



Sophia Mundi Steiner School

# Annual Report & Chronicle

2014









## Chairperson's Overview

2014 was a strong year for the School, and an important one. In particular, there are three things the School achieved which are significant. The first relates to the past, the second to the present, and the third to the future.

As to the past, in 2014 Sophia Mundi paid off a longstanding debt to the Australian taxation Office, several years ahead of schedule.

The Board wishes to specifically thank those who made this possible. In recognition of the integrity the School has shown in adhering to its arrangements, the ATO agreed to remit in full a sizeable general interest charge. The Board considers this an important milestone, and a manifestation of strong financial governance and community spirit. This gave closure to a burden from the past, creating greater freedom for the future.

As to the present, in 2014 we were very fortunate to have Norman Sievers lead our school as Principal. Together with the Board, he prepared the ground for a new direction, given in part by the new requirements under the Commonwealth Education Act. Following a great deal of preparatory work, this led to a series of creative workshops, in fourth term, to generate our new School Improvement Plan. It

was my personal privilege to work with Norman, my fellow board members, the teachers, the other staff members, the parents and the Members of the School in this process, which culminated in the first version of the School Improvement Plan, published earlier this year. In 2015, the collaborative work on this project will continue, with workshops throughout the Winter months leading to the crystallisation of a renewed Plan in the Spring.

The Board wishes to especially thank Norman Sievers for the important contribution he made in his time as Principal. We are very grateful to him for bringing an impulse and energy which will, we feel sure, resonate through the School's development and culture for years to come.

As to the future, toward the end of 2014, the Board appointed our new Principal, Fiona Cock. Fiona has taught at the School for many years and has been a strong, intelligent and capable leader, especially in obtaining for the School and implementing the IB program, and as Deputy and then Acting Principal of the School. Fiona presented the Board with a clear and compelling vision for the next phase of the School's life. Fiona's deep understanding of and commitment to the School position her well to bring about a phase of stability and growth over the next several years.

The Board wishes to thank the teachers and other staff who have given – with such wonderful, warm spirit – of their time, love and life's work to the Schools work: educating children towards freedom of the human spirit.

The Board also wishes to thank all the parents for their continuous support of the School, and especially for engaging so warmly and enthusiastically with the creation of the School Improvement Plan.

The Board wishes also to specifically thank those parents who played leadership roles in the School: providing specialist assistance to the Board, sitting on the PFA, co-ordinating the Spring Fair, or in any other way.

**Emrys Nekvapil**

Chair, on behalf of the Board of Directors, May, 2015

**Emrys Nekvapil:** [emrys.nekvapil@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au](mailto:emrys.nekvapil@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au)

**Robin Dexter:** [robin.dexter@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au](mailto:robin.dexter@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au)

**Robin Power:** [robin.power@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au](mailto:robin.power@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au)

**Denise Hall:** [denise.hall@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au](mailto:denise.hall@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au)

**Eleni Kondos:** [eleni.kondos@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au](mailto:eleni.kondos@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au)

---

## Our Vision is to educate towards freedom of the human spirit.

*“Our highest endeavor must be to develop independent human beings, who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives.”*

Dr Rudolf Steiner

---

### Principal's Report

Welcome to Sophia Mundi Steiner School's Annual Report for 2014. In 2014 Sophia Mundi continued in the core task of educating its students following the pedagogy of Dr Rudolf Steiner for classes (P-10) and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (classes 11-12) and preparing them to take their place in contemporary Australian and world society.

At Sophia Mundi Steiner School we work with the philosophy elaborated by Rudolf Steiner (1861 - 1925) which describes the child as a spiritual being who

brings his or her own gifts into the world. It is the task of the teacher to recognise and foster these gifts and to help the child to become his or her true self. This gives education a purpose which extends beyond that of leading into a job or a course. Sophia Mundi provides an environment where the child or youth is met physically, emotionally and intellectually - where not only the thinking, but also the will (striving towards a purposeful destiny) and the feelings of the child can grow and truly reflect the whole person.

During 2014 Norman Seivers was the Principal at Sophia Mundi.

With his deep connection to the Lorien Novalis Steiner stream, Norman brought his energy for creative storytelling and a passion for the Arts.

Under Norman and Emrys Nekvapil's direction, Sophia Mundi embarked on a new collaboration between the College of Teachers and the school community through the School Improvement Plan.

