

As a large primary school, **Good Shepherd Primary School, Amaroo** has worked hard to get everyone on the same page and working as one to improve student learning.

Good Shepherd Primary School serves students from diverse and multicultural backgrounds in Canberra. The school has transitioned from an inquiry-based approach to teaching to Catalyst’s focus on Direct Instruction and Explicit Instruction, and staff are seeing strong results from the change.

 **Amaroo, ACT**

 **767 Students**

 **37 Teachers**

At Good Shepherd, Catalyst supports equity in learning

Prior to Catalyst, Good Shepherd adopted a student-led approach where children where taught with an inquiry-based model. Current research suggests that students benefit most from this approach when they have existing content knowledge to draw on. For this reason, Catalyst focuses on a 'knowledge-rich curriculum' and ensuring every student is explicitly taught the skills they need.

"We can now see that every student is getting the same thing, and one class isn't missing out on, for example vocabulary or text level writing." (Classroom teacher)

The Catalyst approach now taken at Good Shepherd is about giving every student the same opportunity to succeed. A strong message from leadership about equity resonates with teachers, who recognise the importance of this – not just at their school – but for every child in the system.

"The biggest conversation I would have with those new teachers is about equity." (School leader)

Teachers work in teams to bring this approach to life. Weekly two-hour meetings are the key mechanism for consistency, with all staff in a given year level planning together to ensure they are delivering the same content. Teachers know when and how to adapt the shared plan, when needed, to best support the children in their particular class.

The new Principal identifies the importance of student assessment

While the school has undergone a leadership change in 2024, the new Principal has maintained a strong focus on Catalyst. Data use across schools is unlocking new possibilities for teaching, and Good Shepherd is keen to be at the forefront. The Principal identifies, "We're really evolving a new language around assessment at the school".

The approach to data use and assessment spans both sophisticated adaptive and diagnostic testing, to

systematically using miniature whiteboards with students in classrooms. The latter is a Catalyst strategy that gives teachers instant feedback on how well all students are grasping what is being taught. It means teachers get the information they need, without students constantly doing tests.

"The biggest change is using data to inform our teaching practices. We're collecting data more consistently. And just even the use of whiteboards we collect more data rather than relying only on formal assessments...And trusting that that is actually a good way of informing our teaching practices." (Classroom teacher)

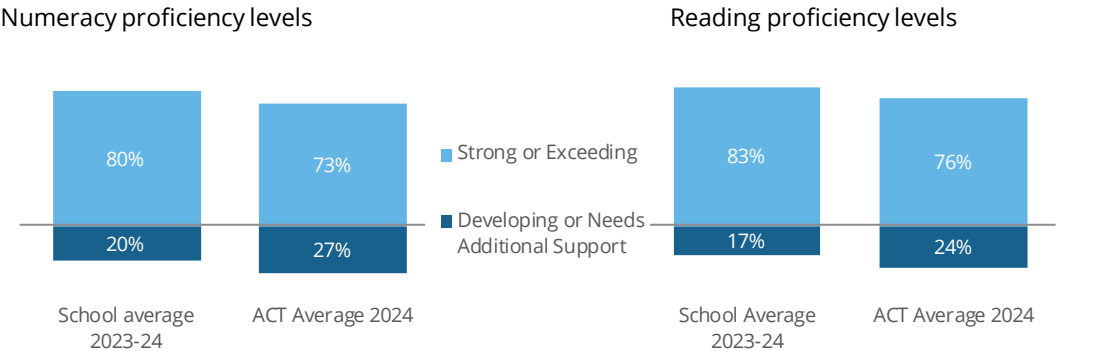
Teachers are motivated by the results they are seeing students achieve

Ask any teacher at Good Shepherd about the impact of Catalyst, and they will tell you what they are seeing in their classroom, and how this motivates them to keep getting better and better.

"The results are really what's driving us, that we can actually see these programs are working... We can see our little people are growing." (Classroom teacher)

This improvement, and the way the school supports all students can also be observed in NAPLAN.

