

2023

ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

SERVICE | LEADERSHIP | JUSTICE

Together in Christ



St Columba's Primary School

Lockyer Street, ADAMSTOWN 2289

Principal: Jenny Howard

Web: <http://www.adamstownsc.catholic.edu.au>

About this report

St Columba's Primary School (the 'School') is registered by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and managed by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO), Maitland-Newcastle. The Annual School Report (the 'Report'), provides parents and the wider community with fair, accurate and objective information about various aspects of school performance and development. Additionally, the Report complements and is supplementary to other forms of regular communication to the School community regarding initiatives, activities and programs which support the learning and wellbeing of its students.

Detailed information about the School's improvement journey is documented in the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) which is developed, implemented and evaluated in consultation with key stakeholders. Further information about the contents of this Report may be obtained by contacting the School directly or by visiting the School's website. Information can be also be obtained from the My School website.

Message from key groups in our community

Principal's Message

Our students have enjoyed success in their achievements across the academic, cultural and sporting areas. They flourish in an environment that provides expansive learning activities and the opportunity to perform and grow. We enjoyed the opportunities that opened up through 2023. The school has a rich spiritual life that celebrates our Catholic traditions, is centred on the teachings of Jesus and the charism of our founders, the Mercy Sisters. We are guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ, especially focused on through daily prayer, meditation, staff and student opportunities to recognise and develop their spirituality, liturgical celebrations and by embedding the Mercy values in all that we do. Our school community has benefited from the strong support of parents and the wider community. Families and the staff worked and communicated effectively and positively throughout the year and we were able to successfully implement student lead conferences as a part of our processes. The staff is continuing with ongoing PD in line with the CSO's Leading Learning Collaborative. It has been an exciting initiative in building capacity for both learners and teachers.

Parent Body Message

The parent body is actively involved and consulted on events and happenings in the school and continues to be very engaged in activities at St Columba's. In 2023, the St Columba's parent body voted to transition from the long-standing P&F Association model, to the new Parent Engagement Group (PEG) Model. It was felt that this new model offers benefits for our school and importantly is a better fit for our parents and carers to continue to be actively involved in their child/children's education going forward. Meetings are held each term and provide a forum for parents and carers to provide input and requests for an educational component they would like to see presented.

Occasions, such as Catholic Schools Week, Mother's and Father's Days, Sporting Carnivals, Musicals and School Assemblies, are always well supported, thanks to the openness and encouragement provided by the school, as well as the desire of the parents and caregivers to be involved in school activities.

Parents have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in student led conferences, hearing about learning from the children with the teacher being present.

Student Body Message

All students in Year 6 have the chance to be school leaders and get to demonstrate this with running assemblies, looking after buddies and with jobs across the schools.

The classrooms are good learning environments. They have learning walls and bump- it- up walls so you can improve your learning.

They have lots of sporting opportunities like swimming carnivals, athletics, soccer and netball gala days and the cross-country.

The new playground is so much better because more people can use the basketball than before.

School Features

History of the school

Established in the 1890's by the Sisters of Mercy, St. Columba's Primary School continues to serve the needs of the Catholic community of Adamstown. The school proudly maintains its close connection with the Mercy order and its charism. Since the retirement of Sr. Mary Regina Donoghue in December 1986, the school has been staffed by lay teachers apart from the recent addition of Sister Paula Volchek as a pastoral care worker. We have 8 straight classes. Three demountable classrooms with additional outdoor learning space have been added to accommodate our students. Enrolment stands at 196 students with two streams in one grade and strong enrolment in all other classes. Additional teaching staff include a Learning Support teacher who provides expertise in additional needs, supporting students and teachers across all grades, as well as four Learning Support assistants who provide in-class support for teachers, enabling greater access to differentiated learning. A Gifted Education Mentor (GEM) provides professional and learning support to gifted learners and their teachers, across the school. An Aboriginal Education Teacher and an English as an Additional Language or Dialect teacher, raises awareness and supports the school community in celebrating our Indigenous and multicultural heritage whilst assisting the academic growth and cultural development of our Indigenous students. We look forward to an ongoing range of improvements to our outdoor learning and play spaces and all the benefits this will bring for our students.

Location/Drawing Area

St Columba's Primary School mainly draws students from the suburbs of Adamstown and Adamstown Heights, Kotara, Merewether, Broadmeadow and Hamilton. However, we also have students who live in other areas and where family circumstances require a placement in our school. Our school is a part of the All Saints Blackbutt South Parish which also comprises the communities of St Kevin's at Cardiff and St James' at Kotara South. All three schools have active church and school communities. St Columba's is part of the Central Region, one of the six geographic regions that make up the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Due to our central position, parents are able to select from St Pius X, Adamstown, or St Francis Xavier, Hamilton, for high school for their children.

