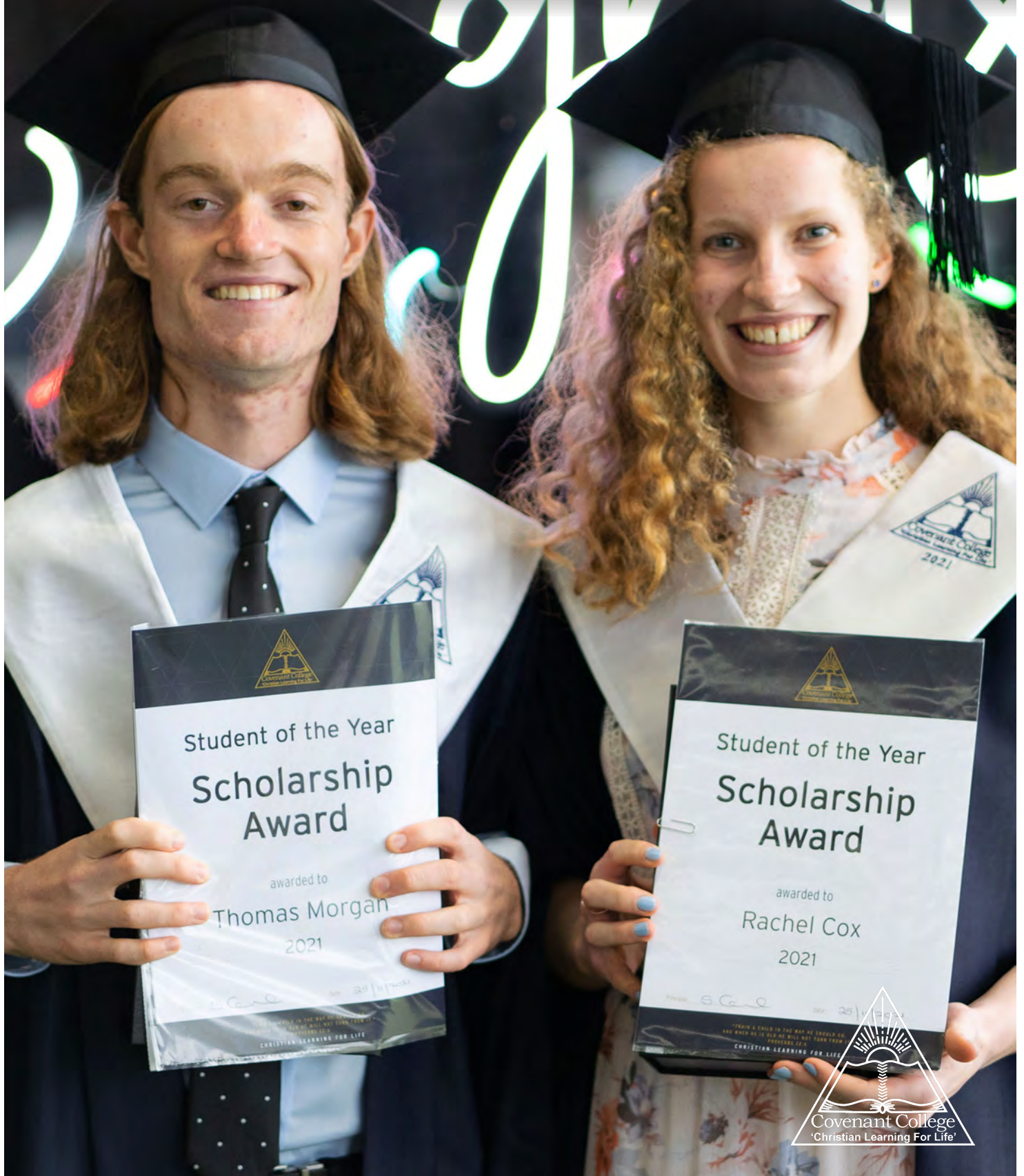


Covenant College

CHRISTIAN LEARNING FOR LIFE

Annual Report 2021



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Covenant College strives to be
a vibrant Christ-Centred community where
parents and staff serve in partnership to
nurture in each child a passion for learning
and an uncompromising desire to
live according to God's Word.



Message from the College Principal

We started 2021 with the announcement that David Saunders had passed away during the Christmas holidays after a long battle with brain cancer. David had made an incredible impact on his fellow students and staff – his ultimate trust in his Saviour Jesus and his bravery facing many hurdles along the way. We were blessed to have David as one of our students and knew that his friends and the staff would miss him greatly. In Term 2 of 2021 the school purchased a unique artwork designed and painted by local artist and long-time friend of David's, Laine Hogarty. Named 'Pixo&Pixa', the UooUoo (pronounced "you-you") is dedicated to the memory of David and was one of 100 UooUoo sculptures brought to life by emerging and established Australian artists and displayed around Geelong and Melbourne. Pixo&Pixa will be installed into the garden bordering our Administration building, once infrastructure works are completed in this area, where it will honour the legacy of David's life and his time with us here at Covenant.



