

2024 Annual Report to the School Community

School Name: Merriang Special Developmental 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 29 April 2025 at 12:48 PM by Robyn Mitchell (Principal)

- As executive officer of the school council, I attest that this 2024 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 29 April 2025 at 12:49 PM by Robyn Mitchell (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
- 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').

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 2024, the Early Years Campus comprised eleven classes, with the Later Years Campus comprising seven classes.

Merriang's Early Years Campus operates on the same physical site as The Lakes South Morang College. In 2024, 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 continues to advocate for the undertaking of stage 2, to include a modern, versatile, safe and accessible hydrotherapy pool at our Lalor campus. In addition to this, refurbishment and capital works will occur across both settings, in alignment with agreed plans and with the support of the VSBA. In 2024, the school's enrolment was one hundred and fifteen students, comprising of thirty female and eighty-five male students. 16% 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 two acting principals (term 1 and 2-4, inclusive) one principal (term 4 onwards), two assistant principals (of which, one assumed the role of acting principal in terms 1-4), one leading teacher (with a second employed in term 4), two learning specialists, 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 2024, the school focused on Key Improvement Strategies (KIS) outlined within the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and related the to Department's Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) initiative. Two priority goals were actioned with the school's 2024 AIP encompassing improvement within numeracy and extending students pathways for our 15+ cohort. Priority areas were addressed via the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) of practice.

Numeracy

The numeracy PLC was led by Merriang's Learning Specialist and encompassed a team of teachers and education support staff, across both campuses. The numeracy PLC successfully audited school processes encompassing numeracy to identify strengths and areas for improvement within the curriculum and practises school-wide. The team were able to refine a scope and sequence in the numeracy curriculum and provide for new initiatives in this learning areas, such as learning pods and development of new teaching resources. The PLC was able to demonstrate, with reference to the learning data obtained via SENTRAL, that acceptable progress is being made across all school cohorts, in numeracy. Future plans and recommendations include the implementation of teaching pods to establish numeracy lesson plans and to promote further collaboration around school improvements in numeracy.

Strengthening Student Pathways (15+)

The 15+ pathways PLC was led by Merriang's performing arts teacher and encompassed a team representative of the school's senior school teaching teams (teachers and education support staff). The 15+ PLC conducted a review of current school programs for the 15+ cohort to establish whether the school was providing for optimal learning opportunities within the 15+ curriculum. The PLC identified students were presently involved in regular community access programs in conjunction with adult disability service providers, engagement with local communities via entrepreneurship programs, work experience and leisure activities. The school operates an established and successful post school exposition, where student and families have the opportunity to liaise directly with adult disability day service providers, NDIS entities and disability employment services to successful student placement, post school. The PLC was able to develop resources to assist teachers to support students and families in making appropriate and engaging post-school choices around students' strengths and interests.

Wellbeing

In 2024, Merriang continued to action steady progress in wellbeing, to support of student wellbeing outcomes. Wellbeing at Merriang is primarily associated with our School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support program, led by our 'wellbeing' acting assistant principal. 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.

In 2024, Merriang made significant 'strides' in embedding the SWPBS framework, including the re-accreditation of the DE's 'bronze' award. The bronze award recognises schools that implement SWPBS with fidelity and to the DE's standards of implementation. Broadly speaking, the SWPBS team achieved goals in the following areas:

- Embedding SWPBS across all learning areas and within the curriculum
- Continued to build staff capacity through the completion of thirty-five hours of targeted professional development
- Effectively mobilised resources to support students' wellbeing via the school's Tier 1, 2 and 3 teams.

In 2024, Merriang Special Developmental School's SWPBS framework indirectly supported academic outcomes by fostering a positive, consistent learning environment. Although SWPBS focuses on behavioural improvements, its implementation has allowed students to engage more effectively in classroom activities, contributing to increased focus, resilience, and task completion. Teacher assessments based on the VIC Curriculum reflect that student's benefited from reduced classroom disruptions and more sustained instructional time. Teachers noted that SWPBS practices have positively impacted students' readiness to learn, with structured behavioural expectations aligning well with academic routines.

Moving forward, the school plans to integrate more formal assessments and feedback to better understand the relationship between SWPBS practices and academic progress, aiming to further support student achievement in line with curriculum standards.