Good Shepherd NAPLAN results – Year 3 and 5 combined



Empowering students to take the next step in their learning

In reflecting on the next steps for the school in 2025, there is a strong emphasis on how students can feel that they 'own' their assessment data (in an age-appropriate way). This aligns with research about the importance of student agency, motivation and wellbeing, and the types of feedback that best help students learn. In practice, this might look like conversations with students after tasks to help them understand the specific next step for them in their learning.

Catalyst and the International Baccalaureate go hand-in-hand at Merici College, Braddon, supporting students to achieve their potential.

Merici College underwent significant change when it adopted the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Catalyst at the same time. Now, this secondary school for girls has more than 250 additional enrolments and is becoming known for supporting all students to succeed.

 **Braddon, ACT**

 **905 Students**

 **65 Teachers**

Evidence-based teaching and adapting to the needs of students

As of 2023, all staff at Merici had done ‘High Impact Teaching Practice (HITP)’ training – one of the key Catalyst supports provided by Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn (CECG). Staff have now incorporated what they learned into what they do in the classroom everyday. This occurs not only for English and Maths, but also ‘non-core’ subjects such as design and technology. New teachers report that these clear expectations help them adopt Merici’s high standards of teaching.

The school currently has a deep focus on ensuring classes in a given year level are teaching the same curriculum, at the same time, and aligning to the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP). When teachers work together more closely and develop and use shared learning materials, students across classes get a more similar experience. In addition, teachers can spend more time adapting materials for their students’ needs when they are not starting from scratch.

“Students actually really like that because they can see...it’s been consistent with the resources and with the assessment. Students who need that extra scaffolding...they like it because it is already embedded in the [materials]...They didn’t feel like they were pointed out.” (Classroom teacher)

Assessment and learning intervention ensures no student is left behind

Each year, half of Merici’s Year 7 students come from outside the Catholic system. This means teachers must work quickly to understand where a student is at with their learning, and what support or extension they may need.

“Especially with Year 7, we try to use [assessment data]...so we can identify them early. We eventually get NAPLAN and we do stuff in the second semester too, once we know them a little bit more, but we do start in Semester 1 with our high needs kids that we know definitely need help.” (Teacher Leader)

Students across Years 7 to 10 participate in additional standardised tests (at a much smaller scale than NAPLAN), which enable Merici teachers to use this data to zoom in on any challenges.

For students that need it, small group support is provided for younger students, and one-on-one support for older students. Strong processes are in place for literacy, with current plans in place to ensure the same level of numeracy support, driven by a newly-appointed Numeracy Facilitator.

“We’ve got quite extensive and very successful intervention programs now up and running with staff allocated and trained in those spaces.” (School leader)

Students like the changes at their school, and results may be showing in NAPLAN

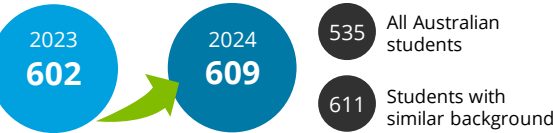
Students are responding positively to this high impact approach to teaching, and find it improves their confidence going into assessment. One example from English is shared below.

“The girls have really loved the SPOs – which is a ‘single paragraph outline’ – to help them plan their paragraphs and use their note taking skills using the abbreviations and the symbols...for their first ever essay.” (Classroom teacher)

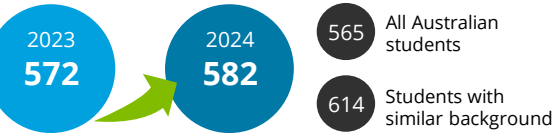
In addition, a positive signal is the increase in NAPLAN mean scores for Year 9 students since 2023, in both reading and numeracy. Merici’s mean scores are well above that for all Australian students, and are increasingly in line with schools serving similar student cohorts.

Merici’s 2024 Year 9 NAPLAN results

Reading mean score



Numeracy mean score



NB: In 2023, the timing and approach to NAPLAN changed, meaning it is not possible to compare with prior years.

Numeracy, and supporting teachers to learn from each other, are the next focus

In 2025, the school will further strengthen its numeracy focus, including how Maths concepts are taught in subjects like Science. The school is also looking to strengthen how teachers share knowledge and skills with each other. This includes observing each other and receiving feedback, and conducting inquiries into student learning in teams through a ‘Professional Learning Communities’ approach.