Covenant College is governed by the Geelong Christian Education Association which consists of both parent and non-parent members who are actively involved in a variety of Christian churches. During 2021, the Board met in person when they were able and via Zoom when we needed to isolate. The Board continues to work to make Covenant College an authentic, Biblically based Christ-centred school. In 2021, the Covenant Board consisted of Gary Plumridge (Board Chairman), James Kingsland (Board Vice-Chairman), Reyson Royo (Treasurer), Andrew Thierry, Glen Munday, Sally Baird, Leanne Johnson, Jarrod Cairncross and José Rodriguez-Lopez.

Staff training continued to focus on developing online skills, teaching classes in front of cameras, learning new systems and online professional development programs. Once again, all new staff participated in a professional development evening at school where they were privileged to have two fathers of past and present students lead them through the evening – Dr Murray Capill and Dr Phillip Scheepers. During the evening the staff were introduced to the importance of Christian Education and how it permeates all that we do at Covenant. All staff participated in the State Christian Education Conference via Zoom: the whole staff met in the Multi-Purpose Centre (MPC) and joined with 1000 staff from across other Victorian Christian Education Network schools to hear from Graeme Lowe, Murray Capill, Natasha Moore and Kara Martin, whose words challenged and encouraged us. On the second day, staff were able to choose from 36 different topics, with some of our own staff presenting workshops: Jorline Cox, Belinda Webb, Daniel McDowell, Luke Ivory, Pieter Stok, Roz Haines and Steve Brown. There were also network meetings where Roz Haines, Steve Brown, Bruce Horman and Emily McDowell were hosts.

Our staff devotion time continued to focus on strengthening our Biblical understanding and its impact upon our teaching. Maintaining a Christian worldview is essential for our staff – devotions continued in the form of 'Zoom Devotions', as there was insufficient space for us to socially distance in the staff room. Our curriculum continues to be written through the Christian Education National (CEN) Biblical lens of "Transformation by Design" curriculum development documentation.

Religious freedom and exemptions were still on the political agenda in 2021, although the discussion was pushed back while Federal and State Governments were engaged in managing the pandemic. It was only brought forward later in the year when, with all the changes, the Federal Government decided to withdraw their Bill. However, the Victorian Government's "Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020" was passed, a highly complex Bill that will need wisdom and understanding as we work through it in a school setting. We will continue to lend our voice and that of our parents to maintaining our ability to hold onto our freedom of speech, the freedom to teach from our Biblical Basis statement, and our ability to shape the educational practices of the school based on these core beliefs.

Like the previous year, COVID-19 had a significant impact on 2021. We started the year with mask mandates and gathering limits for all students and staff, still hopeful that we would not be shut down again and that this year could be a 'normal' school year. Parents were able to attend our first Parent/Teacher interviews in February with over 600 interviews held across the day. The Year 4 Camp at Mill Valley Ranch went ahead but the Swimming Carnival was cancelled for 2021 due to a short lockdown. We learnt to be flexible and nimble as we moved from lockdowns to restrictions and then to lessening restrictions, working hard to figure out what we were and were not able to do. Lockdowns could occur suddenly and with little warning, sometimes in the middle of camps – the Year 8s had their three-day camp turn into a two-day camp and were called home early. By August we were back to another lockdown, this time called on a Saturday – the Monday was hectic as we worked hard to package up 800 books and study packs for students from 3-year-old kindergarten to Year 12. Lockers had to be emptied, work had to be generated, and everything wrapped up for each student. Next, the packages were sorted into family groups and delivered to households - this was our seventh lockdown since 2020. Mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations were introduced for all education workers; the first dose to be administered by 25/10/21, and a second dose by 29/11/21 or a medical exemption was required from a medical practitioner. This caused significant disruption to our work at Covenant, with a number of staff not able to sign the consent for vaccinations. Our CRT staff did a wonderful job in this space, stepping up and taking extra classes. Throughout this time Covenant followed the government guidelines, including vaccination directions for staff, contractors and volunteers. We formulated a COVIDSafe plan and are still implementing COVIDSafe practices in terms of ventilation, physical distancing, face masks, hygiene and testing. Despite taking every precaution, we had to send classes home when there was a COVID-19 infection and were closed down for several days, trying to eliminate cross infection.