Student Profile

Student Enrolment

The School caters for students in Years K – 6. Students attending this School come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. The following information describes the student profile for 2023: Additional information can be found on My School website.

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Total Students
105	102	11	207

* Language Background Other than English

Enrolment Policy

The [Enrolment Policy](#) applies to all school enrolments within the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. School authorities manage local enrolment processes and procedures in a manner consistent with the rationale and guiding principles articulated in this Enrolment Policy and accompanying [Enrolment Procedures](#). It aims to:

- Set direction for school procedures and practices for enrolling students into Catholic primary and secondary schools within the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
- Establish a common, consistent approach in enrolment practices.
- Assist the system of Catholic schools to:
 - provide schooling, where possible, for children of Catholic families who seek enrolment
 - cater for the individual needs of each child equitably within the constraints of the available teaching and material resources
 - encourage parents enrolling their children in Catholic schools to give support to parish and school life, especially in education in faith.

Student Attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for 2023 was 92.40%. Attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance rates by Year group						
Kindergarten	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
94.26	92.14	92.57	91.70	93.06	91.81	91.25

Managing Student Non-Attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. The School, in partnership with parents, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

School staff, under the Principal's leadership, support the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the School community
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.

The Principal is responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by ensuring that:

- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented
- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern
- the designated CSO officer is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom the School's strategies have failed to restore regular attendance.

Staffing Profile

Staffing Profile

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2023:

Total number of staff	28
Number of full time teaching staff	8
Number of part time teaching staff	13
Number of non-teaching staff	7

Total number of teaching staff by NESA category

Teachers at this School are either accredited as conditional, provisional or proficient as defined by the NSW Teacher Accreditation Act 2004. Accreditation at the levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher are voluntary. The number of teachers within the Diocesan Schools System (systemic schools) at these levels is as follows:

- Conditional 107 teachers
- Provisional 69 teachers
- Proficient 1887 teachers
- 4 Highly Accomplished teacher
- 1 Lead teacher

Additionally, there are approximately 10 teachers who are currently actively engaged in the submission process at the higher levels of accreditation. Teacher status at individual schools can be sourced directly from the School.

Professional Learning

The ongoing professional development of each staff member is highly valued. Professional learning can take many forms including whole school staff days, subject specific in services, meetings and conferences and a range of professional learning programs provided by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO). The School takes responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and tracking of its staff professional learning and individual staff members take responsibility for their ongoing professional development. All teachers have been involved in professional learning opportunities during the year related to improving student outcomes.

Summary of professional learning at this school

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Summary of professional learning at this school

Term 1

- CPR and Anaphylaxis
- Staff curriculum PD
- Online learning on Mathematics problem solving
- DEVELOPING EXPERT LEARNERS facilitated by Dr Michael McDowell
- LIFT Numeracy PL facilitated by Prof Peter Sullivan
- Weekly Staff Meetings, Stage/Faculty Meetings and PLTs/Collaborative Planning/PLCs

Term 2

- Staff Spirituality Day
- Weekly Staff Meetings, Stage/Faculty Meetings and PLTs/Collaborative Planning/PLCs

Term 3

- LLC Professional Learning Days
- DEVELOPING EXPERT LEARNERS facilitated by Dr Michael McDowell
- LIFT Numeracy PL facilitated by Prof Peter Sullivan
- Weekly Staff Meetings, Stage/Faculty Meetings and PLTs/Collaborative Planning/PLCs

Term 4

- LLC Expo for Executive Staff
- DEVELOPING EXPERT LEARNERS facilitated by Dr Michael McDowell
- LIFT Numeracy PL facilitated by Prof Peter Sullivan

- Staff Development Day on Mathematics
- Weekly Staff Meetings, Stage/Faculty Meetings and PLTs/Collaborative Planning/PLCs

Catholic Identity and Mission

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle participate, under the leadership of the Bishop and in partnership with parents and parishes, in the mission of the Church to provide quality education in the context of a living Catholic Christian tradition. Within this context, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle educate from and for vibrant, welcoming and diverse communities with a particular commitment to the poor; for justice, integrity and peace; and with hope for the future.:

At the heart of everything there is always Jesus Christ.

