

# 2023 Annual Report to the School Community

School Name: Western Autistic School (5290)



- all teachers at the school meet the registration requirements of the [Victorian Institute of Teaching \(VIT\)](#)
- the school meets prescribed Minimum Standards for registration as regulated by the Victorian Regulation and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) in accordance with the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#) (this includes any exemption granted to this school by the VRQA, for the most recent calendar year, in relation to minimum student enrolment numbers and/or the curriculum framework requirement to deliver a languages program)
- the school meets the requirements of the Child Safe Standards as prescribed in [Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools \(PDF\)](#).

Attested on 30 April 2024 at 01:48 PM by Adele Field (Principal)

- This 2023 Annual Report to the School Community has been tabled and endorsed at a meeting of the school council and will be publicly shared with the school community

Attested on 30 April 2024 at 02:22 PM by Jim Adamopoulos (School Council President)

# How to read the Annual Report

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## What does the 'About Our School' commentary section of this report refer to?

The 'About our school' commentary provides a brief background on the school and an overview of the school's performance over the previous calendar year.

The 'School Context' describes the school's vision, values, and purpose. Details include the school's geographic location, size and structure, social characteristics, enrolment characteristics, and special programs.

The 'Progress towards strategic goals, student outcomes, and student engagement' section allows schools to reflect on highlights related to implementation of and progress towards the School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan, and efforts to improve student learning, wellbeing, and engagement.

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## What does the 'Performance Summary' section of this report refer to?

The Performance Summary includes the following:

### School Profile

- student enrolment information
- the school's 'Student Family Occupation and Education' category
- a summary of parent responses in the Parent Opinion Survey, shown against the statewide average for Specialist schools
- school staff responses in the area of School Climate in the School Staff Survey, shown against the statewide average for Specialist schools

### Learning

- English and Mathematics for Teacher Judgements against the curriculum

### Engagement

Student attendance and engagement at school, including:

- how many exiting students go on to further studies or full-time work

Results are displayed for the latest year and the average of the last four years (where available).

Key terms used in the Performance Summary are defined below:

### NDP and NDA

'NDP' refers to no data being published for privacy reasons or where there are insufficient underlying data. For example, very low numbers of participants or characteristics that may lead to identification will result in an 'NDP' label.

'NDA' refers to no data being available. Some schools have no data for particular measures due to low enrolments. There may be no students enrolled in some year levels, so school comparisons are not possible.

Note that new schools only have the latest year of data and no comparative data from previous years. The department also recognises unique circumstances in Specialist, Select Entry, English Language, Community Schools and schools that changed school type recently, where school-to-school comparisons are not appropriate.

### What is the 'Towards Foundation Level Victorian Curriculum'?

The Victorian Curriculum is assessed through teacher judgements of student achievement based on classroom learning.

The 'Towards Foundation Level Victorian Curriculum' is integrated directly into the curriculum and is referred to as 'Levels A to D'.

'Levels A to D' may be used for students with disabilities or students who may have additional learning needs

'Levels A to D' are not associated with any set age or year level that links chronological age to cognitive progress (i.e., there is no age expected standard of achievement for 'Levels A to D').

## Updates to the *'Performance Summary'* in the 2023 Annual Report

Reporting on the following measures has been updated in the 2023 Annual Report to align with changes to departmental and public reporting products.

### **Parent/Caregiver/Guardian Opinion Survey, School Staff Survey and the Attitudes to School Survey**

The calculation of the percentage endorsement for all survey measures has been revised to no longer include skipped responses. This applies to all survey measures reported in the Performance Summary. The change to the calculation reduces the negative impact of skipped responses on school results, particularly where there were a small number of respondents to the survey.

Additionally, the Parent Satisfaction measure has been revised to use the percentage endorsement of the 'General School Satisfaction' factor of the Parent/Caregiver/Guardian Opinion Survey only. Previously, this measure reflected an average of multiple factors in the survey. The change to reporting a single factor is consistent with how Parent Satisfaction is reported to schools and in other public reports.