Merici College is committed to continuous progress – for their students and their staff. They were up for the challenge of introducing the IB and Catalyst at the same time, because they could see the connections and want the best for their students every day.

As a small school, St Anne’s Central School, Temora is experiencing key benefits from the whole-system focus on Catalyst.

With a team of 24 teachers (FTE) from Foundation to Year 12, St Anne’s is a small school that has unlocked new potential with the help of Catalyst. As the change process flows from the primary years through to secondary, students are learning more as teachers embrace new approaches.

 Temora, NSW

 282 Students

 24 Teachers

High impact teaching and learning from each other

St Anne’s is aligning their teaching with the best evidence for what works for students – known as ‘High Impact Teaching Practice’ (HITP) within Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn (CECG) archdiocese.

As a part of Catalyst, all primary school teachers have undergone HITP training. Teachers also regularly use CECG-produced curriculum resources in their lesson plans. This helps teachers use their planning time effectively – as a small school with only one class per year level, teachers otherwise spend a lot of time individually preparing lessons as they cannot share this load with colleagues. Access to these ready-to-use, high quality curriculum resources enables teachers to instead spend their time tailoring the material for individual student needs and provide more targeted support.

“We use them [curriculum materials] consistently... I adjust them accordingly to my cohort and to individual students, but I utilise them all the time.” (Classroom teacher)

In the secondary school, a majority of teachers have also undergone HITP training. Teachers report greatly benefiting from periodic peer observations, where they visit other classrooms while staff are teaching. This ensures an opportunity to give and receive feedback, but also to see what a colleague does particularly well and take ideas back into their own classroom.

“We still have the opportunity to learn from each other, even though we’re all working...within our content or subject area.” (Classroom teacher)

Teachers continuously improve their practice to better support their students

In the primary school, each teacher takes part in a coaching program. Teachers are observed regularly by their coach, and meet with them twice per term to set goals and discuss feedback. This allows teachers to improve on aspects of their practice and feel empowered to remain a learner themselves.

The school also prioritises using student data to support learning and wellbeing, holding weekly

meetings in which concerns for students are raised, and the best support for a student is discussed. Teachers access the advice of their colleagues and allied health experts as part of these conversations.

Benefits for our students, and all students

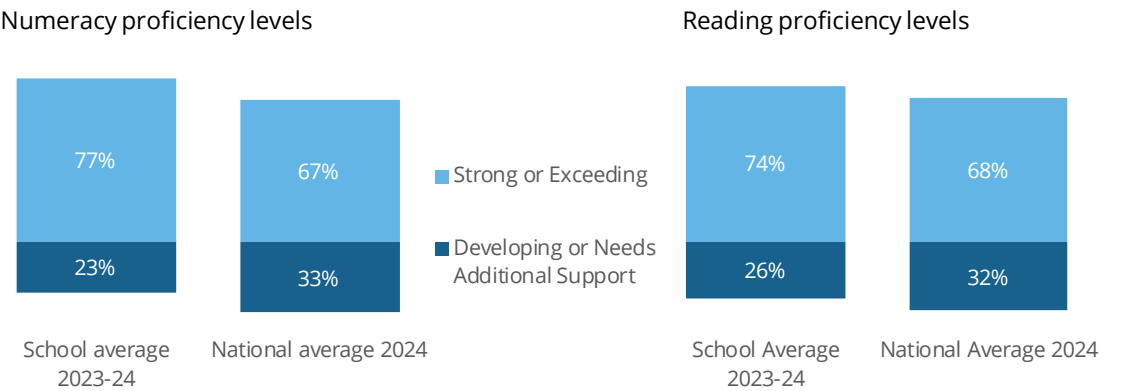
Staff at St Anne’s are observing a range of benefits for students, including that they are more engaged, more confident and more motivated as a direct result of the new teaching practices.