Despite these challenges, many activities were still able to go ahead:

- Victorian High School Ultimate Frisbee Championships
- 2021 Premiers' Reading Challenge
- Passover Presentation
- Book Week
- Maths Celebration Day
- Cross Country Carnival
- CSEN Primary and Secondary Swimming Championships
- SSV Corio District Primary Cross Country Championships
- Virtual Reality Painting Excursion
- Mother's Day Stall
- Athletics Carnival
- Year 5/6 Gilwell Park Camp
- Year 8 excursion to Kryal Castle
- Port of Geelong excursion
- Visit to the Immigration Museum
- CC Netball Academy introduced an Autumn season into their program
- Combined School Band Day
- Year 7 excursion to Anglesea
- Year 6 excursion to Moggs Creek
- Year 10 end-of-year fun at 'The Summit' and outdoor adventure park
- FUN DAY – involved students swapping classes (big kids taking little kid classes and vice versa), learning card tricks, building with Lego, rock painting, chess, jigsaws and board games, treasure hunt, jeopardy, spaghetti constructions and learning to dance as a whole school
- Beyond Blue (BB) fundraiser, supporting our mums who walked in a BB event
- Year 8 Pax Hill Camp
- Foundation students celebrated 100 days of school



As we became more accustomed to living with lockdowns and restrictions, we found creative ways to respond to the challenges this posed to regular school life. The Father's Day stall was turned into an online experience, where orders were placed via the Qkr! app and gifts personally delivered to families. The Year 12s were encouraged and blessed towards the end of their studies by the delivery of special care packages, lovingly prepared by Marieta and her team of wonderful helpers. The Year 9 students were able to complete some of their usual experiences, but not all. Our Year 12 graduation was once again held outside, this time in the 'Cage' with parents able to come onsite for the occasion – food boxes were available and our Year 12s were able to enjoy the experience of graduating with their family and friends in attendance.

Our Investiture Service was limited to the Student Leadership Team, our 2020 Dux and their parents.

We welcomed our new Student Leadership Team for 2021:

School Captains:

Tom Morgan and Ella Kuipers

Senior School Vice Captains:

Ben Gibbs and Anastasia Magana Cruz

Middle School Captains:

Esther Harrisson and Matilda Varcoe

Junior School Captains:

Edward Stark, Ebony Gillett, Pryah Albon and Samuel Baard

Senior School Student Leaders

Kacie Higgins, Mary-Praise Opadokun, Archer Belousoff, Jireh Vicary, Hannah Williams and Carmien Pretorius

Middle School Class Captains:

Elizmarie Pretorius (8N), Lily Rama (8D), Tayla Mason (8H), William Fletcher (7G), Jude Weymouth (7P), Ben Schaddee (7M), Noah McDowell (6R), April Brown (6A), Solomon Kent (5W), Stefan Adamovic (5K)

Senior School House Captains:

Tim King (LL), Anastasia Magana Cruz (WW), Stella Ward (TBT), Rebecca Pritchard (MM)

Middle School House Captains:

Breanna Langlely and Kirra Kemp (LL), Jaidon Kucharski and Oscar McEwen (WW), Jordan Greeff and Luca Gall (TBT), Eli Edwards and Jordy Edwards (MM)



We welcomed many new casual and full-time staff during the year:

Ignatius Tse – Middle School
 Kim McMinn – Middle School
 Felicity Bongers – Junior School
 Penny Ivory – Art/Music Junior School
 Tracey Mayes – Junior School
 Ebony Combridge – Learning Support
 Paul Dunn – Buses/Grounds/Maintenance
 Sarah Hutton – Kindergarten
 Mel Virgona - TSC
 Rebecca Bennett – Pastoral Care
 Sarah Morgan – Library
 David Murphy – Grounds and Maintenance
 Mandi Hutton – Administration
 Megan Muller – Education Support
 Nicole Rolley – Education Support
 Tina Tiarua – Education Support

We said farewell to some of our excellent staff:

Kellyanne Cazeau – moving to Queensland
 Robyn Thierry – spending more time in Church ministry
 Merv Johannes – retiring
 Amber Cox – maternity leave
 Kelly McKenzie – moving to Warnambool
 Tilly Jansen – moving closer to family
 Glenn Bradley – moving to Tasmania
 Steve Brown – moving to Queensland
 Andrew Winstanley – moving to Queensland
 Jeni De Wet – moving to NSW
 Beverley Davidson – home schooling
 David Aviles-Lopez – Heathdale IT Department
 Cheryl Lansdown – new job
 Alison Macaulay – semi-retiring
 Margaret Toole – retiring
 Janine Morrison – retiring
 Kelly-Anne Romeyn – home schooling
 Alicia Soares-Machado – moving to Queensland
 Lisa Hutcheon – new job
 William Duwe – retiring
 Caroline Pearce – new job
 Trudie Kirk – maternity leave



Our latest buildings were finished and ready for occupation at the start of Term 1. We re-purposed the old maintenance shed into a Design Tech workshop and office, added two new classrooms to the Middle School area, and repurposed the old Design Tech classrooms into two VCAL classrooms. The main VCAL classroom now features café windows, a kitchen area and double doors opening onto the grassed area between the Music rooms and the VCAL rooms. By the end of the year the VCAL students and our maintenance staff had constructed and fired up a large pizza oven to compliment the VCAL Café offerings. We were also able to add two office spaces, one for the Head of Senior School and the other for pastoral care. The last addition was a Media room for students doing film studies.