During 2013 and 2014 the board also oversaw changes to the school's finances which have ensured the long term financial viability of the school.



During 2014 we saw further implementation in years I–10 of the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework in the five areas already approved by ACARA: English; Mathematics; History; Geography and Science. This work was integrated into the school's new IT operating system Edumate.

Edumate allowed the school to greatly improve student attendance management with the addition of an automated SMS service to parents when a student is marked absent.

The introduction of Edumate was not an easy transition for staff, but it enables the school to move to a world class process for planning, delivering and reporting on the curriculum and student outcomes, improved admin functions as well as providing an intranet portal for parents, all which creates a solid platform for improvement.

The Secondary School continued to consolidate with work done to ensure a stable curriculum true to Steiner's principles and quality teaching. Our Cultural exchange program continued to flourish with Memoranda of Understanding signed and our partnerships with schools in France, Switzerland and Luxembourg all improved so that students on exchange are supported and nurtured.

We completed the third year of the IB Diploma Programme (for Years 11 & 12). In 2014 all students attempting the Diploma passed – a 100% pass rate was quite an achievement. With the combination of the Steiner and IB Diploma pedagogy we continued to be a school of interest Nationally



& Internationally with the IB coordinator meeting schools around Australia and networking with the Luxembourg Steiner School.

As part of their professional development, teachers worked together using the Restorative Practices approach in resolving conflicts and issues throughout the year. This restorative language and approach is being developed for use with all classes in an appropriate way for the age of the child.

The seasonal festivals were celebrated including the harvest festival in autumn, the winter

spiral and lantern walk and a spring festival. Eurythmy continues to be featured at various festivals with Class 11 and 12 doing a beautiful performance at our mid winter festival – we are fortunate to have three Eurythmy teachers at Sophia Mundi.

With staff mentoring programs being established and our strong commitment to the delivery of quality education, Sophia Mundi – Melbourne's inner city Steiner School – is well positioned for 2015 and beyond.

Fiona Cock  
Principal





## The Class I Journey

"One for the golden sun, two for the night and day, three for me, for here I find strong limbs, warm heart and a clear true mind. Four for the seasons slowly turning, five for the stars so brightly burning, six for the honeycomb and for the bees who bring their sweet honey to me..." so went one of our favourite songs from Class One last year. This song formed part of our daily Morning Circle during our Quality of Numbers main lesson block. In this block, we explored qualities of each number from 1-12, experiencing and discussing how they differ. We sought to find the uniqueness of one, the duality of two, the 'coming together' aspect of three. This work was carried out orally and in writing and picture-making, and the children brought in objects from home or found in nature to support their understanding. We inspected crystals and verified that each one does have six sides!

We noted the same in honeycomb and in wasp's nests. We noticed the reliable rhythm of day becoming night and night becoming day again. These mathematical laws in nature are pure magic for the six-year-old-becoming -seven, as the child of this age still lives in a very magical realm where fact and fantasy are inextricably woven together.

We spent a lot of the year getting to know each other, learning to line up and how to raise our hands when we want to contribute, learning how to share, keep our workspace and classroom tidy, and play kindly with each other. We also, of course, learned about literacy. In Class One, we learned all 26 letters—consonants first and vowels after, through imaginative pictures. These pictures were brought through Grimm's fairy tales, drawn and correlated with their phonetic sounds. We found the 'W' hidden in waveforms, the 'N' formed by the net and the 'F' of the talking

fish in the story 'The Fisherman and His Wife.' The big brown bear of the story 'Bearskin' showed the children how to form a capital 'B' and the napping cat formed a gracefully curving 'C' in the story 'Cat and Mouse in Partnership.' This approach to bringing letters through the children's feeling life is one of the cornerstones of Class One literacy in Steiner schools.

We did quite a lot of Form Drawing in Class One, using our eyes, elbows, belly buttons, toes, feet and whole bodies to create the forms before committing them to paper. We drew them in sand and on chalkboards. We explored the straight line and curve and (before learning the letters or numbers) discovered that every form in the world is made up of straight lines and/or curved lines. After that initial Form Drawing main lesson block, we continued to have weekly Form Drawing practise lessons and continued exploring through the year.