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. In 2024, the school's combined average number of absence days, per student, increased from 27.3, in 2023, to 29.1. The rolling four yearly average sits at 23.8 absence days, per student. 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). For exiting students, Merriang has maintained its 100% success rate in supporting families to achieve post-school placements. The rolling four yearly average figure for successful placements sits at 100% indicating the school's support mechanisms around post school placements continue to be successful.

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

In 2024 the school continued to excel in promoting student engagement, wellbeing and learning across all areas and within all spheres of influence. Notably, the school was sustained and made continued forward progress despite significant staffing challenges, involving all areas of operation within the school (i.e. leadership, administration and teaching ranks). This has been a credit to the entire school community for supporting one another through these, often sustained, challenges.

Highlights of the teaching and learning program in 2024 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
- 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
- Successful attainment of the federal 'School's Upgrade Fund' grant to remodel yards at our Early Years campus (with works to begin in 2025)
- Continued involvement with the VSBA and the Region to further plans for the hydrotherapy pool
- Family Day celebrations and year 12 graduation event

Financial performance

The main source of income for Merriang School in 2024 was, of course, the Student Resource Package termly cash grants which totalled approximately \$539,494. Additionally, we received \$33,275 in leave reimbursements.

Two credit to cash transfers totally \$495,582 were actioned bringing the total SRP funding to \$1,074,542.

We also received a grant from DFFH for the community program formally known as Advance.

The school was a successful recipient of the Schools Upgrade Fund grant for \$965,385.00 to undertake the Inclusive Playground Upgrade (still in planning).

Interest received for the year from Westpac and CBA totalled \$44,000.

Our CRT budget was considerable at \$260,000 and the Maintenance etc for both campuses totalled \$412,000. This included the purchase and installation of shade sails at the Lalor campus.

Fundraising raised nearly \$2,500 in profit which was earmarked for bus expenditure.

Our bank account balances at the end of December 2024 totalled \$1,327,486. We have put aside \$325,500 in our 2025 budget to allow for future Capital projects.

Our photocopier contract was due to end in early 2025 but we have extended it to mid-year to allow for us to properly research our options.

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 115 students were enrolled at this school in 2024, 30 female and 85 male.

16 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).

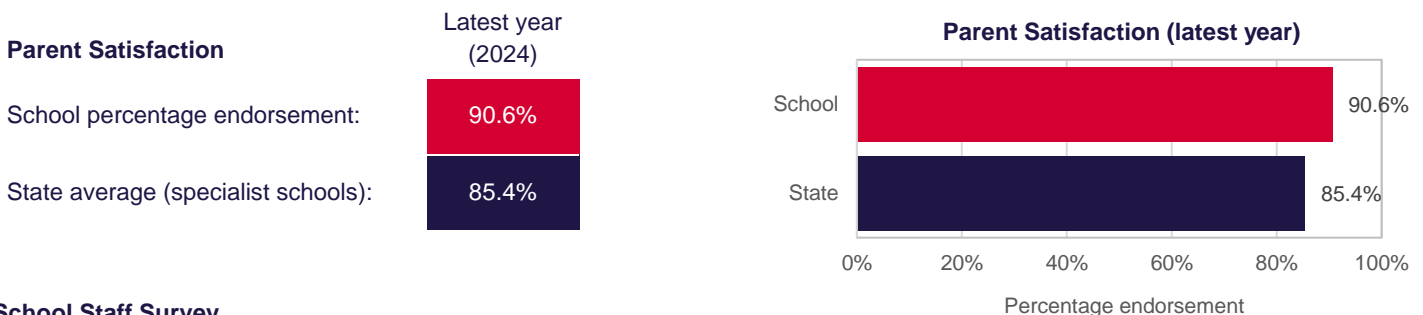
SFOE is a measure of socio-educational disadvantage of a school, based on educational and employment characteristics of the parents/carers of students enrolled at the school. Possible SFOE band values are: Low, Low-Medium, Medium and High. A 'Low' band represents a low level of socio-educational disadvantage,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

This school's SFOE band value is: **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.

