



MATER DEI SCHOOL



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2023**

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Section 1: Who We Are

Life-enriching innovative education

Mater Dei School is a coeducational setting for students from Kindergarten to Year 12 with a Mild to Moderate Intellectual Disability. As a Catholic, independent school, we are a proud member of Good Samaritan Education.

We are committed to the provision of contemporary and innovative education for students with specific needs. We have created a place of opportunity to develop their unique gifts and talents in a way that will enable them to become fully participating members of their respective communities. The school is active in the Catholic Faith and espouses the values of the Benedictine Tradition.

Mater Dei acknowledges the Dharawal people as the Traditional Custodians of Country and the First People of the land on which Mater Dei stands today. We pay our respects to Dharawal Elders past, present and emerging and commit to working collaboratively to create a just and reconciled future for all Australians.



Section 2: A Message From Us

2.1 Chair of the Board

Michael Lavorato

On behalf of the Board of Mater Dei, I congratulate the Principal and staff of Mater Dei School for all that they have accomplished throughout 2023, with a dedication to the learning and pastoral care of the students. During 2023, the leadership structure of the school changed from the dual model of CEO/Principal in Terms One and Two, to a single Principal role from Term Three. For the purpose of this Report, a message from the School Principal, appointed from October 2023, has been included.

The Mater Dei Board oversee the entire organisation and the School is a core component of our responsibilities and what we do. Established in 1957 as a specialist school setting for students with intellectual disability, Mater Dei has an enviable reputation for providing excellence in education and care. Mater Dei is incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee, and the Members of the Company represent and are accountable to, Good Samaritan Education.

The Mater Dei Board consists of seven directors drawn from the community. They represent diversity in gender, life experience and professional qualification, but share a deep sense of good-will and affection for the work of Mater Dei. Through a comprehensive system of working sub-committees, the Mater Dei Board advise on strategic direction and policy, providing financial oversight and budgetary approval. Mater Dei is in the sound position it is today because of good governance and wise stewardship by current and former Directors working collaboratively with the CEO, Principal and their Leadership Team.

I am very grateful for the support of my fellow Board Directors and am confident that the Mater Dei school will continue to thrive and prosper into the future, for that is what we are committed to make happen for the benefit of our students who deserve nothing less.



2.2 Principal

Jennifer Foldes

Education is often one of the most highly scrutinised professions, often in the spotlight, regularly in the media and rightly so, held to the highest account for the great responsibility of ensuring that quality learning and teaching is happening in schools. Mater Dei School staff know and value that learning matters and that learning is not restricted to the classroom. At Mater Dei School, classroom teachers know that learning growth and achievement is measured in many different ways, and they acknowledge and celebrate this diversity. Throughout 2023 our students continued to shine in all areas of school life where barriers were overcome and challenges were met head on.

The swimming carnival and athletics carnival were particular highlights with students focussed on achieving personal bests while cheering on the other students to do the same. A 'can do' attitude is witnessed and encouraged regularly and particularly on these great community days. Our St Benedict's Feast Day was another such event bringing our school community and many visitors from the local and Good Samaritan Community together in celebration of Mater Dei. Likewise, our annual PAN performance was another wonderful celebration where the gifts and talents of Mater Dei School students and staff were on display. The 'Mater Dei School of Rock' was the perfect place to witness this creativity and the commitment, care and compassion of our staff.