In September we received word that we had been successful in obtaining a Victorian Government Grant to complete the Middle School - classrooms, offices, toilet facilities, and construction of the TEP (Tailored Education Program) building for students with ASD/anxiety who want to learn but find the general classroom setting challenging. We hope to begin building in early 2022 for completion that year. At the same time, our infrastructure has become insufficient for our growing needs, especially as we continue to build on the school site. This infrastructure includes power, water, data, the fire ring mains and sewerage. The work on upgrading began this year and will be completed during 2022. In addition to infrastructure works, some smaller building works also took place. The wall between our two staffroom spaces came down, giving a much larger area for staff to meet together. We also added two new exit doors to our MPC, allowing for a greater number of people to gather at one time.

Our support for other schools continues with many of our staff and Junior School students supporting Joshua Primary School, part of Bushikori in Uganda. We continue to have a wonderful relationship with Covenant Christian Academy (CCA) in Rizal, Philippines. Unfortunately, once again we were unable to visit CCA this year due to the pandemic, however we were able to continue to support the school through the sponsorship of students and staff. CCA found 2021 very difficult due to COVID-19 restrictions in the Philippines and the transition to remote learning but they continued to reach out to their community offering Bible-based education, love and care.

Our Trades Skills Centre (TSC) continued to grow in numbers with 60 students across three areas - Certificate II in Horticulture, Agriculture and Animal Studies. Practical skills are a focus of the TSC and include grooming animals; caring for chickens, sheep and alpacas; driving the tractor; occupational health and safety; and soil and garden establishment. The TSC also features many excursions to a wide variety of organisations such as farms, animal shelters, vet clinics, GAWS, an ostrich farm, commercial horticulture facilities and many more. These events were hampered due to lockdowns; however, our students did well and completed the tasks set to obtain their Certificate II.



We congratulated our 51 final year VCE and VCAL students who completed their studies in 2021. The majority of our graduates chose to apply for further education, seeking places at university, TAFE and other industry specific institutions. A broad range of disciplines were chosen by students, representative of the diversity in their passions, skills and God-given abilities. In addition to those pursuing further education, a number of our graduates chose to commence apprenticeships or enter the workforce and have found employment in various occupations. Our Dux of 2021 was Rachel Cox, with an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank of 97.55.

This report is just a snap shot of the year that was - 2021 was unlike anything we have encountered and has stretched us all in so many ways. Our hope is that it has made us value our relationship with each other and with Jesus Christ. When Jesus was asked which commandment is the most important, He replied "...*'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'.* And the second is this: *'Love your neighbour as yourself.'* There is no commandment greater than these." Jesus pointed to the most important way we can live to honour Him. (Mark 12:29-31)

I would again this year like to thank our dedicated staff of 2021 - Administration, Bus Drivers, Grounds and Maintenance workers, Cleaners, Teachers, Community Development, Catering, Education Support, Leadership, Board Members and our Volunteers - for their work and their passion for Christian Education, which is seen in whichever area they work. I thank our families for their support of the staff and the students who make it a joy and a blessing as we journey together even through tough weeks of lockdown and remote learning.

Ultimately, all thanks goes to God for His hand on Covenant College, His blessing on our staff and families, for the provision of His love and protection, and for empowering and challenging us to live according to His will.