We made soup in the colder months, built cubbies indoors on rainy days, put on a class play to support our Four Processes main lesson work and began to learn to play recorder. We sang and danced together, learned to knit, practiced Eurythmy, and hosted a French Café for class parents. We visited the Collingwood Children's Farm and took a weekend day trip to the Tesselaar Tulip Festival in Silvan in the Spring.

Closer to home, we also went for many walks around the Convent, both during Home Surroundings main lesson blocks and weekly on Friday afternoons. We noticed signs of the changing seasons—flowers budding, blooming and dying; spiders and mushrooms popping up; growing herbs and even fruiting artichokes in the Convent gardens. We rolled in the grass and built cubbies and fairy houses in the gardens too. Class One was a varied and interesting year—full of learning, love and magic found in simple things.

Jill Casaveccia, Class I Teacher,  
2014







## Class 8 Projects

I have been incredibly proud of the class 8 student's achievements with their projects this year. These projects were completed across the year with the help of mentors both in and outside of the the school community. The purpose of the project is to expand the student's horizons by asking them to begin working with someone who is not their parent or teacher. It also encourages them to discover more about themselves by exploring an area of their particular interest in depth. It's a big challenge for the students to approach people and ask for their help and to learn how to set

goals for themselves across a longer period of time. Not only this, but they then have to present their work to the school community! It was a pleasure to help them with this as a class teacher and to watch their journeys. As I was sitting in the audience, watching the presentations I was blown away by the growth that I could see in my class. I feel that this task that we offer is something quite unique to Steiner schools. Alongside the class 8 Shakespearean play it challenges the students to take on new aspects of thinking, feeling and willing.

Kate Barker, Class 8 Guardian

2014





## To what extent are we able to base our pedagogy on great, cosmic feelings in today's world?

The maypole and class 6... Already there is so much to do...and now we have to perform The Grand Chain! There are no available dance steps so we invent our own. Our goal is to weave the pole in a beautiful pattern. To get there we will dance the rites of spring, female and male,

moving together, twirling, bowing, moving apart, winding and unwinding. It becomes a cosmic picture with limbs radiating back to each dancer from the pole periphery (if you turn it inside out!). Such joy in the dancers as they interact and complete the form, and such feelings aroused in the

spectators as they witness the eternal dance of life, unspoken, felt, deeply profound...and the little children rush up to touch the woven pole, and the dancers whirl freely without ribbons, raptured, bouyant, riding the remembering of being.

Ben Darby, Class 6 Teacher,  
2014

## My Steiner Journey

I have had a 13 year Steiner experience at Sophia Mundi Steiner School in Melbourne. I have been here since kindergarten, now I'm in my second last year of high school. My Steiner journey has been

long and thorough, it has been one of joy. Of course, like all schooling systems it has had it's hard parts but I still remember when we used to go for walks to the river. We would pick dandelions and listen to stories.

Where you go to school and the teachers and people you get to

know there, shapes who you are and how you behave. I think my time at Sophia Mundi will stand me in good stead and I am incredibly grateful that I have had the opportunity to go to school here.

Oona Cochrane, Class 10  
Student 2014

## Theory of Knowledge Presentation 2015

Theory of knowledge is a very enjoyable subject. The unfortunate time of 8am is made up for by enthusiastic debates, about the critical issues of global importance that surround us, instigated by an energetic Ben, you never want to miss out on a class! Part of the IB TOK course is a 10-20 minute presentation. The two man group I was involved in focused on the question: To what extent is

Moral Absolutism valid in Music Piracy? In the presentation we aimed to discuss the topic of music piracy and whether what the media portrays is really true. Our analysis of this concluded that music piracy is not as bad as it is made out to be, the main problem is the big labels who take a high percentage of the profit, in most cases the artist only receives around 10% of revenues. Because of this, artists are starting to become independent, giving them a closer connection with the fan, who by buying their product

are directly supporting them, this funding means that the artist can continue to satisfy the fan's needs through new music releases.

Projects like Kickstarter are helping this model become a reality. Technology is not the problem, it can be the solution. The music industry needs to adapt, in a way so that the close connection between the artist and the fans returns.