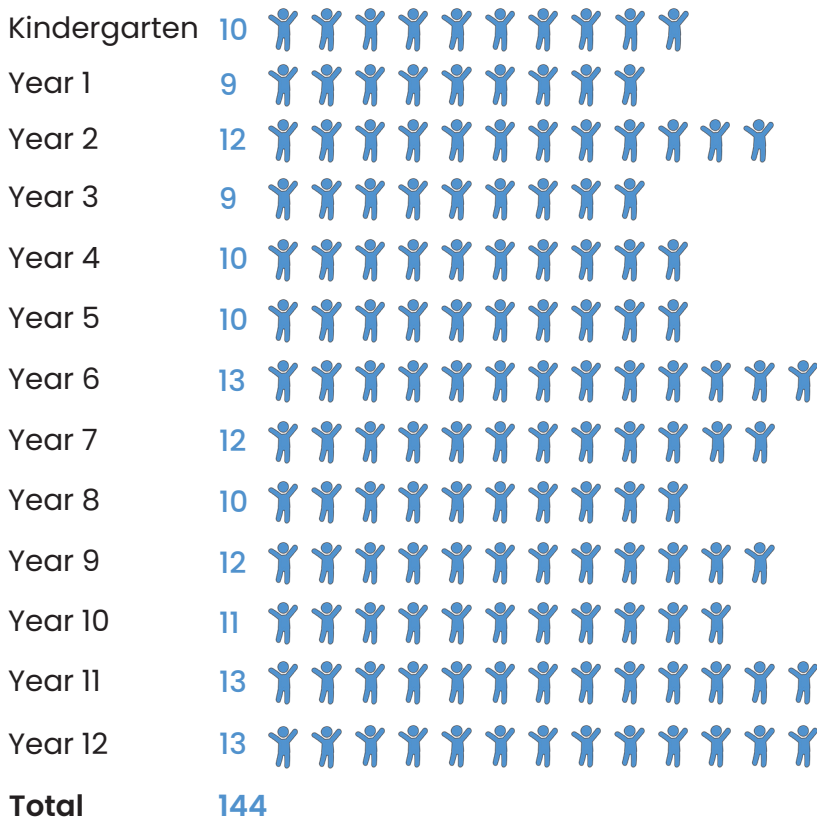
2023 was a great year and our families, supporters, donors and community partners continued to help us make Mater Dei the place it is. The partnership with our parents and carers in the learning and development of our students is absolutely paramount. In particular, the support that we receive from the Parents and Friends Association is greatly appreciated and I acknowledge their significant contribution to the success of our community. Mater Dei also gratefully enjoys the support of many people in the local and wider community, and we should never forget what they bring to enrich our lives. Our governance supporters at Board and Good Samaritan Education level, as well as the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, also quietly provide assistance and guidance in our various endeavours.

Mater Dei School is, indeed, a beautiful place to come to work each day and I am grateful for the tireless support of the staff who embody the Benedictine values of welcome and hospitality and enrich the lives of our students and provide wisdom and support to all the happenings in the classroom and beyond. The images and stories in this publication capture the spirit of Mater Dei that shone brightly in 2023.