Rachel Cox – 2021 Dux



"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

PROVERBS 22:6

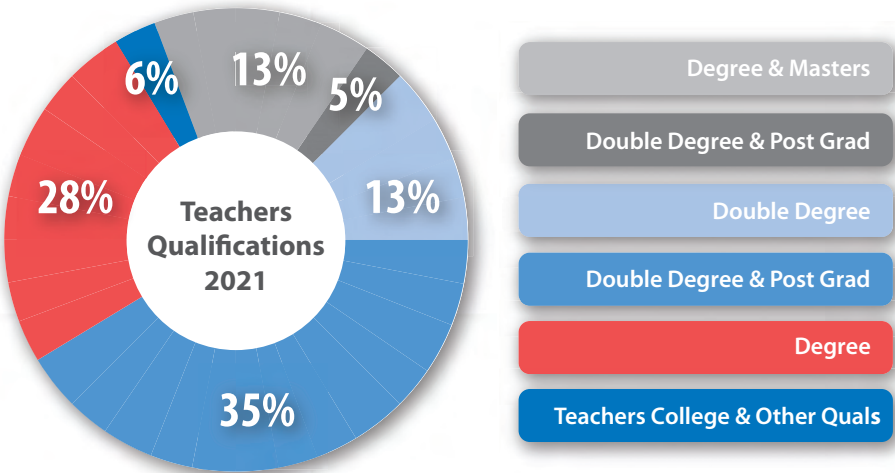


Professional Engagement

Staff Retention

After only a few staff departures at the end of 2020, a total of three new teachers commenced at Covenant College in 2021, bringing the total number of full-time and part-time teaching staff to 83¹. Due to the unique challenges posed by consecutive years of COVID-19 and remote learning, staff retention figures deviated significantly from previous years. Departures were related to interstate relocation, retirement, career changes and work-family balance. Of the 83 teaching staff employed in 2021, a total of 15 staff moved on at the end of the year, translating to a staff retention rate of 82% for 2021. We would like to take this opportunity to again thank all our staff for their commitment to Christian Education, their students and Covenant College.

Staff Qualifications



¹ This figure represents permanent full-time and part-time teaching staff, both those currently teaching and those on personal and long service leave.



Professional Development and Staff Appraisals

Despite restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff continued to participate in a wide variety of professional development programs throughout the year. To accommodate lockdowns and restrictions, many courses were once again held online rather than in person. Covenant staff attended approximately 73 days of professional development programs throughout 2021, equating to an expenditure of approximately \$75,072 throughout the year or \$904.48 per teaching staff member (note: this excludes the cost of casual relief teachers to cover classes).

In addition to professional development, staff at Covenant College are required to complete regular training and refresher courses in the following areas:

- First Aid and CPR
- Anaphylaxis and Allergy Management
- Asthma Management
- Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting

New staff are required to complete an induction and training program that covers such topics as occupational health and safety, privacy, student duty of care, administrative functions and school policies. Throughout the year, all staff undergo annual appraisals. These are conducted both formally and informally with a view to encouraging staff in their work and the development of ongoing goals.



Student Outcomes

Student Attendance 89.9% Student Retention 77%

Student Attendance

Despite extended periods of remote learning and lockdowns, students from Foundation to Year 11 were in attendance² approximately **89.9%** of the time in 2021. Below is the breakdown of student attendance by year level.

Average Student Attendance by Year Level

Year	%
Foundation	90.6
Year 1	90.6
Year 2	91.5
Year 3	92.1
Year 4	91.0
Year 5	88.6
Year 6	89.9
Year 7	88.1
Year 8	89.0
Year 9	91.4
Year 10	86.8
Year 11	89.6
Average Across All Year Levels	89.9

²This includes attendance online during off-site remote learning. Student absenteeism is defined as 'students not attending school at all or students who arrive late or depart early'.

Student attendance is recorded in line with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) minimum standards. In the event that a child will be or has been marked absent from school, an explanation is required from the parent/guardian along with information regarding the nature and duration of the absence. This is preferably done prior to commencement of the school day via one of the following methods:

- Parent Portal app
- RollCall app (for bus travellers)
- SMS or phone call
- Email to Student Reception
- note in the school diary

Management of Student Non-Attendance

If a student is marked with an unexplained absence at morning homeroom, an SMS is sent to the parent/guardian informing them of the absence and requesting them to contact the school. In the event of long term, unexplained absences, the Head of School will follow up directly with the family.

Student Retention Rate

The student retention rate is calculated on the number of Year 9 students who continue on to graduate from the school in Year 12. Of the 60 students who formed the Year 9 cohort in 2018, 46 of these went on to graduate from Covenant College in 2021³. This represents a retention rate of **77%**.

³This figure includes one retained student who graduated in 2021 after completing their VCE over three years

National Benchmarks

Each year, students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 participate in the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), administered by the Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority (VCAA). These tests provide an indication of how well students are developing in the areas of Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation and Numeracy, relative to the national minimum standards. While the results give a broad picture of overall aptitude, the data is impacted by factors such as class size, changes in class cohorts from year to year, and any students exempt from testing (as these students are required to be included in the data as not meeting the benchmarks).

In 2020, the decision was made by Education Ministers to cancel NAPLAN testing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the table below reflects the school's NAPLAN results from the years 2018, 2019 and 2021.