Walter Bakowski, Class II  
Student 2014







## Graduating Class 2014

The students of our graduating class 2014 are to be congratulated on their outstanding success in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). The class of 2014 is the second cohort to graduate from Sophia Mundi under the Diploma Programme pathway. We were thrilled to be able to expand our course offerings, adding Biology, French B (Standard Level), Psychology and Theater to an already extensive list of courses. The class consisted of ten students, 50% of whom had been at Sophia Mundi since Year 9. Of the Year 9 Class of 2011, 31% continued into class 12. We were excited to welcome two inter-state students who came from Tasmania to complete the Diploma at SMSS as well as two students

transferring from other Melbourne schools so they could attempt the Diploma.

The two-year IB Diploma Programme curriculum encompasses the study of six subjects together with the core components of CAS (Creativity, Action and Service), TOK (a Theory of Knowledge course) and EE (a 4000 word academic research based Extended Essay). The aim of the challenging and rigorous Diploma Programme is to develop internationally minded people who strive to display the IB Learner Profile outcomes of being inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective individuals.

Seven of the ten students in the cohort graduated with a full Diploma and three pursued certificates in a select set of

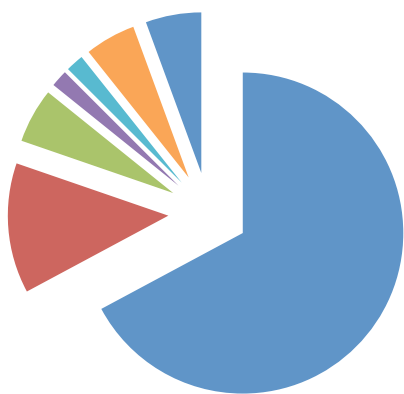
subjects. All seven students who attempted the Diploma were granted one, with the average score of 28 (out of 45) with one graduate achieving a 38. The class of 2014 beat the world average in both Biology SL and History SL and performed on par in Theatre SL. The class of 2014 had two students receive early entrance offers to LaTrobe University with other offers coming in from RMIT, Melbourne University and the University of Tasmania. Many class of 2014 graduates have taken a gap year to travel and work, while others have gone immediately into further study, working towards degrees in a range of areas, including IT, Psychology, Journalism and Environmental Studies. We are excited to see how each student decides to use their unique talents and achievements.

Ashley Dufty, IB Co-ordinator

## Finances

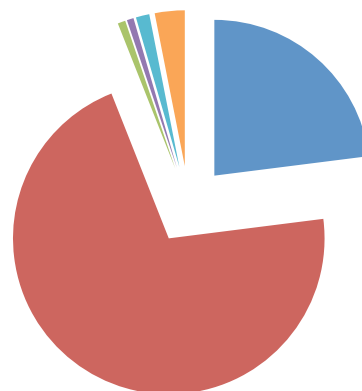
Refer to the "2014 Income and Expense Pie Charts" for a pictorial overview of the breakdown of the school's income and expenses.

As mentioned in the second paragraph of the Chairperson's Overview, we paid off a longstanding debt to the ATO. This was made possible through a low interest loan from within our school community, for which Sophia Mundi is very appreciative. The ATO agreed to remit its accumulated general interest charges, which effectively resulted in Sophia Mundi receiving a net income (3.1%) from the ATO in 2014. A further beneficial effect of the above has been the reduction



## 2014 Income Sources expressed as Percentages

Government Grants	23.0%
Student Fees	71.0%
Fundraising	0.8%
Donations	0.7%
Building Fund Donations	1.4%
ATO Remittance	3.1%
	100.0%



in our financial (including interest) expense category to 1.8% (was 5.3% in 2013).

Nonetheless, the School still faces financial challenges and continued to operate on a tight budget during 2014. The enrolment numbers remained slightly below the Board's target, but the budget was adjusted accordingly, and the necessary savings were found without negatively affecting the quality of the School's educational offering. The 2014 Audited Financial Statements (available on the SMSS Website) show an income Surplus (5.6%).

We would like to say a special thank you to all those parents who have generously continued making their regular building

fund donations throughout 2014 (and 2015 thus far). These donations are crucial and help fill a very important gap within the funding needs of Sophia Mundi and deserve a mention. During 2014 a total of \$49,564 was spent (\$14,346 in 2013) on capital building improvements at Sophia Mundi and a total of \$53,176 was received in voluntary building fund donations (\$5,000 in 2013).