“For me, I’ve seen that it empowers students, even [struggling] students. I’m not asking them questions that I haven’t taught them...I’m not leaving them behind. I’m bringing them along.. The students almost feel like assessment has gotten easier... they are mastering the assessments.” (Classroom teacher)

In addition, the adoption of similar approaches across all CECG schools helps students moving mid-year. This can otherwise be highly stressful, but the consistent approaches feel familiar, and students are less likely to miss out on learning parts of the curriculum – or conversely repeating them again.

St Anne’s focus on not leaving any student behind can be seen in their NAPLAN results. For both reading and numeracy, the school has a higher proportion of students classified as ‘strong’ or ‘exceeding’ in comparison to the national average.

St Anne’s 2023-24 NAPLAN results – All year levels combined



A smooth leadership transition is the next step

The school will have a new principal in 2025. Staff at St Anne’s feel prepared for the upcoming transition, and know that having shared goals for student learning across the system helps ensure everyone is on the same page, and no momentum will be lost.

By meeting students at their level, **St Mary's Primary School, Moruya** ensures students experience success and growth in their learning.

A small school with big aspirations, St Mary's Primary School in Moruya has embraced a shift to evidence-based practices. With skilled staff committed to self-improvement and supported by knowledgeable leaders, students are finding success and deeper engagement in their learning.



Moruya, NSW



183 Students



11 Teachers

Evidence-based practice is enhanced by continuous collaboration and self-improvement

Since 2021, St Mary's has been busy training all staff in 'High Impact Teaching Practice (HITP)' which reflect the evidence for how to teach all students most effectively. Combined with high-quality curriculum resources developed by Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn (CECG), this ensures that students take continuous steps in their learning throughout the entire school year. Staff have embraced this way of teaching and observe the positive impacts on their students daily.

"It's the best thing I've seen since I started teaching." (Classroom teacher)

Understanding that there are always opportunities for improvement, the school has laid the groundwork for a coaching program in which teachers receive feedback to help improve their practice. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on collecting assessment data at different points throughout the year to see how students are tracking in their learning. Teachers use this information to inform their daily lesson plans, ensuring they are best meeting the needs of their students. The school's leaders also analyse this data to determine where individual students may need more intensive support.

"We are encouraged to look to the lesson and the children we have." (Classroom teacher)

St Mary's is part of the K-12 pathway in the NSW South Coast, along with Carroll College in Broulee and St Bernard's Primary School in Batemans Bay. There is strong alignment in the teaching and learning approach at each school, and staff from all schools engage in professional learning together. This collaboration facilitates smooth transitions into secondary school and expands the peer expertise to which every teacher has access.

St Mary's prioritises time to build critical literacy and numeracy skills

The school understands the importance of students learning to read, spell, and become proficient in mathematics. Therefore, students spend the first three hours of each day from Monday to Thursday engaged in literacy (reading and spelling) and numeracy programs. Students are grouped according to their learning levels to ensure they face the right amount of challenge, leading to greater confidence.

"We have high expectations of the students, and they have risen to the challenge." (Classroom Teacher)

Although they may not be taught by their usual classroom teacher during this time, staff communicate actively about student progress, which the school aims to improve further. Outside of this time, students stay with their year level class group, ensuring a strong connection with their teachers and classmates. During these periods, students focus on writing, studying novels, Science, Geography, and Religion.

The success of the students is leading to greater engagement in and excitement about learning.

Teachers observe that the students are more excited about their learning. This comes from students' growing confidence from the successes they experience. The routine and structure the teachers put into their lessons ensures that students know what to expect in every class, even between different teachers, and are therefore more engaged and focused.

"Seeing the kids growing, knowing what's expected, the structure, language. It's all been really good." (Classroom Teacher)

With a new Principal at the helm, 2025 will see the school continue to support teachers improve how they teach and provide support to students.

The school will welcome a new Principal at the start of 2025. Coming from one of their local partner schools, staff are looking forward to building on the progress made so far. Key focuses will include getting their teacher coaching program up and running, and ensuring teachers can collaborate in teams more frequently to analyse and discuss student data.

Four years into their Catalyst journey, St Vincent’s Primary School, Aranda are more motivated than ever to keep improving student learning.