Section 3: Our Students

3.1 Student Enrolment



Male Students:
96



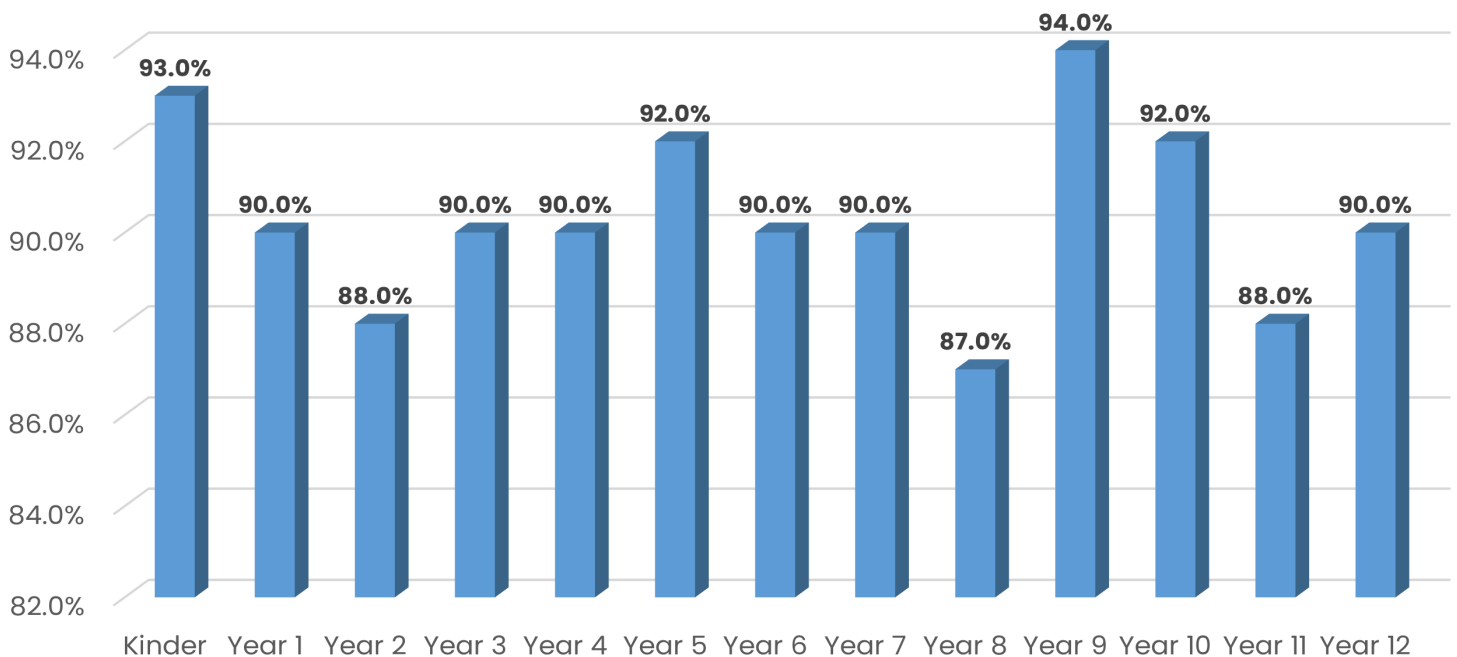
Female Students:
48

Indigenous Students: 5

Students with
a language
background other
than English: 39

3.2 Student Attendance

Attendance Rates (%)



Whole School
Attendance Rate: 90%

Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School (Summary)



STUDENT ATTENDANCE FLOWCHART

WHEN A STUDENT IS/WILL BE ABSENT



DAILY ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE



THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS ABSENT



FOUR CONSECUTIVE DAYS ABSENT



MONITORING ATTENDANCE



FOLLOWING UP UNSATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE



Parent/Guardian to add attendance note on Compass if student is not attending school

Parent/Guardian to submit Application for Leave or Exemption for planned leave for:

- 10-100 days not related to illness OR
- regular external medical/therapy appointments

Leave/exemptions processed and recorded by Compass Admin

9:15am Class roll is taken by the Teacher in classroom

9:30am Reception follows up any class who has not submitted their roll

10:00am Automated SMS distributed to Parent/Guardian of absent students without an attendance note, reminding to submit attendance note

Students who arrive late (after 9:15am) or are collected early (prior to 3:00pm) are signed in/out at Reception via the Compass Kiosk

Compass Admin reviews absence/late reasons and advises any of concern to Stage Leader

Compass Admin advises Classroom Teachers via email of ANY students absent for three consecutive days

Classroom Teacher conducts pastoral phone call to:

- check on student's welfare
- remind Parent to submit attendance note (if unexplained)
- remind Parent that medical certificate is required if student absent the following day

Classroom Teacher records communication/communication attempt

Parent/Guardian to provide medical certificate via Compass (or diary) for absences of four or more consecutive days

Reception uploads hard copy medical certificates to Compass

Compass Admin prepares fortnightly attendance report including all absences, explained/unexplained, reasons/documentation provided and percentages

Attendance monitored fortnightly at the Student Wellbeing Meeting. Students with a poor attendance rate or attendance patterns of concern are noted, discussed and followed up

Phone call to Parent/Guardian by Stage Leader, noting attendance concern, checking on welfare, reminding them of responsibilities and offering support

Letter to Parent/Guardian from Leader of Pastoral Care noting attendance concern and a reminder of responsibilities

Meeting with Parent/Guardian(s) with Assistant Principal to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan to be reviewed regularly

Reporting to appropriate authorities

3.3 Student Retention

Student retention rate is as follows:

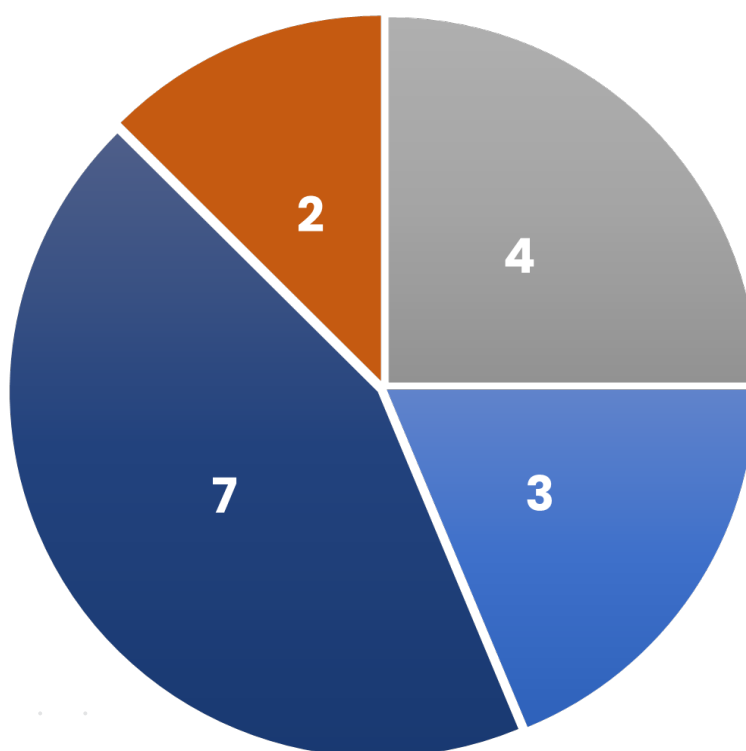
Actual Retention Rate	Year 10 2021 – Year 12 2023	100%
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3.4 Post School Destinations