# About Our School

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## School context

Western Autistic School is a designated school for autistic students from Prep to Grade 3, located in Laverton in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The school's mission is both to address the influences specific to autism on student learning and activate individual strengths to optimise educational opportunities for our students when they move into more mixed settings. The school achieves this by providing intensive, individualised strengths-based teaching at the start of each child's schooling to then allow the students to use these strategies in integrated settings. Western Autistic School's values are Diversity, Respect, Learning as an ongoing process, Sharing and growth of knowledge and Collaboration. We respect ourselves, our school and each other, and understand that our attitudes and behaviours have an impact on the people around us. We model and demonstrate care and compassion and take every opportunity to help others that may be in need. We strive for excellence, which means trying our hardest and doing our best. These values provide us with a framework for how we achieve our vision. In 2023, a total of 292 students were enrolled, comprising of 63 female and 229 male students and a small number of international students. 31% of students have English as an additional language and a small number are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The school consists of four interconnected pods adjoining the main administration area. The grounds include separate children's playground and courtyards adjoining classrooms. The school's socio-economic band value is: Low - Medium, as calculated based on the Student Family Occupation and Education index (SFOE). The staffing profile is made up of 1 Principal, 4 Assistant Principals, 81 Teachers, 64 full-time equivalent Education Support staff, 1 Business Manager and 8 Administration staff, 6 Allied Health staff, and 4 Maintenance staff. A handful of staff have identified themselves as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. There was 1 staff member working in the Autism Teaching Institute. The school has a Marrung Champion. In 2023 Western Autistic School also commenced works to re-register as a Registered Training Organisation, trading as the Autism Teaching Institute, as the training arm of the school. The ATI maintains the high standards of practice excellence and maintains a commitment to the alignment of the Department of Education's state-wide inclusive education agenda.

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## Progress towards strategic goals, student outcomes and student engagement

### Learning

A focus on further establishing core assessment tools such as the Communication Matrix and Continuum Tracker into the teaching and learning cycle was prioritised early in the year, and these were utilized for all students, guiding individualised program planning to align with Victorian curriculum standards. These assessments addressed expressive and receptive communication, as well as functional, adaptive, and social skills. End of year results saw varied achievement levels across foundational goals, with the achievement of individual goals as follows: expressive communication at 56.50%, receptive communication at 56.88%, functional adaptive skills at 56.10%, and social skills at 58.88%. In Semester 1, only 22.72% of students achieved combined goals in expressive and receptive communication, attributed to the time needed for new teachers to understand students fully. Measures like "About Me" documents and handover processes aid teacher understanding. A Professional Learning Community (PLC) model utilizing inquiry cycles supported collaborative planning, focusing on student priorities. PLCs, led by Learning Specialists, met weekly with an Assistant Principal to discuss school-wide planning and individual progress. In 2023, PLCs targeted various student learning areas, addressing shared play skills, social interactions, and play understanding. PLCs, consisting of up to nine teachers, focused on improving student learning through data-driven interventions. Professional conversations and collective responsibility toward student progress were emphasised, with teachers utilising evidence-based practices informed by holistic formative assessments. PLCs facilitated teacher growth and expertise sharing, evidenced by a 64% positive staff opinion survey rating in 2023.

Teachers recognized the importance of family contexts in student learning, with Education Support staff and Allied Health professionals providing crucial support. Families were encouraged to actively participate in their child's education. This collaborative approach enhanced teacher confidence and understanding of effective teaching practices, evident in the staff opinion survey's positive ratings regarding family contributions, rising from 84% in 2022 to 87% in 2023.

### Wellbeing

Throughout 2023, our school has made significant strides in advancing our wellbeing goals and supporting improvements in student wellbeing outcomes through a multi-faceted approach.

One highlight of our wellbeing efforts is our proactive stance on addressing various challenges faced by our students. Collaborative efforts between teachers, the Wellbeing team, and department attendance officers have been instrumental in identifying strategies to mitigate these issues. Daily time allocations dedicated to tailored interventions have ensured a comprehensive approach to promoting student wellbeing.

In tandem, our staff have actively engaged in professional learning surrounding the new DI Reform framework, aligning with our school's teaching and learning model. While the rollout process has been gradual, efforts aim to ensure seamless integration and gather valuable feedback, ultimately enhancing student learning experiences.

Additionally, our school has invested in fostering resilience and a supportive environment through various initiatives and programs. Noteworthy achievements include the completion of an NDIS handbook, updates to wellbeing policies, and staff participation in protective intervention training. These efforts have contributed to a positive shift in psychological safety ratings, as reflected in the 2023 School Staff Survey, which showcased improvements in factors related to resilience and psychological safety. Notably, the endorsement of our dedication to staff psychological health increased from 80% in 2022 to 82% in 2023, highlighting our commitment to cultivating a supportive work environment conducive to staff wellbeing.