Catholic schools educate:

- From and for the community of faith
- From and for excellence in learning
- In a rigorous, creative and critical pursuit of truth

(Adapted from: The Catholic School's Office Diocesan Vision Statement, 2016)

St Columba's Primary School is part of the All-Saints Blackbutt South Parish. Our Mass Centre is St Columba's Church, located adjacent to the school. Open communication is enjoyed between the school staff and our Parish Priest, the Parish Team, St Vincent de Paul society and members of the Parish Office. The Sacramental Parish program is primarily run through the school and information is shared with other members of the parish through parish bulletins.

In 2023 school Liturgies were celebrated to mark the beginning and end of the school year. Other school liturgies were celebrated on special occasions including Ash Wednesday, ANZAC Day, Holy Week & Easter, Mother's and Father's Day Liturgies. Year 6 Graduation, the feasts of St Columba and Catherine McAuley.

Our school promotes the values and traditions of the Mercy Sisters who were its original founders. An education in the Mercy tradition invites us to take up a challenge – one that encourages us to develop fully our own God given talents. St Columba's educates and nurtures the faith and well-being of all through the Six Pillars of Mercy and how they influence them on a daily basis:

- service
- respect

- hospitality
- compassion
- justice
- courage

Our Mission and Vision statements reflect the Catholic Schools Mission Statement of “At the Heart of Everything, there is always Jesus Christ”. St Columba’s Vision statement is “Faith, Opportunity and Inspired Learning for every child.”

Curriculum, Learning and Teaching

The School provides an educational program based on and taught in accordance with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses for Primary Education. The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and its Environment, Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education.

The Curriculum is structured around the outcomes and content for each learning area and general capabilities for learning across the curriculum including literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, critical and creative thinking, ethical behaviour, personal and social competence and intercultural understanding.

St Columba's continued to be engaged in the Leading Learning Collaborative in 2023 that identifies 14 parameters that matter most in learning, teaching and leading. Parameters 1 and 14 of shared beliefs and understandings, responsibility, and accountability, underpinned our whole school approach to improve student achievement. The focus in 2022 was in Mathematics, utilising PD and ideas from Peter Sullivan as well as best practice in the teaching of Mathematics to improve student learning and outcomes. Case management meetings were conducted regularly to identify students at risk or students who required extension and enrichment and these were supported by ongoing use and analysis of data. Gifted students have been formally identified through diagnostic testing and differentiation of the curriculum has been identified as a priority for these students. A Gifted Education Mentor continues to work with teachers providing guidance and support to improving pedagogy in differentiating the curriculum to meet individual needs of identified gifted students. Our Learning Support Teacher ensures that the needs of students at risk in their learning are receiving funding and assistance in class as required through engagement with specialised literacy and numeracy programmes and providers. Grades 4-6 utilised features of Teams and OneNote to provide timely feedback to students, marking rubrics and criteria for assessments and a collaborative learning space. Our kindergarten and year 1 teacher implanted strategies from Successful Foundations to ensure meaningful play-based learning was occurring through intentional provocations.

Student Performance in Tests and Examinations

NAPLAN

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia participated in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The purpose of NAPLAN is to provide information to parents and teachers about the achievements of students in literacy and numeracy. The test provides a measure of the student's performance against established standards and against other students in Australia. Each year the results are analysed by the school to inform teaching with a view to improving student performance.

From 2023, NAPLAN results are reported against proficiency standards with 4 levels of achievement to give teachers, parents and carers clearer information on how students are performing:

- Exceeding: The student's result exceeds expectations at the time of testing.
- Strong: The student's result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing.
- Developing: The student's result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing.
- Needs additional support: The student's result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

The percentage of student achieving at Exceeding and Strong proficiency standards in NAPLAN at St Columba's Primary School for 2023 is reported in the table below.

NAPLAN RESULTS 2023		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 3	Grammar and Punctuation	77%	54%
	Reading	74%	67%
	Writing	97%	76%
	Spelling	68%	61%
	Numeracy	87%	65%

NAPLAN RESULTS 2023		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	78%	64%
	Reading	85%	74%
	Writing	73%	66%
	Spelling	80%	69%
	Numeracy	70%	68%

Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing

Pastoral Care Policy

The School's pastoral care and student wellbeing policies guidelines and procedures are informed by the [Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#).

The Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy 2022 aims to provide a framework for the policies, programs, resources and practices implemented at system and school level with the purpose of supporting and enhancing the wellbeing of students, and all within its school community. It refers to the overall climate of care that exists within a Catholic school.

