 1	To improve the learning of students within faculties using explicit teaching strategies in each KLA.	Still Working Towards.
Priority 2	Improve students' pro-social behaviours in order to support learning, safety and connection to one another, students and staff.	Still Working Towards.

Projected School Priorities		
Priority 1	Lift learning and academic performance in the areas of numeracy and literacy.	
Priority 2	Increase the wellbeing of students and staff.	

Financial Statement

Financial information is based on the detailed information provided to the Commonwealth and State Government in the Financial Questionnaire.

School Financial Information for 2024 is detailed below:

Recurrent and Capital Income	
Commonwealth Recurrent Grants ¹	\$9,055,456
Government Capital Grants ²	\$0
State Recurrent Grants ³	\$2,428,056
Fees and Private Income ⁴	\$3,253,598
Other Capital Income ⁵	\$419,697
Total Income	\$15,156,807

Recurrent and Capital Expenditure	
Capital Expenditure ⁶	\$3,519,493
Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷	\$11,574,687
Non-Salary Expenses ⁸	\$3,869,436
Total Expenditure	\$18,963,616

¹ Commonwealth relates to Commonwealth Recurrent Grants including per capita funding and special purpose grants

² Capital relates to Government Capital Grants received for construction of school assets

³ State relates to State Recurrent Grants including per capita funding, interest subsidy and special purpose grants

⁴ Fees relate to Diocesan and school based fees, excursions and other private income from parents/carers

⁵ Other refers to Other Capital Income including amounts charged for Diocesan Building Levy from parents

⁶ Capital Expenditure refers to expenses incurred mainly for School Buildings, Furniture and Equipment

⁷ Salaries refers to the total of all Salaries, allowances and related expenses such as superannuation, workers compensation and leave

⁸ Non-Salary refers to all other Non-Salary Recurrent Expenses