Overall, our school remains dedicated to prioritizing student wellbeing and creating an inclusive and nurturing school community where every student feels supported and empowered to thrive.

Documentation updates, such as incident reporting guidelines and a purchasing checklist, reinforce our commitment to a secure and supportive environment. Moreover, the facilitation of student case conferences and regular discussions of Child Safe Standards reflect our dedication to holistic student support and transparent collaboration.

The positive outcomes from these initiatives are reflected in the upward trend of positive endorsements in the 2023 School Staff Survey, indicating success in prioritizing staff wellbeing and safety.

## Engagement

Throughout 2023, our school dedicated efforts to address attendance issues, engaging teachers and the Wellbeing team in proactive strategies. Collaborative efforts with department attendance officers provided valuable insights, while daily time allocations allowed for comprehensive monitoring and interventions, emphasising the importance of combating absenteeism.

During 2023, the school placed a focus on increasing community and parent engagement in various ways. The school introduced a 'Sip and Share' event inviting parents on-site fortnightly to meet other families and share stories. This was a well attended initiative which will continue on in 2024.

The school held its second annual Community Fair in December which was very well attended by families. This was held in-line with our first whole school art exhibition 'Day Dreams' which showcased wonderful creative expressions produced by the students of our school whilst bringing together the wider WAS community. The theme was the 'Digital World' where students created installations, performances and artworks that represented websites, blogs, apps and so much more.

Looking ahead, the adoption of the Compass Parent app in 2024 promises enhanced visibility of absences despite challenges posed by off-site therapies, supporting efforts to promote regular attendance.

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## Other highlights from the school year

The school undertook its strategic review this year. This process reviews our school's performance against the previous strategic plan, and develops a new four year plan outlining the school priorities for improvement until 2027. The panel agreed that a focus on two school goals for this new period aligned to the priorities evidenced through the panel's review of available evidence; To maximise the learning growth of every student and Strengthen students' agency, engagement and connectedness to school and peers.

After receiving funding from the Victorian Government to upgrade our school and replace relocatable buildings with new permanent facilities, including art and science classrooms in 2022, discussions continued and master plans were finalised with Guymer Bailey Architects. Construction is due to commence in early 2024.

In 2023 the school facilitated a camp program available to students in their fourth year of schooling. 40 students participated in the camp over three days. Students travelled to a new location to stay at Camp Sunnystones in Merrimu. This was a highly successful experience for these students and staff.

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## Financial performance

Western Autistic School maintained a good financial position throughout 2023. In addition to the Student Resource Package, in 2023 the school raised \$16,558 locally and received \$43,430 in Equity Funding. Western Autistic School Council began 2023 with more permanent teaching staff employed than the year before, and as a result spent significantly less than 2022 on casual staff, with \$1,161,553 expended on hiring teachers and teacher assistants through an agency to cover vacancies and leave throughout the year. This expenditure can be seen in the support services budget line and is the highest expenditure item after the student resource package. At the end of 2023 there was a budget surplus. This surplus can be connected to the school still having some difficulties in recruiting permanent staff across different positions in the school. The school management team and School Council continue to manage the school finances within DE policy and guidelines to support and achieve the goals and targets of the Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan.

**For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at <https://westernautisticschool.vic.edu.au/>**

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# Performance Summary

The Performance Summary for government schools provides an overview of how this school is contributing to the objectives of the Education State and how it compares to other Victorian government schools.

All schools work in partnership with their school community to improve outcomes for children and young people. Sharing this information with parents and the wider school community helps to support community engagement in student learning, a key priority of the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes 2.0 (FISO 2.0).

Refer to the 'How to read the Annual Report' section for help on how to interpret this report.

## SCHOOL PROFILE

### Enrolment Profile

A total of 292 students were enrolled at this school in 2023, 63 female and 229 male.

31 percent of students had English as an additional language and NDP percent were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

### Overall Socio-Economic Profile

The overall school's socio-economic profile is based on the school's Student Family Occupation and Education index (SFOE).

