

Victorian Association of Catholic Primary School Principals Inc.

**LEADERSHIP SURVEY
AUGUST 2025**

VACPSP. Better, Together.

Proudly representing Victorian Catholic Primary Principals locally, statewide and nationally.

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VACPSP LEADERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

August 2025

In August 2025 the VACPSP commissioned a leadership survey seeking to understand Principalship from the perspective of Deputy Principals, current Principals and Retired Principals. The turn around, design, distribution and summary for the project was three weeks and yielded 117 responses from Principals (mainly from the MACS region), 104 responses from Deputy Principals and 8 responses from Retired Principals.

In short, the survey reveals a profession committed to its mission and community impact, yet deeply strained by workload, compliance demands, and behavioural pressures. Strengthening administrative support, wellbeing strategies, and leadership pathways is essential to sustain and retain Catholic school leaders in Victoria.

The survey provides valuable insight that will be used to support the upcoming VACPSP Position Paper on Principalship.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Principals

- **Satisfaction:** Average rating 7.1/10. Most feel they make a meaningful impact, but workload pressures are high.
- **Sources of satisfaction:** Student growth (91%), staff development (77%), faith-based leadership (68%).
- **Key challenges:** Include Administrative workload (91%), staffing shortages/performance issues (58%), parental aggression (64%), and impacts on personal well-being (64%).
- **Support:** Rely most on leadership teams (86%) and colleagues (77%). Limited support was felt from diocesan systems.
- **Retention:** Only 30% very likely to remain in the role in 2–3 years; 37% have considered leaving within the past 12 months.
- **Motivations:** Vocation, impact on students, leadership of teams.
- **Supports needed:** reduced compliance/administration (82%), more administrative support (83%), and well-being/mental health support (44%).

Deputy Principals

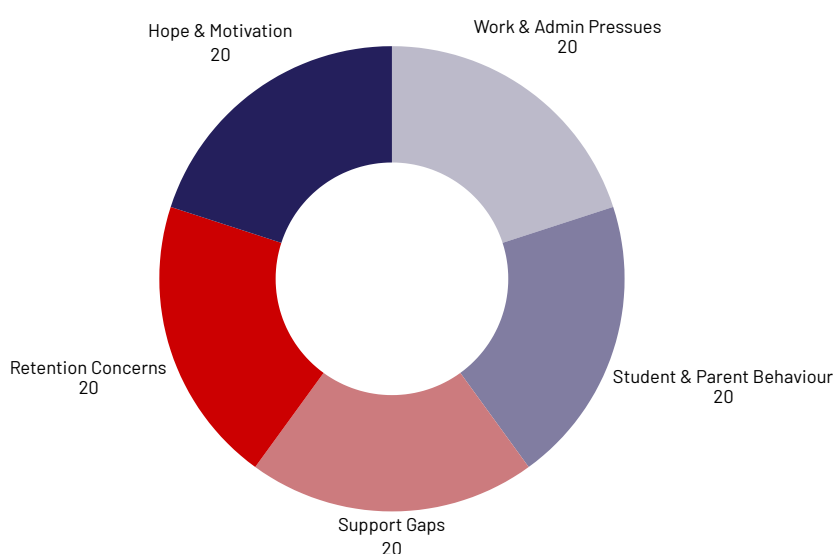
- **Workload:** Average rating 7.6/10; the majority also carry a teaching load.
 - **Responsibilities:** Cover administration (91%), staff management (95%), student wellbeing (74%).
 - **Satisfaction:** Relationships with staff/students, mentoring colleagues, supporting student learning.
 - **Challenges:** Escalating student behaviour (50%), parent aggression (54%), workload pressures (73%), and limited time for strategic leadership.
 - **Career intentions:** Mixed—25% aim for Principalship, 23% want to stay in role, 32% are undecided, 14% plan to leave education.
 - **Barriers to leadership:** Work-life balance concerns (77%), problematic parent interactions (42%), and lack of support pathways.
 - **Supports needed:** Leadership development (55%), mentoring (45%), admin support (58%), and wellbeing strategies (47%).
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Retired Principals

- **Pre-retirement satisfaction:** Average rating 7.1/10.
- **Reasons for retirement:** High workload, parent aggression, health, lack of diocesan support, and need for better work-life balance.
- **Post-retirement wellbeing:** 100% report improved wellbeing, reduced stress, and more family/personal time.
- **Advice to current leaders:** Prioritise wellbeing, build strong leadership teams, stay grounded in faith, celebrate small wins, set boundaries.
- **Future contribution:** Many open to mentoring or leadership development support for current Principals.

Overall Themes

- **Workload & Admin Pressure:** The single greatest challenge across all groups.
- **Student & Parent Behaviour:** Increasingly difficult, contributing to stress and reduced job satisfaction.
- **Support Gaps:** Strong reliance on peer networks; limited confidence in diocesan/system-level support.
- **Retention Concerns:** A significant number of individuals are considering leaving their roles or the profession altogether within 2–5 years.
- **Hope & Motivation:** Despite challenges, many leaders remain for their sense of vocation, the impact they have on students, and their commitment to Catholic education.



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