NAPLAN Results

Percentage (%) of students achieving at or above minimum standards:

	2018	2019	2021
Year 3			
Reading	95	98	95
Writing	100	100	100
Spelling	95	93	100
Grammar & Punctuation	97	98	100
Numeracy	100	97	100
Year 5			
Reading	98	100	98
Writing	95	97	100
Spelling	100	95	94
Grammar & Punctuation	93	95	94
Numeracy	100	100	100
Year 7			
Reading	97	100	100
Writing	95	99	98
Spelling	96	98	97
Grammar & Punctuation	99	94	91
Numeracy	95	98	98
Year 9			
Reading	97	97	100
Writing	85	91	95
Spelling	93	96	95
Grammar & Punctuation	93	91	95
Numeracy	100	100	100

Senior Secondary Outcomes

VCE Achievements

- 51 students completed their VCE and VCAL in 2021
- Our Dux of 2021 achieved an ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking) score of **97.55**
- Our median ATAR score for all students was **68.95**
- 8.82% of students achieved an ATAR score above 90
- 32.35% of students achieved an ATAR score above 80
- Four Year 12 students achieved a total of 12 study scores of 40 or higher
- Two additional Year 11 students each received a study score above 40 for VCE subjects completed in 2021
- **93.75%** of students applying for higher education received an offer from a tertiary institution, with **25%** of students receiving more than one offer
- 34 students applied to a Victorian Tertiary or Vocational Institution
- 28 students accepted offers; of these 4 chose to defer their studies

Where did our 2021 Year 12 students go?

Tertiary Institutions	#	%
Deakin University	15	55.56
RMIT University	3	10.71
Federation University	2	7.41
TAFE	2	7.41
Australian Catholic University	1	3.70
CollArts (Australian College of the Arts)	1	3.70
JMC Academy	1	3.70
Monash University	1	3.70
Oxygen College	1	3.70
Swinburne University of Technology	1	3.70
Total	28	100%

Career Pathways	#	%
University	26	50.98
TAFE/Vocational Study	2	3.92
Employment	9	17.65
Other/Unknown	14	27.45
Total	51	100%

Some of the career pathways that our Year 12 students are pursuing include:

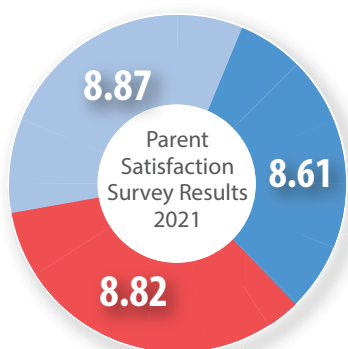
- Arts (Psychology)
- Aviation (Pilot)
- Big Data and Analytics
- Biomedical Science
- Certificate IV in Vet Nursing
- Commerce
- Digital Media
- Electrical Apprenticeship
- Engineering
- Exercise and Sport Science/Nutrition Science
- Film and Television Production
- Health Sciences
- Interior Design
- Landscaping & Construction Apprenticeship
- Law/International Studies
- Laws(Honours)/Global Studies
- Nursing
- Osteopathy/Health Science
- Plastering Apprenticeship
- Psychological Sciences/Criminal Justice and Criminology
- Psychology (Honours)
- Science
- Social Work
- Zoology and Animal Science

Satisfaction Survey Results

Staff, parents and students are invited to provide regular feedback regarding the school by participating in yearly satisfaction surveys. This is done through participation in the Independent Schools of Victoria (ISV) LEAD School Effectiveness Surveys every second year, and via in-house surveys on alternating years. Information obtained from the surveys gives valuable insight into overall perceptions of the school, providing opportunities to celebrate strengths and work on areas for improvement.

The below results are taken from the 2021 ISV LEAD School Effectiveness Surveys and reflect the opinions of parents, staff and exiting Year 12 students.

Parent Satisfaction (average score out of 10)