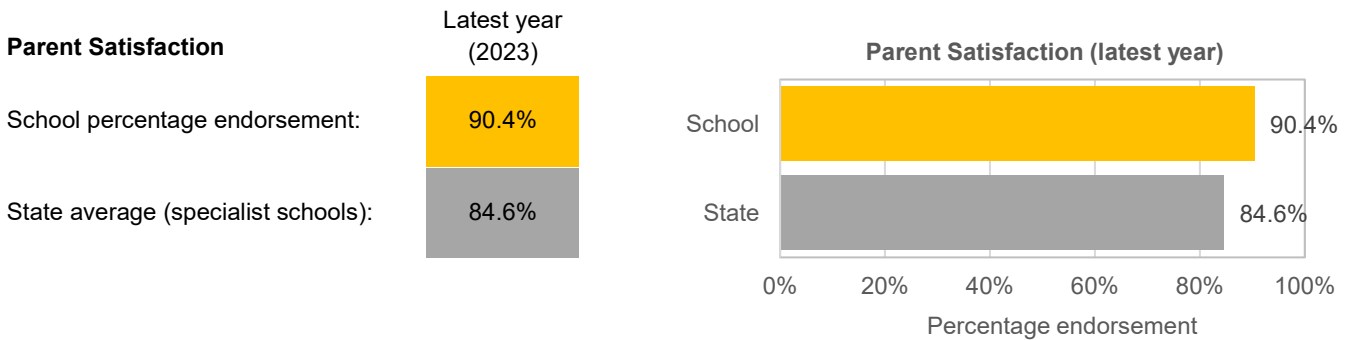
SFOE is a measure of socio-educational disadvantage of a school, based on educational and employment characteristics of the parents/carers of students enrolled at the school. Possible SFOE band values are: Low, Low-Medium, Medium and High. A 'Low' band represents a low level of socio-educational disadvantage, a 'High' band represents a high level of socio-educational disadvantage.

This school's SFOE band value is: Low - Medium

### Parent Satisfaction Summary

The percentage endorsement by parents on their General School Satisfaction, as reported in the annual Parent/Caregiver/Guardian Opinion Survey.

Percentage endorsement indicates the percent of positive responses (agree or strongly agree) from parents who responded to the survey.

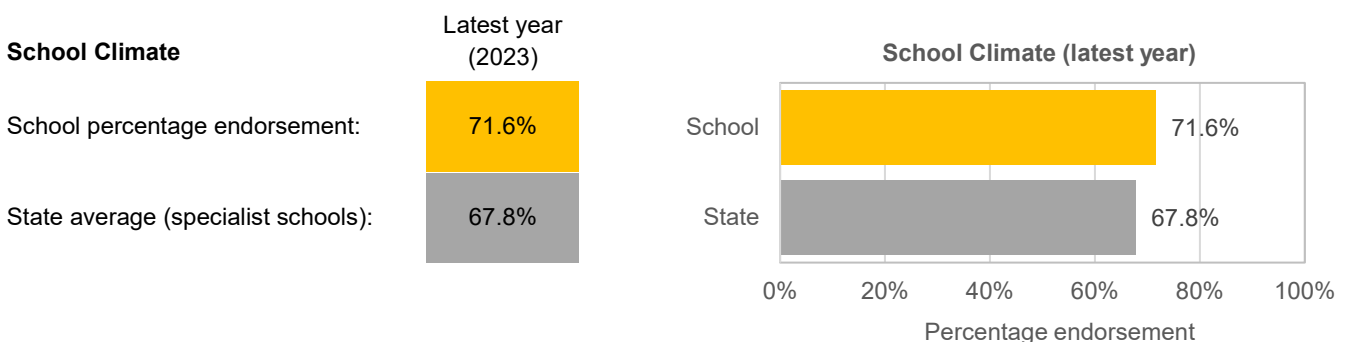


### School Staff Survey

The percentage endorsement by staff on School Climate, as reported in the annual School Staff Survey.

Percentage endorsement indicates the percent of positive responses (agree or strongly agree) from staff who responded to the survey.

Data is suppressed for schools with three or less respondents to the survey for confidentiality reasons.



