



Williamstown Primary School: A Year of Aspiration and Growth

In 2024, Williamstown Primary proudly celebrated its 151st year of operation, welcoming 50 dedicated staff members and 493 students to embark on another year of learning. As is typical, student and staff numbers fluctuated throughout the year, driven by families moving into and out of the area, and several staff members taking family leave.

Building upon the momentum of 2023's theme of **CONNECT**, 2024's theme was **ASPIRE**. This year, we focused intensely on refining our teaching and learning practices. We engaged in a year-long process of auditing, reviewing, and documenting all aspects of teaching across the school, ensuring that we continually strive for excellence in all curriculum areas.

Curriculum – Teaching and Learning

The Willy Way: Our Teaching & Learning Philosophy

Following our school review at the end of 2023, Williamstown Primary embarked on a comprehensive audit of our curriculum across all year levels and subject areas. The goal was to consolidate our teaching practices into a cohesive framework, which would then be formally documented in the **School Teaching and Learning Booklet**, known as *The Willy Way*.

This core curriculum document is designed to ensure consistency in teaching practices across the school, providing all staff with the tools and guidance they need to engage our students, or “Willy Kids”, in their learning. *The Willy Way* serves as our school's educational manual handbook guide, grounded in research and best practices. We eagerly anticipate sharing a community version of this document by the end of 2025.

Teacher Professional Development

Our commitment to continuous improvement is reflected in the broad range of professional learning opportunities provided to our staff. A key highlight was our ongoing collaboration with mathematics consultant **Michael Minas**. This marks the third year of our partnership with Michael, which has focused on enhancing our understanding and teaching approaches to mathematics.

We also continued to upskill staff in the implementation of the **Little Learners Love Literacy** program, our structured phonics-based approach to literacy. 2024 marked the



third year of this initiative, reinforcing its importance as the cornerstone of our junior literacy block. In fact, the Department of Education mandated that all government schools implement a phonics-based approach in Years Prep-2, meaning Williamstown Primary was ahead of the curve when this change was announced.

Staff also engaged in **Professional Learning Communities** (PLCs), conducting targeted inquiries that aligned with their professional development goals. Each Tuesday, teachers gathered for **Curriculum Focus Groups** (CFGs), where they deepened their knowledge in key areas such as **Literacy, Numeracy, and Inclusion**. These groups are integral to fostering a collaborative and cohesive school culture.

Academic Achievement

NAPLAN Results: A Year of Continued Strength

Williamstown Primary once again demonstrated strong academic performance in **NAPLAN**, with results that met or exceeded state and similar school averages. The curriculum work undertaken in 2024 aims to further strengthen the school's overall academic performance, ensuring long-term success.

Although NAPLAN results have fluctuated in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, the focused review of our teaching practices has strengthened our professional learning pathways. We aim to ensure that our curriculum is both guaranteed and viable, leading to more consistent data and evidence of sustained student growth.

(Note: Similar schools are school's that have similar key characteristics such as, student enrolments and socio-economic level. Generally, families have the same (Student Family Occupation Education) SFOE index, which looks at the relative disadvantage levels of the school community.

Year 3 NAPLAN Performance:

- Reading: **79%** (WPS) – **81%** (Similar Schools) – **69%** (State)
- Writing: **86%** (WPS) – **88%** (Similar Schools) – **78%** (State)
- Numeracy: **77%** (WPS) – **79%** (Similar Schools) – **65%** (State)
- Spelling: **71%** (WPS) – **66%** (Similar Schools) – **61%** (State)
- Grammar & Punctuation: **68%** (WPS) – **68%** (Similar Schools) – **55%** (State)

Year 5 NAPLAN Performance:

"Once a Willy Kid, always a Willy Kid!"



- Reading: **82%** (WPS) – **85%** (Similar Schools) – **73%** (State)
- Writing: **83%** (WPS) – **83%** (Similar Schools) – **73%** (State)
- Numeracy: **83%** (WPS) – **80%** (Similar Schools) – **67%** (State)
- Spelling: **75%** (WPS) – **74%** (Similar Schools) – **67%** (State)
- Grammar & Punctuation: **75%** (WPS) – **77%** (Similar Schools) – **64%** (State)

These results, while valuable as a snapshot of student learning, also provide us with critical trend data that will inform our long-term strategies for further academic enhancement.

New Initiatives

Student Inclusion and Wellbeing

To complement our newly established **Wellbeing Hub**, we appointed **Student Inclusion and Wellbeing Leaders** from the Year 5/6 cohort. These leaders played a crucial role in the daily operation of the hub, helping to create a more inclusive and supportive school environment.

Friday Foodies

The **Friday Foodies** cooking program, which took place every Friday, provided selected students with the opportunity to develop social skills through teamwork and collaboration. The program used the engaging context of cooking to promote cooperation and connection.

Positive Minds

Under the leadership of **Anna Swan**, our new **Mental Health & Wellbeing Leader**, we introduced the **Positive Minds** program. This initiative aimed to foster positive thinking and emotional regulation, supporting students' mental health in line with the Department's wellbeing objectives.

Chess Club

In Term 3, we launched an exciting new after-school **Chess Club**, where students of all year levels could learn and practice chess. The program was well attended and received enthusiastic participation from students across the school.