Transition Planning

Mater Dei School supports post-school transition planning by facilitating an annual Post-School Information Evening. Information on transition planning is outlined and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) also deliver a presentation. Information and brochures are provided from various post-school service providers. Mater Dei also facilitates a Post-School Transition Planning Meeting for each Year 12 student. Documentation from this meeting may be utilised at NDIS review meetings.

Post School Destinations



- Post School Education (0)
- Open Employment (4)
- School Leaver Employment Support Service (3)
- Supported Employment (0)
- Volunteering (0)
- Community Participation Service (7)
- Unknown (2)

Definitions

Post School Education: Technical and Further Education (TAFE), Vocational Education and Training (VET), Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Open Employment: Independently gained employment or utilising a Disability Employment Service

School Leaver Employment Support Service: Individualised support for employment goals (e.g. finding and maintaining employment), which may include work experience, job skills training and travel training.

Supported Employment: Utilising a support worker or through supported employment opportunities through Australian Disability Enterprises

Volunteering: Unpaid work for a non-profit or community organisation to pursue an interest connect with community, or to gain work experience

Community Participation Service: Supports young people to develop the skills needed to achieve their personal goals, increase their independence and participate in their community.

**Students may be participating in more than one post-school option.*



3.5 Student Assessment

Assessment/ Credential	Description	Grades involved	Student participation
National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)	NAPLAN is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The tests cover skills in numeracy, reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation.	Years 3, 5, 7 & 9	<p>Number of Students in grades listed 43</p> <p>% of Students who participated 0%*</p>
Record of School Achievement (RoSA)	The RoSA is a cumulative credential for Years 10, 11 and 12 students who leave school prior to the Higher School Certificate.	Years 10, 11 & 12	<p>Number of Students in grades listed 37</p> <p>% of Students who participated 0%</p>
Vocational Training	Vocational training refers to instructional programs or courses that focus on the skills required for a particular job function or trade.	Year 12	<p>Number of Students in grades listed 13</p> <p>% of Students who participated 0%</p>
Higher School Certificate (HSC)	The HSC is issued to students on completion of Year 12 ensuring they have met curriculum requirements. Students receive a HSC testamur showing eligibility for the HSC along with a Record of Achievement outlining subjects completed and a Profile of Student Achievement listing Life Skills outcomes achieved (with or without support).	Year 12	<p>Number of Students in grades listed 13</p> <p>% of Students who participated 100%. HSC - Lifeskills</p>

Section 4: Our Staff

4.1 Workforce Composition

	Number of staff	Full-time Equivalent	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Staff
Teaching Staff	24	21.8	1
Non -Teaching Staff	30	25.6	0

4.2 Teacher Accreditation

Teacher Accreditation

Accreditation Level	Number of Staff
Conditional	4
Provisional	2
Proficient Teacher	17
Highly Accomplished Teacher (voluntary)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary)	0

Teacher Qualifications

Qualification Level	Number of Staff
Bachelor	24
Master	8
PHD	0



4.3 Professional Learning

Staff Professional Development

Staff Professional Development (PD) formats were altered and evolved throughout the year.

The below Table summarises Staff Professional Development activities undertaken in 2023.

Description of the Professional Learning Activity	Staff
Addressing Learning Difficulties in the Classroom (SPELD)	50
Annual Staff Professional Development and Performance Review	50
Applied Behaviour Analysis	50
Collaborative & Proactive Solutions	50
English Syllabus K-6	12
Epilepsy and Diabetes training	50
First Aid, CPR and Anaphylaxis annual training	50
Harnessing the Power of AI in Education	24
In Class Therapy Model	24
Mandatory Child Protection training	50
Maths Syllabus K-6	12
Midazolam & Diabetes Level 1 & 2 (First Aid and Executive Staff)	15
NCCD and PPSDs	24
PEG Tube Feed Training (First Aid and Executive Staff)	15
Reading K-12	24
Reading, Comprehension & Assessment (PM Benchmark Reading)	24
Understanding Psychoeducational Assessments	24
Updating Student Support Plans	24
Working to Our Strengths	50