St Vincent’s has been on board with Catalyst since day one. Even with a change of principal in 2023, St Vincent’s has remained unwavering in its implementation of Catalyst: staff are deeply dedicated to ensuring powerful learning experiences for students.

 Aranda, ACT

 181 Students

 12 Teachers

Curriculum-based, data-informed teaching is the new norm

Having been on the journey since 2021, St Vincent’s staff are very familiar with the expectations of Catalyst, and the supports provided by Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn (CECG). This includes the need for High Impact Teaching Practice (HITP) in every classroom – which has been at the core of how St Vincent’s staff teach since undergoing training. It is now a case of perfecting this practice, and teachers take part in the school’s coaching program to help achieve this.

As an ‘early adopter’, St Vincent’s staff moved quickly to develop their own comprehensive curriculum resources. Schools that engaged later have built these from additional materials provided by CECG – but St Vincent’s staff perceive their teachers possess a deep understanding of curriculum because of this decision. There is also a strong emphasis on using student assessment data to improve learning, with a committee of leaders and teachers formed to look through the data and identify areas for improvement and goals for the school.

“A big focus for us was a low variation curriculum – that was the biggest thing for me, getting people heading in the same direction. This made learning deliberate and planned, not accidental.” (Classroom teacher)

Coaching as the key to improved teaching practices

St Vincent’s is strategic about how it supports teachers to keep getting better, and its new three-step coaching program is the main way they are doing this. The first element of this program involves teachers being observed by their Catalyst coach (an experienced St Vincent’s teacher or leader) twice per term, which is followed by a discussion around feedback and goal setting.

“Feedback [from coaching] leads into goal creation for how we’ll move forward.” (Classroom teacher)

In addition to this, teachers also get the chance to observe each other in the classroom, not only giving the opportunity to provide and receive feedback, but to also adopt ideas from their peers within their

own classroom. Finally, teachers self-reflect on their practice by watching video recordings of their teaching. All of this keeps the focus on how teachers can continually adapt and adjust their practice to better support their students.

“Peer coaching really shows you how it works in the classroom, not just talking about it. It’s very helpful to see it done in real life.” (Classroom teacher)

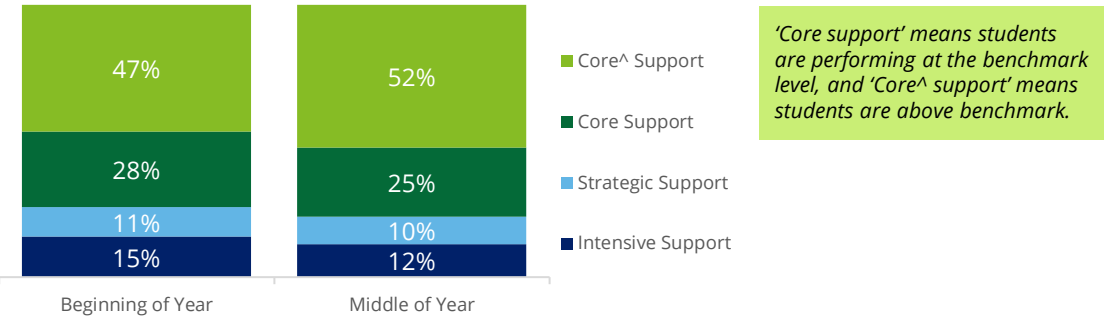
Achieving strong results for students from non-English speaking backgrounds

St Vincent’s is a highly multicultural school, with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) population for almost a third of students. The majority of these students come in with low or developing levels of English skills. St Vincent’s staff attribute the results they achieve with these students to HITP-focused teaching and other Catalyst approaches.

“We also have a high EAL/D population – kids who don’t speak English – [and] by the end of the year they were doing amazing things.” (School leader)

The impact of this work can be seen in St Vincent’s’ DIBELS data – a literacy assessment used across CECG primary schools to understand who needs support in their reading. Over a six-month period, St Vincent’s has seen students moving out of needing additional and targeted support to succeeding in the everyday classroom environment – they are catching students up in real-time.