Score out of 10

Teachers in this school know and care about my child

The school provides an excellent environment in which to learn

Overall I am satisfied with my decision to send my child to this school

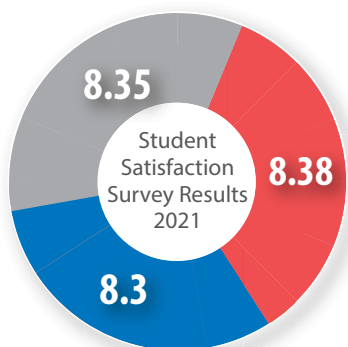


Score out of 10

Students have positive relationships with staff

I am happy to recommend the school to people

Staff in this school are dedicated to improving student learning outcomes



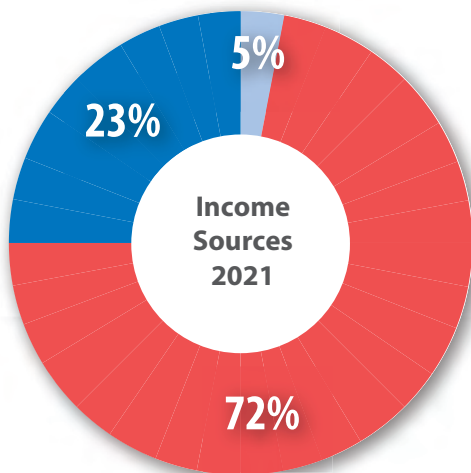
Score out of 10

I find this school a safe place in which to learn

I have been encouraged to develop an appropriate set of life values

Overall I am satisfied with my decision to send my child to this school

Income Sources and Expenditures Breakdown



Recurrent Government Funding

\$10,605,284

Other Income

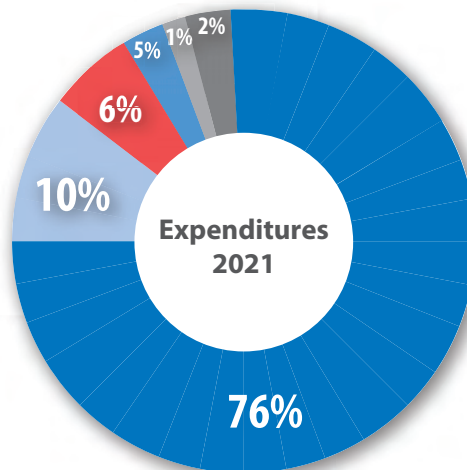
\$709,693

Private Income

\$3,436,055

	Recurrent Government Funding	Private Income	Government Capital Grant Income	Other Income
2016	\$6,548,756	\$2,249,501	\$3,354	\$211,325
2017	\$7,355,431	\$2,866,011		\$489,925
2018	\$8,166,717	\$3,095,832		\$559,251
2019	\$9,075,329	\$3,388,530		\$673,840
2020	\$9,624,861	\$3,115,189	\$450,000	\$40,655
2021	\$10,605,284	\$3,436,055		\$709,693

Expenditures



Staffing Costs

Property Costs

Capital Expenditure

Financing Costs

Operations Related Costs

Other Costs

	Staffing Costs	Capital Expenditure	Operations Related Costs	Property Costs	Financing Costs	Other Costs
2016	\$6,806,425	\$300,904	\$1,090,515	\$355,237		\$203,557
2017	\$7,664,964	\$93,556	\$715,703	\$426,866	\$155,259	\$294,389
2018	\$8,747,600	\$723,234	\$1,139,390	\$566,416	\$154,194	\$341,356
2019	\$9,796,999	\$1,003,492	\$1,513,478	\$695,794	\$170,177	\$378,183
2020	\$10,592,108	\$2,347,815	\$1,248,751	\$807,589	\$117,707	\$311,622
2021	\$11,714,621	\$1,618,321	\$902,741	\$798,048	\$148,329	\$281,618

Our past students – where are they now?

David van Wynen (Marell)

1979-1988 Geelong Christian School (Covenant College)

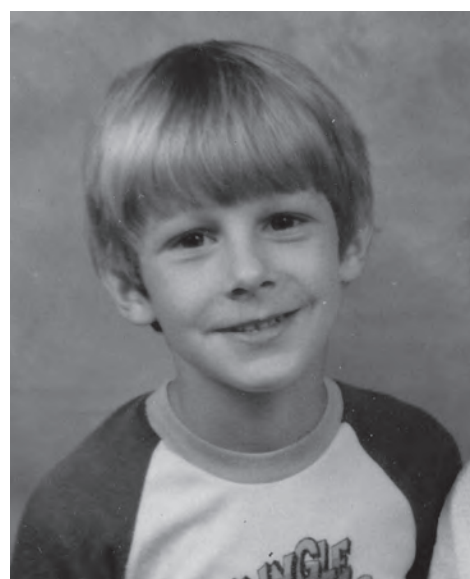
By Laura-Beth Filipovski



When David discovered that an epileptic fit could get him out of Bible class he took some pointers off his best mate, who actually had epilepsy, and threw himself on the floor - it was a touching performance.

On his better behaved days David just enjoyed railroading the class conversations. Eventually it just wasn't wise to let him answer questions or provide commentary - David's mates would throw him a bone here and there by raising their hands and stating "David has a question for you."

Bible class wasn't the only class to get a rough housing. Poor Mr. Bibby, the Art teacher, known to never lose his temper (unless his paints were poured down the sink as 'abstract art'), was forced to march David and his nemesis off to the Principal's office for the strap. David defends himself by saying the punch up in class was his first and only fight at school... and "the other guy started it!" he chuckles. It was an intense wait outside the Principal's office. The two adversaries realised they were being faced with a greater enemy. A truce was struck and the scheming began: how to get out of a strap? It was decided that shoving one's books down one's pants would be the best course of action. It was a valiant attempt, though they were bested in the end and quite sore. David remarks that he made a great mate that day who stuck by him throughout his school years.