Section 5: Our Priorities

5.1 School Goals and Planning

Teaching and Learning	
Priorities	Achievements
Preparing for the implementation of the new Year 3 to Year 6 English and Mathematics Syllabus in 2024.	Teachers worked diligently in preparation for the continued implementation of the new English and Mathematics Syllabus across Year 3 to Year 6 in 2024. Teachers engaged in Professional Learning to explore the new syllabus documents and develop Scope and Sequences to outline when content will be covered across the year.
Evidence Based Practices to engage and support student achievement.	<p>Teachers continued to focus on implementing Task Analysis across classrooms, as an evidence-based practice. Students were explicitly taught how to use the Task Analysis to prompt them to complete each step with increasing independence.</p> <p>The Model-Lead-Test, with the teacher modelling and explicitly teaching students how to complete a task before working with them to complete a similar task, remained a priority focus in the classroom in 2023 to support student learning.</p> <p>The use of these evidence-based practices assists in ensuring that learning is accessible for all students with a focus on building student autonomy and independence in their learning.</p>
Continue to utilise the Universal Design for Learning Framework (UDL) to improve and optimise teaching and learning.	Teachers continued to increase their professional knowledge of the Universal Design for Learning Framework (UDL) and implement into their classroom practice, to ensure access to the curriculum for all students throughout 2023.
Pastoral Care	
Priorities	Achievements
Continued development and implementation of a Positive Behaviours in School (PBIS) Framework for Learning.	The PBIS Framework for Learning to increase our capacity to educate all students by utilising research-based school-wide, classroom and individualised interventions. All classrooms across the school implemented the use of the 'Behaviour Check-in Chart', allowing teachers to positively reinforce behaviours. During the year, students also engaged in pastoral care lessons focussed on exploring emotional wellbeing, teamwork, social skills, friendships and the concept of being kind, an integral part of the PBIS school matrix. An integral inclusion in our school wellbeing program was the introduction of a wellbeing canine program across K – 12.
Mission	
Priorities	Achievements
Strengthen relationships with fellow Good Samaritan Education (GSE) Colleges and local Diocesan schools.	During 2023 Mater Dei staff and students interacted both virtually and face to face with Good Samaritan Education (GSE) Colleges and local Diocesan schools. This included St Benedict's Feast Day and the opportunity for students from Lourdes Hill College, Brisbane to visit Mater Dei for a weeklong immersion across our community. Students and staff from each of the GSE Colleges travelled to Mater Dei with a focus on 'Student Voice' in developing GSE policies and statements.

5.2 Stakeholder Satisfaction

Parent Satisfaction

Throughout 2023, the increased attendance of parents and carers at various school functions was noticeable. This included the return of classroom visits, school masses and assemblies, and a family Christmas Carols event. Parents and carers eagerly attend school functions, and supported the various events organised by the school, and by the Parents and Friends (P & F) Association. Currently, parent and carer satisfaction and feedback are predominantly collected via communication from the Compass Education Management System, email, and communication diaries, as well as anecdotally in discussions with parents and carers who have had contact with the school and interaction with the school in the various functions and events. Expressions of appreciation, dedication and the high regard for the school, the teachers and support staff for all they do for their families is freely and commonly given. An annual Parent Satisfaction Survey will be introduced as a priority in 2024.



Staff Satisfaction

Following a workplace review in 2022, identifying various areas and need for improvement across the organisation, initial steps have been taken during 2023 including the separation of the CEO/Principal role to provide greater clarity to the leadership of the school. Staff had identified the need to gain a deeper understanding of individual roles, responsibilities and delegations of authority in the previous workplace review. Initial efforts in response to the need for a streamlined approach to IT have also commenced but have not been fully resolved. Staff have affirmed a genuine understanding of the commitment by Mater Dei in ensuring that the school is a place where all staff and students can thrive, along with an appreciation for the recognition of staff for their work and care provided to students. No formal opportunity to gather staff satisfaction has been used and this will be a priority area in 2024.

Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction is clearly reflected in the daily interactions between students and their overall enthusiastic engagement at school, including their involvement in major school events, participation in sporting events both at school and representative level, and the enthusiasm to participate in various workplace learning opportunities in the wider community. Student voice is evident in the planning of individual wellbeing and learning plans. Opportunities to assist students to engage with a survey to provide feedback will be explored in 2024.