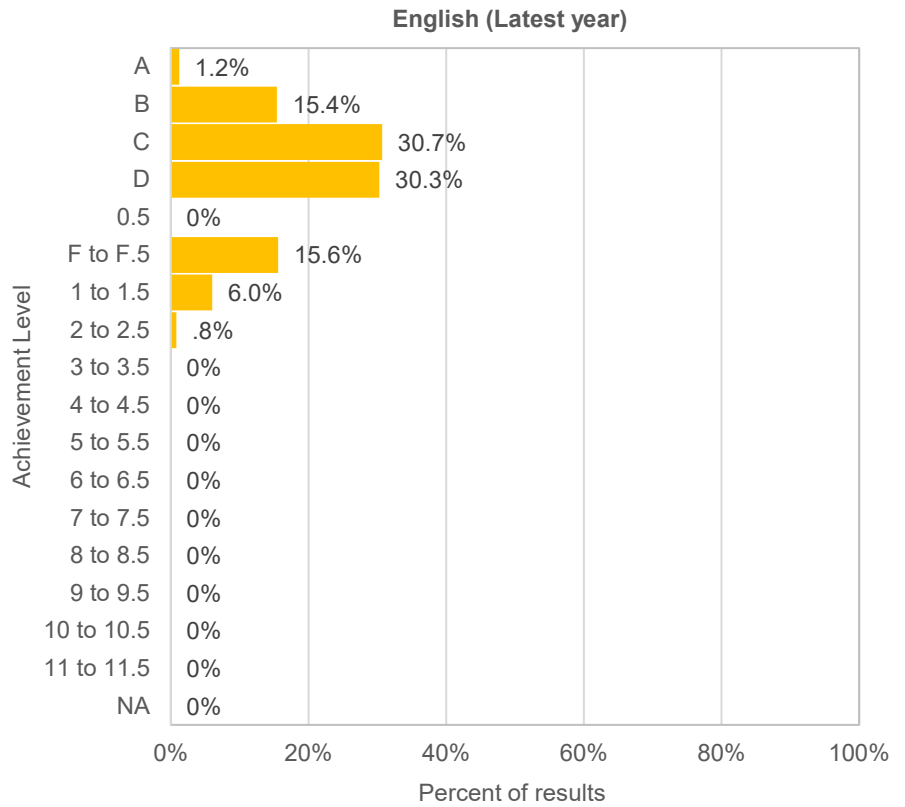
## LEARNING

### Teacher Judgement of student achievement

Percent of results at each achievement level in English and Mathematics.

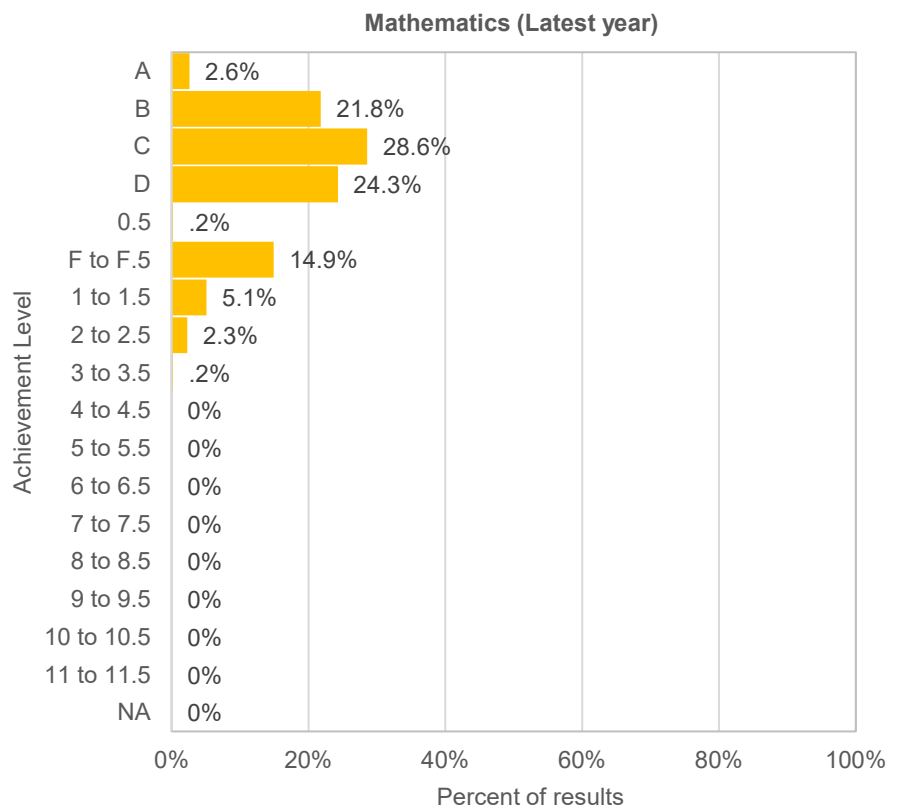
#### English

Achievement Level	Latest year (2023)
A	1.2%
B	15.4%
C	30.7%
D	30.3%
0.5	NDA
F to F.5	15.6%
1 to 1.5	6.0%
2 to 2.5	0.8%
3 to 3.5	NDA
4 to 4.5	NDA
5 to 5.5	NDA
6 to 6.5	NDA
7 to 7.5	NDA
8 to 8.5	NDA
9 to 9.5	NDA
10 to 10.5	NDA
11 to 11.5	NDA
NA	NDA