Though it sounds like he was terrible at school, David says he was "not the worst" and that, to him, was a great achievement. He even enjoyed some classes – particularly French with Mrs. Weaver. He still speaks French to this day when he can, though his daughter, a language student herself, isn't convinced it's French at all! As for the rest of his teachers, David credits them with showing "snippets of Jesus" throughout his school life and it was always obvious to him that "it wasn't just their job – it was a part of their heart and soul".

Behind David's school antics, a lot of stuff was going on. His antagonism toward Bible class in particular grew as he delved deeper into, and eventually left school for, a cult. Although seeds of faith, love and peace had been planted within David, they grew



dormant, hidden from the source of light and life itself. Pushing Jesus aside, David's life become enveloped in darkness. Despite this, God's love and grace cannot be so easily dismissed and after a few years, feeling at the end of himself, David cried out "God help me". After that, it only took one week before David left the cult. A few years further on (and after lots of nagging from his sister) David reluctantly ventured inside the walls of a church. Bart Kroon lead a sermon that spoke to all the things in David's heart and head, and from that moment on he began crawling out of the dark, stumbling toward the light. As the seeds of his childhood faith began to take root, David enrolled in Bible college, eager to get scripture within himself. But the journey was long. While at Bible college, David's first marriage fell apart and he found himself a single dad. At this point he learnt what it meant for "Jesus to be his strength". Life continued, studies continued.



As David grew and healed, God brought a new chapter into his life. One day a beautiful person (a single mother) came to his church and things went rather well for them both – though David wonders how it did, their first date being a very 'romantic' Bible college dinner. 19 years of marriage later, and with eight children combined, David says life is "like the Brady bunch - just bigger (and with no maid Alice)". The blessings continue, as David enters a new chapter in his life. He is now a very proud 'Opa', (Opa being Dutch for grandfather) to his brand new granddaughter.

Now a Pastor himself, David reflects on the advice he would give his younger self: "Pay attention to your teachers! It's life changing" he says and, to quote Alastair McEwen from his first ever lecture at Bible college, "God is the hero of every story!" And that is a powerful truth - that God will always be there, and that even his difficult experiences could be used for the glory of God, has been very powerful to David.



Students Connecting Globally

Covenant Christian Academy

Covenant Christian Academy (CCA) is Covenant College's sister school in the Philippines and is equally dedicated to Christian Education. Through financial and prayerful partnership, Covenant College encourages the brilliant work CCA are doing within their local community.

Some areas where Covenant College support CCA include:

- Teacher wage substitution
- Child sponsorship
- Special project support
- Gifts in time of need such as during the Coronavirus pandemic

In previous years Covenant College senior students have visited CCA in the Philippines and have been mentored by the community there, learning many things about other cultures, countries, economies and people. Due to safety and travel restrictions, these trips have not taken place in the past few years.

CCA, like Covenant College, has experienced two years of online learning, working from home and managing social distancing. Through all these new experiences, they transitioned well and continued to support their students and families.

Letter to the Covenant Community from CCA, as written by the principal during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Greetings in the name of Jesus our Lord. The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic has created a truly unparalleled circumstance, which affects us all. Like other schools, we are doing our best to secure the health and well-being of our staff and their families, students and parents. Our teachers are encouraged to minimize their travel and do teaching from home. This shift has been relatively smooth, and we are able to deliver quality education even though it is our first time doing it. Moments like this remind us that we are called to remain on our thrust. We are called upon to be our best selves, despite the many difficulties we all face. Quality Christian education should be allowed to thrive and not be defeated by COVID-19. Thank you for being with us in the midst of not-so-well circumstances.

Stay safe and healthy.

God bless us all. In Christ,
Ellen P. Visey
Principal

Prayer requests as written by CCA:

Prayer is how we actively practice believing, so simply, so confidently, that God has the whole world in his hands. It is where we "let petitions and praises shape our worries into prayers, letting God know our concerns" (Phil.4:6-7). Prayer is never the last resort of God's people. It is our first point of action.

Prayer requests:

- Keep CCA families safe and healthy
- That God provides financially to our parents, especially if they fall ill and are unable to work
- That we will be able to submit on time the 2nd part of our Learning Continuity Plan to the Department of Education
- Give us wisdom and knowledge to know how to reach every student. Give us an ability to rejoice in successes, both large and small, and to find words of wisdom and encouragement when there are failures
- Give us boldness to share the gospel to our parents and students even in this difficult time





In memory of David Saunders