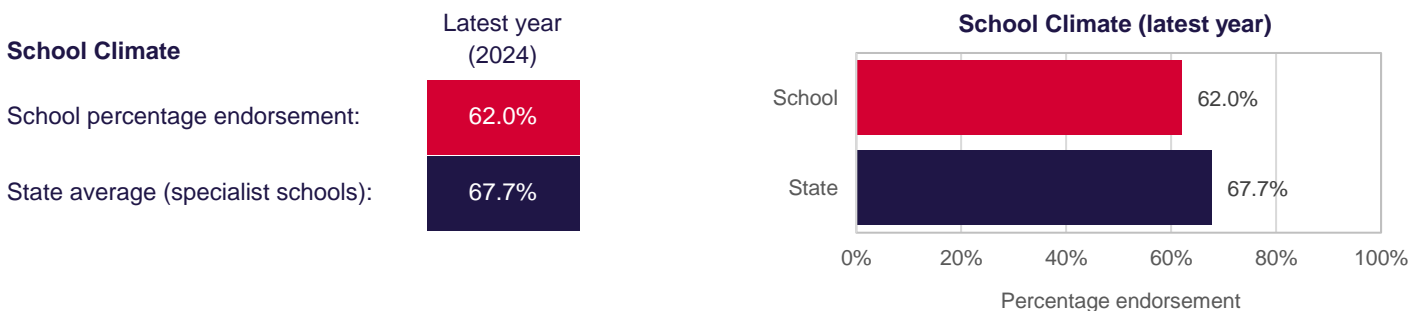


School Staff Survey

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.