John Bradshaw, Business Manager

## 2014 Expense Categories expressed as Percentages

Employment	67.1%
Occupancy (incl Depreciation)	13.1%
Educational Delivery	5.5%
Administrative	1.7%
Financial (incl Interest)	1.8%
Other (e.g. Discounts)	5.1%
Income Surplus	5.6%
	100.0%





## Professional Development expenses during 2014

Internal PD
Steiner Based
IB Based
ISV & Other
First Aid
<b>\$17,466</b>

were sponsored to attend Steiner teaching intensives at the Gleneaton Steiner School. Five staff attended seminars presented by Independent Schools Victoria. 28 Staff attended the Anaphylaxis and Asthma Training and 31 the CPR Refresher course, keeping their Level 2 First Aid certificates current.

In 2014 Norman Sievers introduced a program of Professional Development for Teachers during the weekly

college meetings. College is open to all teachers at Sophia Mundi and was well attended during the year by Primary and Secondary staff. Several teachers

## Staff Qualifications

Qualification	Total
Bachelor of Education	9
Master of education	3
Graduate Diploma of Education	7
Diploma of Education	13
Steiner Education Qualification	18
Bachelor of Arts	10
Masters	4
Bachelor of Teaching	2
Bachelor of Science	4
Bachelor of Applied Science	1
Bachelor of Outdoor Education	2

Bachelor of Music	5
Bachelor of Physical Education	1
Bachelor of Visual Art / Fine Arts	3
Bachelor of History	1
Bachelor of applied Psychology	1
Bachelor of Letters	1
Bachelor of Law	1
Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies	1
Advanced Diplomas	10
Certificates	3
Eurythmy Qualifications	3
IB Certificates	22

## Staff Attendance

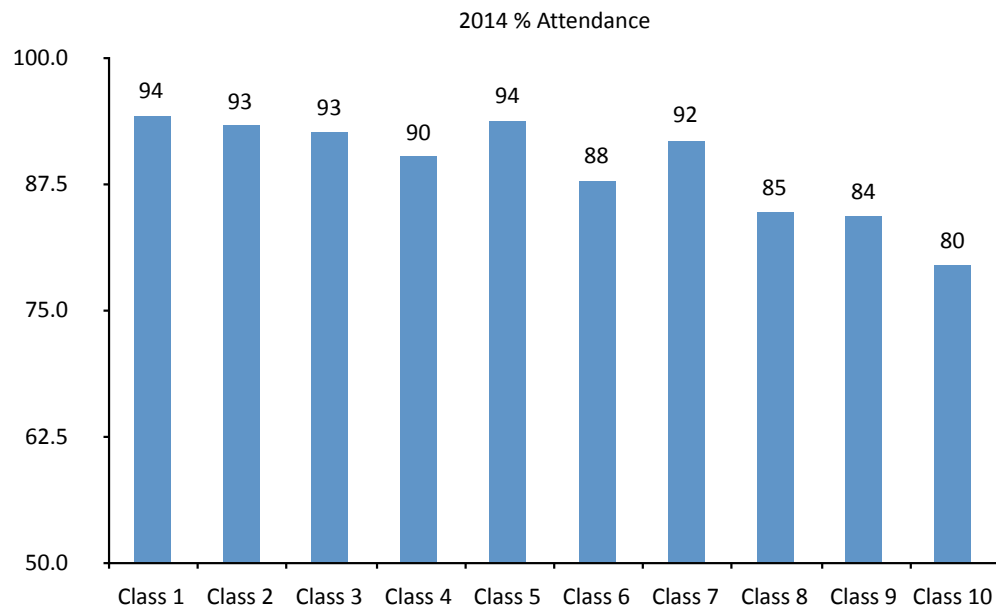
In 2014 we had a teaching staff attendance rate of 97% and an Admin staff attendance rate of 98%.

