2025 Annual Report to the School Community

School Name: Merriang School (5284)

- 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 March 2026 at 01:13 PM by Georgia Tsonis (Principal)

- As executive officer of the school council, I attest that this 2025 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 23 April 2026 at 01:42 PM by Georgia Tsonis (Principal)

How to read the Annual Report

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.

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
    - responses to the General Satisfaction area of the Parent/Caregiver/Guardian Opinion Survey
    - school staff responses to the School Climate area of the School Staff Survey
- Engagement
    - how many exiting students go on to further studies or full-time work
    - average absence days per student
    - student attendance rate

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’)

About Our School

School context

Merriang Special Developmental School (SDS) is a dual campus, government specialist school located in the City of Whittlesea. The Later Years Campus and main administration offices are located in Duncan Rd, Lalor and is attended by secondary aged students. Our primary aged students attend the Early Years Campus located in South Morang. There is a driving distance of 10km between the campuses. The school's vision is: 'To lead special education through exemplary and innovative practice.' Our school values of Safety, Respect and Active Learning align to the school's expected behaviours of We Are Safe, We Are Respectful and We Are Learners. The school continues to promote a positive learning environment through School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) and our behaviour purpose statement reflects this commitment: 'Merriang promotes effective, social and purposeful learning by creating a safe and positive school environment. Through predictable and consistent school wide behavioural learning expectations we will empower, engage and support all members of the school community.'

In 2025, the Early Years Campus comprised eleven classes, with the Later Years Campus comprising eight classes. Merriang's Early Years Campus operates on the same physical site as The Lakes South Morang College. In 2025, both schools regularly engaged with one another regarding funding support (under the Program for Students with Disabilities and Disability Inclusion model) and enrolment enquiries such as students and families seeking dual enrolment. It has been the endeavour of Merriang School to further develop inclusive partnerships with other settings as evidence by our active involvement in the Whittlesea Schools Network. Following the successful completion of our recent stage 1 build, Merriang School spent 2025 engaging in the development of stage 2. This will include a modern, versatile, safe and accessible hydrotherapy pool at our Lalor campus and a building upgrade to both our Lalor and South Morang campuses.

In 2025, the school's enrolment was one hundred and twenty-seven students, comprising of thirty-six female and ninety-one male students. 24% of our students has English as an additional language. Overall, the school's socio-economic profile sat in the medium band value (a 'low' value, representing a low level of socio-educational disadvantage and a 'high' value representing a high level of socio-educational disadvantage). The school's employee breakdown included one acting principal, one assistant principal, two acting assistant principals, one leading teacher, one learning specialist, one inclusion outreach coach, two therapists (one speech pathologist and one occupational therapist), George (our therapy dog), twenty teachers, twenty-three education support staff, and three administration staff (including one business manager).

Progress towards strategic goals, student outcomes and student engagement

Learning

In 2025, the school focused on Key Improvement Strategies (KIS) outlined within the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and related to the Department's Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) initiative. Two priority goals were actioned with the school's 2025 AIP encompassing the Strengthening of social awareness and self-regulation for all students and extending students pathways for our 15+ cohort. Priority areas were addressed via the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) of practice.

Stimulated learning was a highlight of 2025, exceeding the performance of similar schools. Student perceptions regarding personal and social wellbeing, including Emotional awareness and regulation (74%), Managing bullying (89%), and Teacher concern (85%) remained above similar schools.

The 15+ curriculum was reviewed in 2025, and this included the development of a goal bank, more targeted units of work and resources, an expanded focus on vocational education, and the introduction of Career Action Plans. All students successfully exited the school with a post–school pathways plan.

A trial program on Student Voice, with the introduction of 'Talking Mats', supported all our students to more clearly express their thoughts, preferences and ideas. It increased student participation in communication and decision-making, improved staff understanding of student perspectives, and supported greater student confidence and independence when communicating.

Wellbeing

In 2025, Merriang School continued to action steady progress in wellbeing, to support student wellbeing outcomes. Wellbeing at Merriang is primarily associated with our School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support program, led by our 'wellbeing' acting assistant principal and Learning Specialist. The school's emphasis continues to be on developing students' social awareness, including students' abilities to self-regulate. In addition to the sustained implementation of the Department's Respectful
Relationships program, SWPBS at Merriang supports students to model respectful behaviours, and display positive learning attitudes.

The school's Data collected in 2025, highlighted that most students were successfully achieving or making progress toward their Personal and Social Capability goal—Self/Social–awareness and Management. Personal and social capabilities, as well as social and emotional learning, were consistently planned for and incorporated into daily activities such as morning circle, routine procedures, mealtimes, personal hygiene programs, and structured play. Adjustments were continuously made around communication, including visual supports, sensory supports and

regulation which helped students engage in learning. Professional Learning committees supported staff to address all 32 areas of RRRR, while SWPBS Tier 1 supports showed increased student connectedness and engagement.

Engagement

Absence from school can impact on students' learning. Common reasons for non-attendance include illness, other educational commitments (such as NDIS accredited programs) and extended family holidays. Students at Merriang can be at greater risk of illness and/or complications from illness, as well as often requiring NDIS supports during school hours (an approved absence). Student attendance in 2025, was 79%, a result that was relatively consistent over recent years. School-wide enablers to engagement include:

- Individual Education Plans designed and implemented for every student, with the support of the Student Support Group (parents and carers) and in alignment with the Victorian Curriculum
- Allied health supports embedded in teaching practices
- School-wide Positive Behaviour Support interventions that are implemented with fidelity
- Active engagement with the School Council and parent cohort, including daily communication with families via SENTRAL
- Involvement in Care Team meetings outside of scheduled classes to ensure the school supports both students' engagement in learning and at home programs
- Strong partnerships between teachers and parents to ensure mutual and sustained accountability in matters of engagement
- Regional support to assist with increased engagement and wellbeing for students, staff and families

Other highlights from the school year

Merriang school has established partnerships with local schools, healthcare professionals, specialist services and community services providing support to students and their families. The connections with industry and the local community facilitated work experience and pathway options for 15+ students, offering them a wider range of post–school opportunities. The introduction of Career Action Plans and the Post School Expo assisted students, and their families navigate future pathways.