The environment is designed to be safe and inclusive, one that promotes academic rigour. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents, and the wellbeing of all.

Behaviour Management and Student Discipline Policy

The School's policies and procedures for the management of student behaviour are aligned the CSO [Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#) and to the [Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Procedure](#). The dignity and responsibility of each person is promoted at all times along with positive student behaviours whilst ensuring respect for the rights of all students and staff. Corporal punishment is expressly prohibited in this School. The School does not sanction administration of corporal punishment by School persons and non-School persons, including parents, to enforce discipline in the School. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the School's website.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Catholic Schools Office has established an [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) which is implemented by our school and all schools in the diocese. It provides a framework for school communities to work together to prevent and address issues of student bullying, in order to build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each person. The CSO monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the Anti-Bullying Policy may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or at the CSO website.

Complaints Handling Policy

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has established a [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) which is implemented by our school and all systemic schools in the diocese. The rationale for the policy is that within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world. CSO monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or at the CSO website.

Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

In 2023 our Pastoral Care worker Sr Paula continued the Seasons for Growth program with both infants and primary. This program promotes the high level of respect we have for students social and emotional health and through the program, children learn some strategies about coping with change and things they are/are not responsible for. Positive feedback from this program was received.

The executive staff at St Columba's worked alongside executive staff at St Columban's Mayfield to plan a collaborative professional development day where learning walks and talks and case management meetings took place. For this day to be successful a shared understanding of respect and commitment to professional conversations had to occur. The day began with learning intentions, success criteria and agreed norms. The outcome of the day was a shared understanding of the fact as employees of Maitland Newcastle Catholic Diocese, we have a shared responsibility and commitment to the learning of all students, not just the ones in our classroom at our school. Coming together to share knowledge, expertise, ideas and experiences, resulted in teaching staff walking away with practical strategies to use with their students and a wider network of colleagues to liaise with.

Our students gained a greater understanding of respect and responsibility through the establishment of the "LCM" club – "Let's Create Mercy!" Previously, we had a "Mini Vinnies" group but due to being unable to meet in mixed grades in 2020 and 2021, it had slowly diminished. 2022 was the time to re-establish a social justice group for students and our REC Annual School Report to the Community 2022 Page 16 of 21 concluded the best way to reignite the passion for Catholic social justice initiatives was to promote some ownership of the group hence the name "LCM." The group researched some Mercy Works projects and used our fortnightly school assemblies to promote the Mercy Values of Courage, Justice, Respect, Compassion, Service and Hospitality.

Our staff spirituality day was focused on Pope Francis' Laudato Si – Care for the Common Home and strengthened our awareness of the Catholic church's commitment to the

environment as well as looking at Mercy Works Projects and how Indigenous people cared for the land. The day solidified the fact that we are part of a global community, and we all have a responsibility to promote respect of our common home.

School Improvement

The School implements the system's review cycle of improvement which outlines the processes and benchmarks for creating the culture and practice of continuous improvement with students as the focus. Strategic Improvement Plans are future focused documents that map the School's directions, aimed specifically at improving educational and wellbeing outcomes for all students through the following areas:

- Catholic Identity and Catholic Curriculum
- Learning and Wellbeing

Each year, the School develops a Strategic Improvement Plan indicating the intended key improvements for student learning outcomes. A copy of the school's Strategic Improvement Plan may be obtained from the School administrative office.

Key Improvements Achieved

During 2023 our school improvement goals have been centred around building an understanding of our Catholic formation for our students and their families as well as in building the data literacy of our staff, particularly in the area of Mathematics, with a view to improving planning and assessment.

St Columba's staff worked on further building a supportive and connected school community, grounded in faith and the quality teaching of RE; building the capacity of staff and students through the promotion of a culture of learning and growth; and that values and promotes positive wellbeing for all. Our student formation days have continued to be a success with clear growth in student understanding of their own formation. We saw a significant growth in our Religious literacy test in Year 6 with one of our students topping the diocese.

Staff have worked to build the capacity of educators to ensure that all students are known, their strengths are recognised and accommodated, diversity is celebrated, and each learner demonstrates growth. We have a cohesive culture that is inclusive of all students, with transparent academic and wellbeing structures that support and inspire their resilience and self-awareness.