#### Mathematics

Achievement Level	Latest year (2023)
A	2.6%
B	21.8%
C	28.6%
D	24.3%
0.5	0.2%
F to F.5	14.9%
1 to 1.5	5.1%
2 to 2.5	2.3%
3 to 3.5	0.2%
4 to 4.5	NDA
5 to 5.5	NDA
6 to 6.5	NDA
7 to 7.5	NDA
8 to 8.5	NDA
9 to 9.5	NDA
10 to 10.5	NDA
11 to 11.5	NDA
NA	NDA





## ENGAGEMENT

### Average Number of Student Absence Days

Absence from school can impact on students' learning. Common reasons for non-attendance include illness and extended family holidays.

Student Absence	2020	2021	2022	2023	4-year average
School average number of absence days:	24.7	28.5	42.4	36.9	32.4

### Students exiting to further studies or full-time employment

Percentage of students going on to further studies or full-time employment.

Note: This measure refers to data from the previous calendar year. Data excludes destinations recorded as 'Unknown'.

Student Exits	2019	2020	2021	2022	4-year average
School percent of students with positive destinations:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

# Financial Performance and Position

## FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - OPERATING STATEMENT SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER, 2023

Revenue	Actual
Student Resource Package	\$18,505,145
Government Provided DET Grants	\$2,827,056
Government Grants Commonwealth	\$0
Government Grants State	\$0
Revenue Other	\$427,495
Locally Raised Funds	\$16,558
Capital Grants	\$0
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$21,776,253</b>

Equity <sup>1</sup>	Actual
Equity (Social Disadvantage)	\$43,430
Equity (Catch Up)	\$0
Transition Funding	\$0
Equity (Social Disadvantage – Extraordinary Growth)	\$0
<b>Equity Total</b>	<b>\$43,430</b>

Expenditure	Actual
Student Resource Package <sup>2</sup>	\$14,339,856
Adjustments	\$0
Books & Publications	\$11,158
Camps/Excursions/Activities	\$48,874
Communication Costs	\$32,027
Consumables	\$176,426
Miscellaneous Expense <sup>3</sup>	\$25,233
Professional Development	\$53,132
Equipment/Maintenance/Hire	\$103,286
Property Services	\$297,359
Salaries & Allowances <sup>4</sup>	\$373,043
Support Services	\$1,161,553
Trading & Fundraising	\$18,303
Motor Vehicle Expenses	\$17,379
Travel & Subsistence	\$777
Utilities	\$178,719
<b>Total Operating Expenditure</b>	<b>\$16,837,126</b>
<b>Net Operating Surplus/-Deficit</b>	<b>\$4,939,127</b>
<b>Asset Acquisitions</b>	<b>\$81,833</b>

- (1) The equity funding reported above is a subset of the overall revenue reported by the school.
- (2) Student Resource Package Expenditure figures are as of 16 Feb 2024 and are subject to change during the reconciliation process.
- (3) Miscellaneous Expenses include bank charges, administration expenses, insurance and taxation charges.
- (4) Salaries and Allowances refers to school-level payroll.

## FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

<b>Funds available</b>	<b>Actual</b>
High Yield Investment Account	\$571,151
Official Account	\$245,020
Other Accounts	\$3,038
<b>Total Funds Available</b>	<b>\$819,208</b>

<b>Financial Commitments</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Operating Reserve	\$380,270
Other Recurrent Expenditure	(\$95)
Provision Accounts	\$0
Funds Received in Advance	\$0
School Based Programs	\$0
Beneficiary/Memorial Accounts	\$0
Cooperative Bank Account	\$0
Funds for Committees/Shared Arrangements	\$0
Repayable to the Department	\$0
Asset/Equipment Replacement < 12 months	\$0
Capital - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	\$210,000
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	\$0
Asset/Equipment Replacement > 12 months	\$0
Capital - Buildings/Grounds > 12 months	\$0
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds > 12 months	\$0
<b>Total Financial Commitments</b>	<b>\$590,175</b>

*All funds received from the Department of Education, or raised by the school, have been expended, or committed to subsequent years, to support the achievement of educational outcomes and other operational needs of the school, consistent with department policies, School Council approvals and the intent/purposes for which funding was provided or raised.*