## Staff Retention

2013 to 2014

Teaching Staff (Primary and Secondary only)	91%
Primary	93%
Secondary	90%
Music	80%

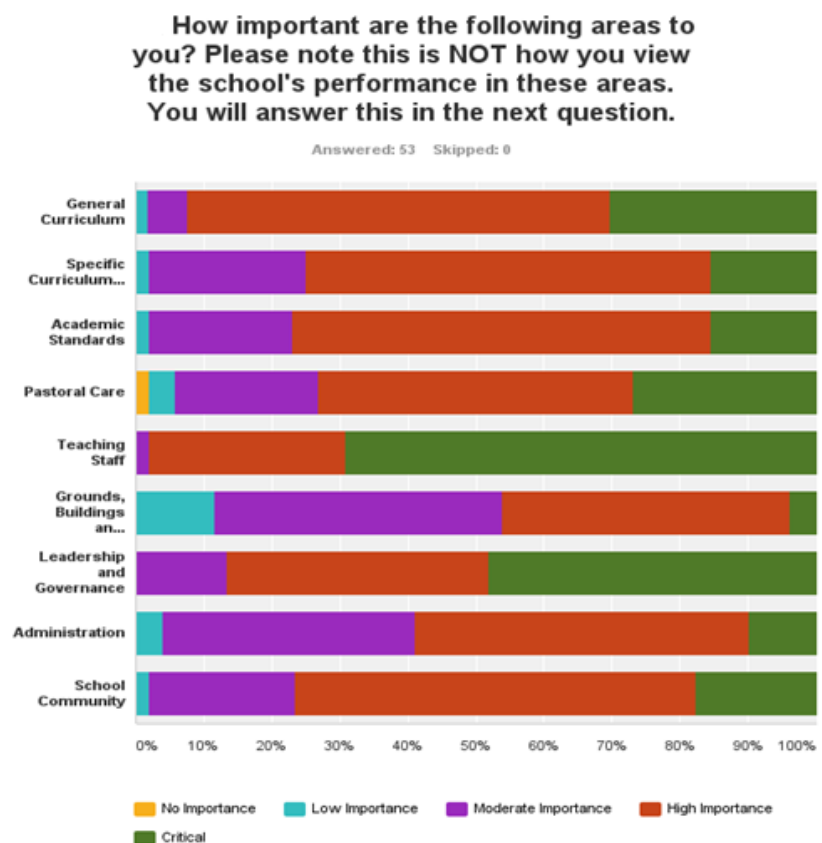
## Student Attendance in 2014



## Parent survey results

In September the school ran its annual parent satisfaction survey. We had 53 parents complete some or all of the survey which was a good response around the same as last year's 51 responses. We had a good spread of responses across all parts of the school and many people provided additional written comments which was appreciated. School leadership and the board use the survey results to inform our plans and priorities for 2015. Full details of the survey and the results can be found on the school's website. In brief, the areas that were ranked of highest importance were Teaching Staff, Leadership and Governance and General Curriculum. The areas of highest satisfaction were Teaching Staff and General Curriculum. There was a slight improvement in satisfaction

levels across all areas compared with the 2013 Survey. The graph below shows the spread of responses in satisfaction across the survey areas.





## NAPLAN and Student Learning Outcomes 2014

In 2014 the majority of parents withdrew their Class 3 students from all NAPLAN tests.

Seven students in Class 5 completed tests in Language Conventions and Numeracy and six completed Writing and Reading in addition to those.

Ten students in Class 7 completed Writing and Reading tests with nine of those students also completing the Numeracy tests.

Six students in Class 9 completed tests in all domains; this represented two thirds of the class completing all tests.

Since many parents at Sophia Mundi choose to withdraw their children from NAPLAN tests, insufficient data is produced from which to draw conclusive comparative results within the school, from class to class and from year to year.

Results for students who participated in NAPLAN were distributed to their parents at the end of Term 3. Class teachers noted their students' results as part of the ongoing assessment process in place at Sophia Mundi.

Our assessment process determines student performance and learning outcomes in a rich and broad curriculum designed to address the social, emotional, academic and artistic development of each individual student. Student progress in specific areas of numeracy, spelling and reading comprehension is assessed using information compiled from results of standardised tests which students complete in semester two at each year level from class 3 to class 10.

Relevant information from these tests and ongoing assessment of main lesson material, oral presentations, performances, class and individual projects, is regularly shared with our Support Education teachers and parents to maximize students' learning outcomes in all domains.

This ongoing assessment by Class and Specialist teachers using a variety of modes takes into account the multiple intelligences with which different students are endowed.



**SOPHIA MUNDI STEINER SCHOOL**

St Mary's, Abbotsford Convent | 1 St Heliers St | Abbotsford | 3067

T 03 9419 9229 E [reception@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au](mailto:reception@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au)

[www.sophiamundi.vic.edu.au](http://www.sophiamundi.vic.edu.au)