Supporter Satisfaction

Within the Macarthur region, Mater Dei is held in a position of great respect respected, receiving generous support and passionate involvement from the wider community. Prominent fundraising events such as the Charity Golf Day, Ladies Lipstick Luncheon, Annual Foundation Dinner, and Country Fair all enjoy substantial local backing.

Approximately forty businesses participate in supporting the Workplace Learning program for senior school students. Staff leading this program maintain ongoing communication and engagement with these businesses. Almost all of them attend a dedicated thank you morning tea at Mater Dei School, where students' participation is recognised with the presentation of Certificates to acknowledge their involvement and achievements.

Neighbouring schools also willingly support Mater Dei School by engaging with its students and assisting school staff in organising and running events like the school's athletic and swimming carnivals.



5.3 Promoting Respect and Responsibility

Our Mission

Mater Dei traces its mission and purpose back to the Rule of St Benedict who created prayerful life-giving communities in the 6th Century A.D. Benedict himself was inspired by the person and teachings of Jesus who explained his mission in the Gospels in this way: "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10). Catholic belief is that all people are created equal in the image and likeness of God with an ultimate purpose to be in harmony with God and all of creation, and that this earthly life is to be lived to the full as a gift from God. All people have an inherent right to experience this fullness of life and to be free to make informed choices as self-advocates. It is Mater Dei's intent to dignify this belief by creating life-enriching opportunities for our children, students and young adults, so that they may grow their capacity for self-determination and realise their full potential.

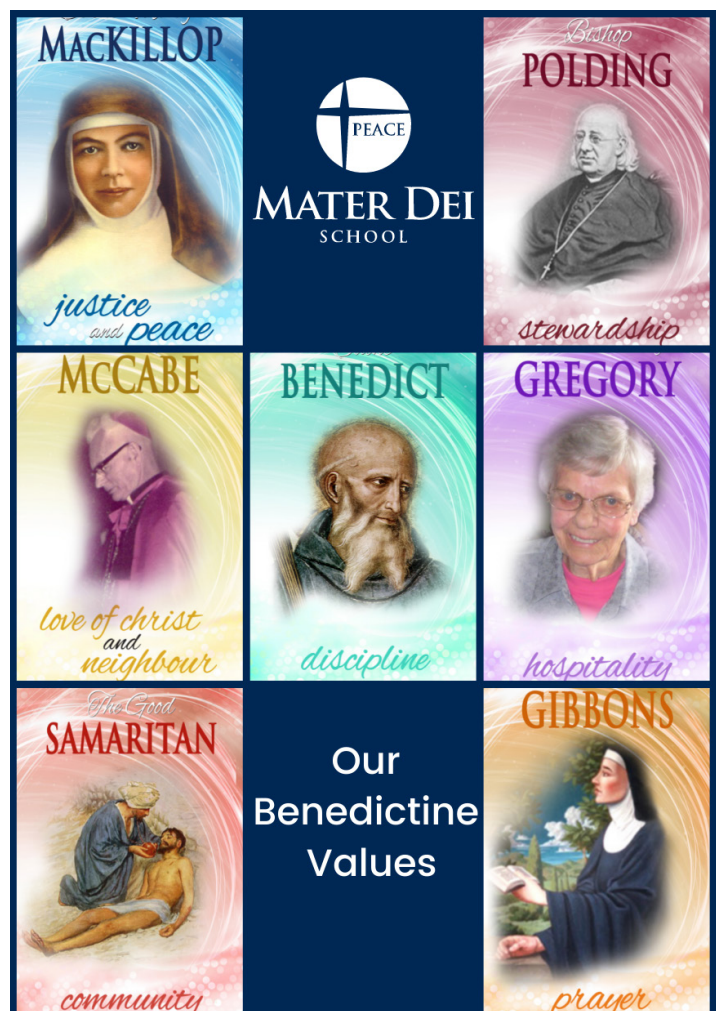
Our Inspiration

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) is the foundational story upon which all Good Samaritan communities, like Mater Dei, are formed. This parable impels all those engaged with the Mater Dei community to:

- Be neighbour, especially to the excluded and disenfranchised
- Respect all persons and all of creation as sacred
- Stand with and be a voice for those who are voiceless
- Seek peace through justice

St Benedict developed his Rule to guide communities in the way to live authentically and Mater Dei draws further inspiration from his teachings that inspire us to:

- Create safe, welcoming communities where everyone has a place
- Value community that challenges and nurtures, where the strong have something to strive for and the weak have nothing to run from
- Cultivate a love of learning and beauty
- Seek wisdom through prayerful discernment, listening with the ear of the heart





MATER DEI
SCHOOL



Be Kind



Be Safe



Be a Learner



So the **STRONG** have something to yearn for
and the weak have *nothing to run from.*

The Mater Dei Way

Mater Dei's behaviour management philosophy is based on evidence-based teaching practice known as 'Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports' (PBIS). This is a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behaviour support which focuses on explicitly teaching students routines, skills and expectations, as well as using data as an integral part of the decision-making process to identify areas of need. This approach is based on actively acknowledging and encouraging positive behaviours. A mascot has been introduced to help teach expectations to students.