Priority Key Improvements for Next Year

Continued targeting school of improvement through participation in the Leading Learning Collaborative - Ongoing focus on Collaborative Inquiry

Staff will focus on further familiarisation with the new English and Mathematics 3-6 syllabus as a priority with specific ongoing PL in Mathematics

Following the “identified areas for improvement” on the School Religious Literacy Plan. Targeted approaches to teaching Religious Education from Kindergarten to Year 6. Building a positive culture of learning and achievement in Religion focused on Religious Literacy Leaders will work with teachers to identify and monitor priorities and goals for their professional growth based on the Australian Professional Standards and the SIP goals. Teachers will reflect and evaluate their practice during this process. Teacher efficacy will be enhanced with a focus on effectiveness and school improvement through an enhanced PLT process with a focus on student data to ensure growth. Continuous improvement of pedagogy through the use of professional learning teams and targeted individuals working with our two Pedagogical Mentors.

Community Satisfaction

Consultation with parents, students and teachers is valued and sought. Their feedback contributes to the planning and the achievement of improved outcomes for students. This year, the School has used a variety of processes to gain information about the level of satisfaction with the School from parents, students and teachers. The school undertakes extensive surveying of all stakeholder groups annually. This data is shared with the school community and contributes to the priorities for future planning.

Parent satisfaction

St Columba's gives witness to a strong Catholic identity through regular liturgies all of which are very well attended by the parent body.

Parents are positive and supportive of the school:

I think it's wonderful how every teacher knows my children, regardless of which class they're in, and I'm surprised by how many teachers know me by name also. It's a wonderfully welcoming community.

Staff are very friendly and teachers have always been very approachable. Kids are overall really well behaved and reflect expected high standards

My child loves going to school and that is the best thing for a parent. He always talks about what he learnt at school and also about his class teacher and his friends at school. The school also keeps us updated about any issues, events or any updates that we need to be aware of as a parent. The teachers are wonderful, supportive and very professional. I am really happy with the school he goes to and can definitely see the results through his learning.

Student satisfaction

In 2023, students were happy to have a completed project to improve our playground, creating a safer and more inviting place to play and learn.

Students at St Columba's express that they are happy at school and enjoy their friendships and the positive relationships with their teachers. Students mix well in the playground & utilise all parts of our playground with creative and imaginative play. They are proud of their school and eagerly contribute to make St Columba's a better place for everybody.

"I have a great teacher because she is incredible with connecting with students and understanding how we all think extremely well. She helps the rest of the students and I

develop our skills in all periods of learning such as physical, spiritual and our general knowledge."

Teacher satisfaction

The staff express satisfaction with the expectations, support and current direction of the school. The staff team works together to improve outcomes and provide for the learning and growth of all the students at the school.

Staff are encouraged to share their skills and abilities and are committed to the welfare, growth and development of all students. The staff of St Columba's agree that the school has a strong Catholic Identity and that teaching and learning is of a high quality.

Staff are welcoming and friendly

St Columba's has a highly supportive and cohesive staff.

This year we gathered for a Formation Retreat with a social evening attached to it. This was a highly positive event for staff, was very well attended and valued.

Financial Statement

This School Financial Information is based on the detailed information provided to the Commonwealth Government in the Commonwealth Financial Questionnaire.

School Financial Information for the 2023 year is detailed below:

Recurrent and Capital Income 2023	
Commonwealth Recurrent Grants ¹	\$2,699,249
Government Capital Grants ²	\$0
State Recurrent Grants ³	\$715,117
Fees and Private Income ⁴	\$581,524
Interest Subsidy Grants	\$0
Other Capital Income ⁵	\$145,846
Total Income	\$4,141,736

Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2023	
Capital Expenditure ⁶	\$19,877
Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷	\$2,765,031
Non-Salary Expenses ⁸	\$1,384,224
Total Expenditure	\$4,169,132

Notes

1. Commonwealth Recurrent Grants includes recurrent per capita grants and special purpose grants.
2. Government Capital Grants includes all capital grants received from the Commonwealth and State Governments.
3. State Recurrent Grants includes recurrent grants per capita, special purpose grants and interest subsidy grants.
4. Fees and Private Income include Archdiocesan and school based fees, excursions and other private income.
5. Other Capital Income includes building levy fees and capital donations used to fund Capital Expenditure.
6. Capital Expenditure includes expenditure on School Buildings, and Furniture and Equipment.
7. Salaries and Related Expenditure includes all salaries, allowances and related expenses such as superannuation and workers compensation insurance.
8. Non-Salary Expenses include all other Non-Salary Recurrent Expenditure covering resources, administration, operational expenses, utilities, repairs and maintenance.

END OF 2023 REPORT