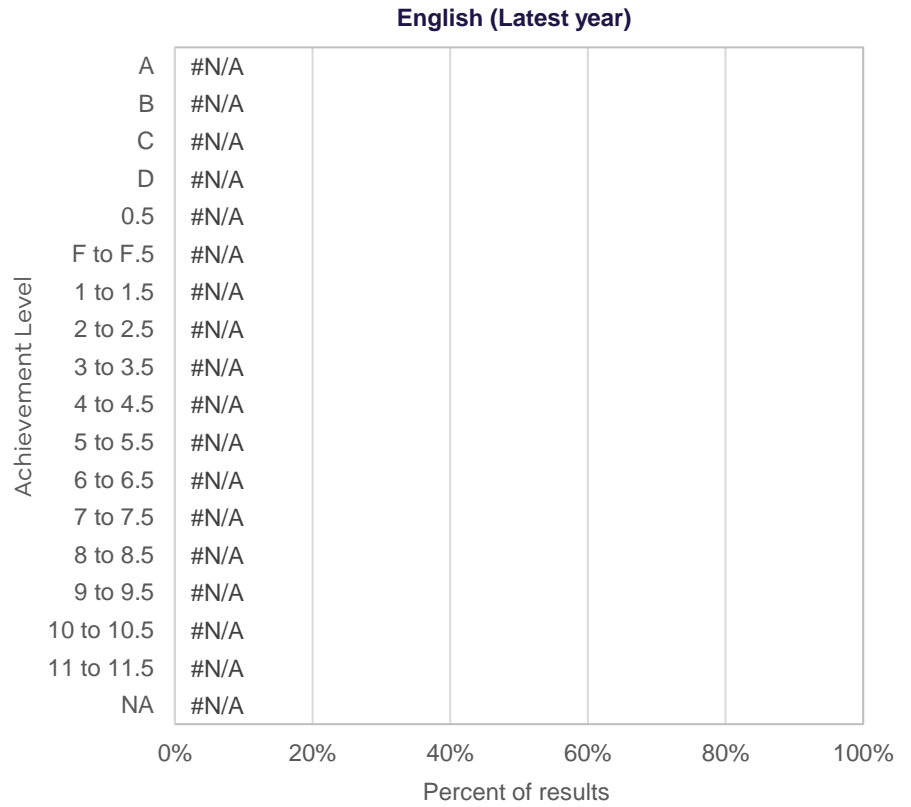
LEARNING

Teacher Judgement of student achievement

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

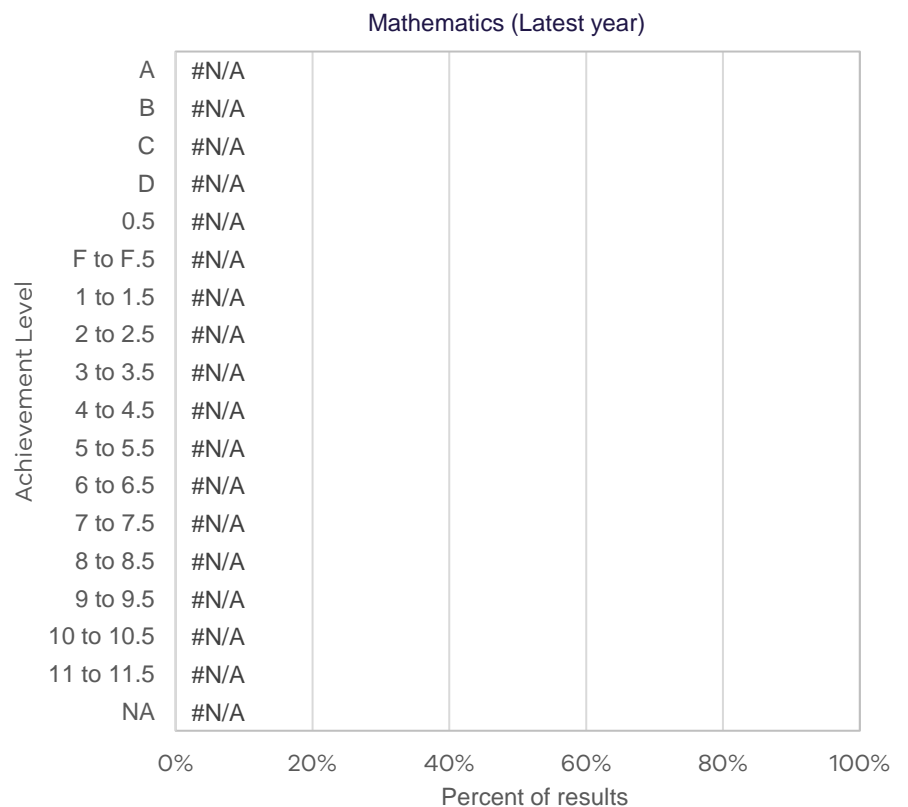
English

Achievement Level	Latest year (2024)
A	NDA
B	NDA
C	NDA
D	NDA
0.5	NDA
F to F.5	NDA
1 to 1.5	NDA
2 to 2.5	NDA
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 (2024)
A	NDA
B	NDA
C	NDA
D	NDA
0.5	NDA
F to F.5	NDA
1 to 1.5	NDA
2 to 2.5	NDA
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



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	2021	2022	2023	2024	4-year average
School average number of absence days:	20.8	17.9	27.3	29.1	23.8

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	2021	2022	2023	2024	4-year average
School percent of students with positive destinations:	NDP	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Financial Performance and Position

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - OPERATING STATEMENT SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2024

Revenue	Actual
Student Resource Package	\$6,337,835
Government Provided DET Grants	\$1,122,123
Government Grants Commonwealth	\$1,136
Government Grants State	\$9,800
Revenue Other	\$52,844
Locally Raised Funds	(\$24,974)
Capital Grants	\$0
Total Operating Revenue	\$7,498,763

Equity ¹	Actual
Equity (Social Disadvantage)	\$53,807
Equity (Catch Up)	\$0
Equity (Social Disadvantage – Extraordinary Growth)	\$0
Equity Total	\$53,807

Expenditure	Actual
Student Resource Package ²	\$5,507,654
Adjustments	\$0
Books & Publications	\$804
Camps/Excursions/Activities	\$11,936
Communication Costs	\$9,321
Consumables	\$76,896
Miscellaneous Expense ³	\$18,782
Professional Development	\$19,519
Equipment/Maintenance/Hire	\$60,185
Property Services	\$411,572
Salaries & Allowances ⁴	\$261,809
Support Services	\$214,360
Trading & Fundraising	\$2,180
Motor Vehicle Expenses	\$23,417
Travel & Subsistence	\$0
Utilities	\$54,863
Total Operating Expenditure	\$6,673,300
Net Operating Surplus/-Deficit	\$825,463
Asset Acquisitions	\$38,801

- (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 2025 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 2024

Funds available	Actual
High Yield Investment Account	\$1,312,638
Official Account	\$14,849
Other Accounts	\$0
Total Funds Available	\$1,327,487

Financial Commitments	Actual
Operating Reserve	\$194,564
Other Recurrent Expenditure	\$0
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	\$340,000
Capital - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	\$351,961
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	\$0
Asset/Equipment Replacement > 12 months	\$0
Capital - Buildings/Grounds > 12 months	\$0
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds > 12 months	\$0
Total Financial Commitments	\$886,525

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.