Mater Dei School Rules are explicitly taught and modelled around school wide positive behaviour expectations of:

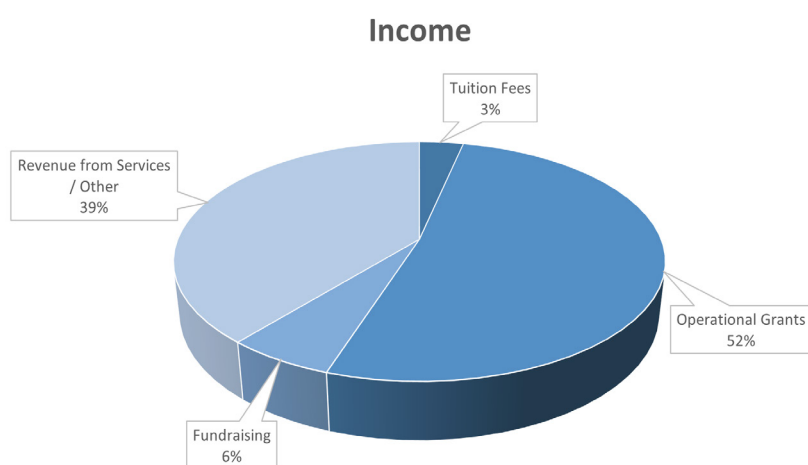
1. *Be Kind*
2. *Be Safe*
3. *Be a Learner*

Positive student behaviour and good choices are encouraged and recognised at Mater Dei by way of either:

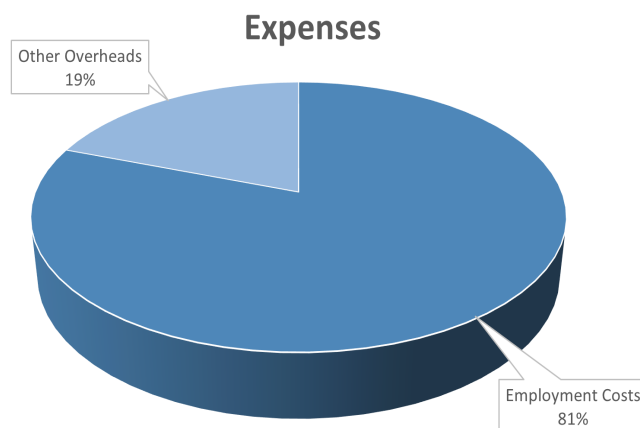
- informal feedback (e.g. immediate verbal praise, incidental high-five gestures etc.),
- informal tangible recognition (e.g. classroom reward charts, stickers and stamps)
- formal award structures for:
 - Curriculum and academic achievement (e.g. 'Merit Award for Learning')
 - Swimming achievement (e.g. 'Swimming Award' [Distributed by Swim Teachers])
 - Pastoral and social achievement (e.g. 'Samaritan Awards' [wristbands])

5.4 Financial Summary

Income	Value
Fees	\$508,767
Grants	\$7,631,401
Fundraising	\$888,587
Revenue from Services/ Other	\$5,737,617
Capital Grants	\$0
Total	\$14,766,372



Expenses	Value
Employment Costs	\$11,509,636
Other Overheads	\$2,776,225
Total	\$14,285,861



Net: \$480,511

Note: All financials provided relate to Mater Dei Organisation as a whole, which incorporates all of the Mater Dei Programs.