Cecil Street Chess Tournament

For the first time, Williamstown Primary School joined forces with **St Mary's Williamstown** to host the **Cecil Street Chess Tournament**, where 16 students from Years 3-6 competed in 5 rounds of chess. The event was a huge success, and we look

"Once a Willy Kid, always a Willy Kid!"



RESPECTFUL RESPONSIBLE RESILIENT LEARNERS

forward to making it an annual tradition, with the potential to extend the competition to Year 2 students in the future.

Engaging the Community

At Williamstown Primary, we are proud of our commitment to school-wide events that unite students, staff, and the broader community. One such event was our **Easter Hat Parade**, which featured 70 hampers as prizes and attracted many families to our front basketball court. The event raised around \$5,000 for the school.

Our **Friends of Willy (FOW) Trivia Night** raised over \$12,000, with a lively turnout at the Williamstown Italian Social Club. This event has become a fixture of the school’s calendar, with the rock-star dress-up theme adding to the evening’s fun.

We also continued our biennial celebration of **Bastille Day**, which allowed our school community to explore French culture, language, and history. Thanks to Madam Cri Cri, our French teacher, the day was filled with exciting activities and delicious food, making it a memorable occasion for all involved.

Our biggest event for the year was our **Wonders of Williamstown Art show**, and what a wonder it was. Staged over two days with an adult only auction on Friday 20th Oct, which was followed by a community day on Sunday 22nd Oct, the event was a huge success both engagement wise and financially.

The event raised almost \$8,000 and saw approximately 1000 people attend the community day. What a way to celebrate our amazing Willy Kids’ art.

Student Engagement

Attitudes to School Survey

The **Attitudes to School Survey** for students in Years 4-6 revealed insights into their sense of connection, learning engagement, and emotional wellbeing. While there have been some challenges, we continue to use this data to guide our efforts toward improving student experience and outcomes.

Key Survey Insights:

- **Sense of Connectedness: 75%** (WPS) – **74%** (Similar Schools) – **77%** (State)
- **Stimulated Learning: 68%** (WPS) – **74%** (Similar Schools) – **77%** (State)
- **Managing Bullying: 77%** (WPS) – **72%** (Similar Schools) – **75%** (State)

“Once a Willy Kid, always a Willy Kid!”



complete the survey, traditionally we have had challenges in having a large percentage of families undertake it.

The survey is divided into 6 domains, with each domain having between 3-8 factors.

The domains are listed below, along with the 2024 percentage endorsement data, supported by similar school and state averages.

- **Connection & Progression:** WPS **86%** - Similar Schools **84%** - State **86%**
- **Parent community engagement:** WPS **78%** - Similar Schools **74%** - State **78%**
- **Safety:** WPS **82%** - Similar Schools **78%** - State **81%**
- **School ethos and environment:** WPS **77%** - Similar Schools **73%** - State **79%**
- **Student Cognitive engagement:** WPS **74%** - Similar Schools **74%** - State **79%**
- **Student development:** WPS **81%** - Similar Schools **76%** - State **80%**

The above data is relatively strong when compared to similar school's, but there is definitely aspirations for ongoing improvement. Most of the domains have seen an improvement of 4-8% over the last five years which is positive.

Facilities and Grounds

2024 saw significant improvements in our facilities, including the development of a new **inclusive quadrangle**, funded by the **Seaside Fair**. This space offers a welcoming environment for students and staff to meet and collaborate.

The addition of the **Wellbeing Hub**, a converted shipping container, provides students with access to a variety of wellbeing activities, further supporting our commitment to social-emotional learning.

In partnership with the Victorian School Board Authority, two major infrastructure projects have been approved. These include major repairs to windows, concrete mouldings and the roof of our two heritage buildings. In addition to the recent grant approval for the **junior toilet upgrade**. These projects, valued at a combined total of over \$1,000,000, are set to be completed in 2025 and will provide much-needed improvements to our facilities.

“Once a Willy Kid, always a Willy Kid!”



RESPECTFUL RESPONSIBLE RESILIENT LEARNERS

Acknowledgements

2024 sees two long serving staff members stepping away into retirement.

Andrea Duxson, the school's principal from 2009-2022 has had a huge impact on the school, its culture and its growth. Moving back to teach in a prep classroom, Andrea's passion for teaching has been evident in her time at Williamstown Primary School.

We congratulate her not just on her time at Williamstown Primary but her time in Education. We wish her all the best in her next chapter.

Robin Nankivell arrived at Willy Primary in 1997 and has been here ever since. 27 years is along time to be at the one place, but Robin's broad range of roles in her time has made the time memorable.

We also congratulate Robin on a distinguished career and all the best in retirement.

To both retiring staff members we remind them, *Once a Willy Kid, always a Willy Kid.*

Parent Volunteers

Nothing happens in schools without the support of parent volunteers, and Willy Primary continues to have the best of the best. I would like to acknowledge the tremendous work our parent volunteers undertook in 2024. Your tireless work has not gone unnoticed, and it is highly appreciated.

In Conclusion

Williamstown Primary continues to thrive as a dynamic, evolving school that is always looking forward to the next opportunity for growth and improvement. As we look ahead to 2025, our theme will be **ENGAGE**, with a renewed focus on maximizing every moment of teaching and learning. With the motto "**Every minute matters,**" we are excited about the positive impact this focus will have on our **Willy Kids**.

We look forward to another successful year of growth, collaboration, and achievement.

"Once a Willy Kid, always a Willy Kid!"



RESPECTFUL RESPONSIBLE RESILIENT LEARNERS