St Vincent’s’ 2024 DIBELS results



A stronger focus on providing targeted Maths support is the next horizon

St Vincent’s has seen great success in using literacy data to set priorities for their school and identify students that need additional help. In 2025, the school wishes to replicate this success within numeracy and will be trialing a new math program and diagnostic tool.

Calm classrooms are enabling **Trinity Catholic College, Goulburn** to improve the learning experience for students.

Trinity Catholic College has always had a strong focus on student wellbeing. The relationship between learning and wellbeing is two-way for students, and Catalyst has helped the school to maintain this priority while refreshing teaching practices to align with the latest evidence.



Goulburn, NSW



651 Students



54 Teachers

Teachers reflect on the big ‘push’ for consistency at Trinity during 2024.

Catalyst is a Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn (CECG) program that offers schools world-class professional development and curriculum resources so that they can unlock each student’s full potential. In response, Trinity has put in place many important changes. This includes miniature whiteboards for students in every classroom – a strategy that keeps students engaged in lessons, and lets teachers see and respond in real-time if students are struggling. Even experienced teachers have found Catalyst has given them new ways to enhance their impact.

“I always used to think that students were consistently engaged in class, as I tend to teach...advanced Maths class, extension classes...It's not until you actually use whiteboard activities [or others]...that you start to realise ‘Well, actually maybe not everyone’. [High Impact Teaching Practice] is actually something that's worked and it's really good...It is something that I'll keep in place while I'm still teaching.” (Classroom teacher)

While Trinity already had a coaching program in place for new teachers, in 2024, they decided to expand this, so that all teachers could get frequent feedback from their peers. In addition, the school has been trialing booklets – an alternative to textbooks developed by Trinity teachers – across its junior classes. These two initiatives are focused on ensuring students get a similar learning experience, in terms of both quality and content. It also has additional benefits – when the Science faculty was faced with some staffing challenges during the year, new teachers were able to easily slot into the role and ensure learning continuity for students.

Trinity uses multiple CECG programs together to create the best possible learning environment for students

In 2024, CECG has also been running a pilot of Classroom Mastery, a program that upskills staff with strategies for a positive and calm classroom culture, with clear routines and expectations. When this

happens, students feel safe, have fewer distractions, and are more engaged. Trinity has been part of this pilot program, and staff are observing how their new practices are helping students settle faster into the lesson – creating more time for high impact teaching and student learning. School leaders also note fewer instances of disruptive student behaviour.

“All the classrooms in the school...have exactly the same routines, which helps not just with behaviour but also helps students. [They] sit down and just lock in...and know what's expected of them.” (Classroom teacher)

Senior students particularly see the benefits, and want to understand their own learning process

Both Catalyst and Classroom Mastery draw on evidence from the Science of Learning and ‘cognitive load theory’, which seeks to optimise students’ working memory to support learning. Catalyst is discussed with parents at information sessions – but also directly with students in the senior years. One leader explains why, and how students have positively responded, in the following quote.

“Daily Review [a teacher-led process of in-class revision] is an absolute game changer in terms of the High School Certificate. We explained it to the [year 11 and 12 students], and we actually talk about Catalyst. We talk about the Science of Learning, understanding what you're doing, and cognitive load...”

Through the lens of the Science of Learning, understanding how the brain works, we're identifying for our young people what kind of stresses you can manipulate to be most successful in a learning environment and the ones that you can avoid...When we're talking about Daily Review [and] revision of learning, we're using all those skills to go back over what we've already done...we're getting our brain to a point of being at ease with what we're doing...

The Year 12s [also] really loved when we sat down with them and talked to them about why we wanted them to do Classroom Mastery. I went to a Year 12 assembly and I talked about the Science of what it looks like to be part of a cohesive learning model, and that you as a year 12, as a leader...set the tone for that calm environment. The buy-in was amazing. They genuinely want to understand how their brains work.” (School leader)

Continuing to ‘sweat the small stuff’ where it matters

The work for the school in 2025 is to keep going with the good work commenced in 2024 – the Principal knows that teachers getting the details right is what leads to better student outcomes. This will include continuing to iterate on the booklets used by students, and progressing with the feedback and coaching process to help teachers continue to learn from their peers.