Section 6: Our Policies

6.1 Enrolment Policy (full text)

Related Policy	Summary of Policy	Changes in 2023
Enrolment	<p>This policy outlines the enrolment process and selection process for prospective students, the conditions for acceptance and continuation of enrolment.</p> <p>Mater Dei School's Enrolment Policy can be viewed here: https://www.materdei.org.au/assets/Uploads/Policies/2021-School-Policies-/1-Enrolment-Policy-v3.0.pdf</p>	NIL



6.2 Other Policies (summaries)

Mater Dei is a place of peace, belonging, respect, justice, hope and celebration. Our values are based on honouring the dignity of the whole person and through the living out of these values we provide witness to Gospel values. Our values are embedded in our policies and procedures. Our approach to student welfare, discipline, anti-bullying and complaints and grievances are disclosed publicly on our website, summarised in the Parent Handbook and are recorded in our suite of policies accessible to staff via CompliSpace. These policies give witness and structure to our commitment to the welfare and safety of our students.

Student Welfare, Discipline, Anti-bullying

Related Policy	Summary of Policy	Changes in 2023
Attendance	<p>Regular attendance at school is essential to assist students to maximise their potential. The school, in partnership with Parents/Guardians, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. This policy sets out the requirements for the attendance and exemption from attendance of students at Mater Dei School, how attendance is monitored and the follow up procedure for unsatisfactory attendance.</p> <p>Mater Dei School's Attendance Policy can be viewed here: https://www.materdei.org.au/assets/Uploads/Policies/2021-School-Policies-/Attendance-Policy-v1.0.pdf</p>	NIL
Child Protection	<p>All children and young people have the right to be protected from abuse and harm. Mater Dei is committed to ensuring that we provide a safe environment for students by complying with the requirements of Child Protection Legislation. Our suite of policies is intended to view child protection as providing a safe and supportive environment for our students by ensuring that systems and processes are in place for preventing, identifying and reporting child protection concerns. The suite of policies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Abuse and Harm Definitions Identification and Initial Responses • Duty to Protect Students from Child Abuse or Harm • Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse or Harm • Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers and Others • Detecting, Reporting and Addressing Grooming Behaviours • Working with Children Checks • Information Sharing About Students' Safety and Wellbeing 	NIL

Related Policy	Summary of Policy	Changes in 2023
Pastoral Care	<p>Pastoral care is the support given to students for their development as a person. It relates to the total care of students and involves tending to both the academic and non-academic needs of students, including their spiritual, emotional and social wellbeing. All school staff are responsible for pastoral care and for administering pastoral care in all classes and extra-curricular activities. Additionally, Mater Dei established a Pastoral Care Team that is responsible for ensuring the proper ongoing administration of pastoral care services at the School. The Pastoral Care Team meet regularly to monitor and implement supports for students presenting with behaviours of concern, experiencing or has experienced trauma, child protection, attendance and incident report monitoring.</p> <p>Mater Dei School's Pastoral Care Policy can be viewed here (via PolicyConnect Public Link): https://materdeimaster.policyconnect.com.au/module/80/page/8b9e24aa-c856-4f0f-ba25-077020a717ce.md</p>	NIL



Related Policy	Summary of Policy	Changes in 2023
Behaviour Management	<p>Behaviour management is necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of all students and staff to provide a learning environment conducive to each student having an opportunity to reach his/her spiritual, academic, moral, social and physical potential. They also have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity. Mater Dei recognises that a collaborative, consistent, whole-school approach that focuses on proactive and preventative strategies, is essential in successfully managing students with challenging behaviours. The school seeks to develop a culture of positive behaviour by setting clear expectations of students and encouraging positive behaviour. Strategies for developing this culture include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly setting behaviour expectations • Establishing specific teaching and learning programs • communicating expectations with the wider school community • acknowledging positive behaviours in a range of ways from informal verbal acknowledgement through to structured merit awards • maintaining records with respect to student behaviour <p>Mater Dei School’s Behaviour Management Policy can be viewed here (via PolicyConnect Public Link): https://materdeimaster.policyconnect.com.au/module/80/page/6ab13af6-12d4-4c56-9355-7fdc9996b708.md</p>	NIL
Bullying Prevention & Intervention	<p>Prevention and management of incidents of bullying are managed through a ‘whole-of-school community’ approach. Bullying prevention strategies are implemented on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower individuals to recognise bullying and respond appropriately. Bullying response strategies are tailored to the circumstances of each incident and strategies are reviewed against best practice.</p>	NIL

Related Policy	Summary of Policy	Changes in 2023
Complaints	<p>Mater Dei is committed to ensuring that its students, clients, participants and their Parents/Guardians have the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the Organisation and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access, efficiency, equity, fairness, accountability, transparency and complies with legislative requirements.</p> <p>Mater Dei School's Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy can be viewed here (via PolicyConnect Public Link): https://materdeimaster.policyconnect.com.au/module/1553/page/README.md7fdc9996b708.md</p>	NIL





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