In 2025 the school continued to excel in promoting student engagement, wellbeing and learning across all areas and within all spheres of influence. Highlights of the teaching and learning program in 2025 included:

- Various incursions and excursions as operated by our extraordinary teaching teams, such as via SEDA, Bunnings, Men's Shed, Bright Industries, Variety and numerous other community services
- Special events days celebrating our strengths in diversity
- Water safety programs for students at both campuses at our local TRAX swimming centre
- Day outdoor education camps for our junior and senior schools
- Involvement in regional networks (including learning specialist and leadership networks) to increase collective efficacy and advocate for increased learning outcomes
- Upgrades to playgrounds and learning spaces school-wide Family Day celebrations and year 12 graduation event

Financial performance

Financial performance:

The school ended the year with a surplus of $644,724, which was due to a gradual increase in enrolments during the year. Like many schools, Merriang school employed many more casual staff in 2025 than in previous years. An increase in staff illness and teacher shortages contributed to this need.

Merriang received equity funding of $52,028.20, which was put towards creating additional communication resources for individual students. A small number of students have a voice output communication device funded through NDIS, however many students do not have such a device and have a communication disorder.

The school also received funding through Active Schools, enabling students to increase their physical activity through targetted water safety programs at our local swim centre, as well as camps and excursion. We also received some funds from variety club to purchase new bikes for our Bike-Ed program.

Merriang was also successful in receiving funds, as part of the Major Works Upgrade initiative from the department of education, for new playgrounds in the Junior campus and upgrading existing ones.

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at https://www.merriangsds.vic.edu.au/

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 125 students were enrolled at this school in 2025, 34 female and 91 male. 22% had English as an additional language and NDP 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 **Medium**.

Parent Satisfaction Summary

The percentage endorsement by parents on their General School Satisfaction, as reported in the annual Parent/Caregiver/Guardian Opinion Survey. Percent endorsement indicates the percent of positive responses (agree or strongly agree) from parents who responded to the survey.

		2025
% positive endorsement General School Satisfaction (Parent/Caregiver/Guardian Opinion Survey)	**School**	**88.9%**
	Similar schools	89.1%
	State	86.9%

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.

		2025
% positive endorsement School Climate (School Staff Survey)	**School**	**58.6%**
	Similar schools	68.5%
	State	68.0%

ENGAGEMENT

Students exiting to further studies or full-time employment

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

		2024	4-year average
% of students exiting to further studies or full-time employment	**School**	**21.4%**	**27.1%**
	Similar schools	40.3%	40.9%
	State	81.5%	81.2%

Average absence days per student

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

		2025	4-year average
Ungraded	**School**	**41.6**	**41.7**
	Similar schools	40.9	39.8
	State	40.0	39.6

Attendance rate

Attendance rate refers to the average proportion of formal school days students in each year level attended.

		2025
Ungraded	**School**	**79.0%**

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND POSITION

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - OPERATING STATEMENT SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2025

Financial figures are as of 19 March 2026.

Revenue	Actual
Student Resource Package	$7,464,287
Government Provided DET Grants	$614,127
Government Grants Commonwealth	$1,136
Government Grants State	$389
Revenue Other	$92,753
Locally Raised Funds	$27,204
Capital Grants	$0
Total Operating Revenue	**$8,199,896**

Equity	Actual
Equity (Social Disadvantage)	$52,028
Equity (Catch Up)	$0
Equity (Social Disadvantage - Extraordinary Growth)	$0
Equity Total	**$52,028**

The equity funding reported above is a subset of the overall revenue reported by the school.

Expenditure	Actual
Student Resource Package[1]	$5,846,335
Adjustments	$0
Books & Publications	$0
Camps/Excursions/Activities	$19,734
Communication Costs	$7,706
Consumables	$70,681
Miscellaneous Expenses[2]	$20,912
Agency Staff	$100,479
Professional Development	$17,681
Equipment/Maintenance/Hire	$47,876
Property Services	$229,142
Salaries & Allowances[3]	$302,432
Support Services	$5,154

Expenditure	Actual
Trading & Fundraising	$3,496
Motor Vehicle Expenses	$29,689
Travel & Subsistence	$0
Utilities	$49,724
Total Operating Expenditure	**$6,751,040**
Net Operating Surplus/-Deficit	**$1,448,856**
Asset Acquisitions	**$18,964**

[1] Student Resource Package Expenditure figures are subject to change during the reconciliation process.

[2] Miscellaneous Expenses include bank charges, administration expenses, insurance and taxation charges.

[3] Salaries and Allowances refers to school-level payroll.

FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

Funds Available	Actual
High Yield Investment Account	$1,048,808
Official Account	$62,915
Other Accounts	$0
Total Funds Available	**$1,111,723**

Financial Commitments	Actual
Operating Reserve	$150,784
Other Recurrent Expenditure	$10
Provision Accounts	$0
Funds Received in Advance	$0
School Based Programs	$97,483
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	$0
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	$200,000
Asset/Equipment Replacement > 12 months	$0
Capital - Buildings/Grounds > 12 months	$0
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds > 12 months	$200,000
Total Financial Commitments	**$648,278**

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.