

Student Flourishing in Australian Christian Schools

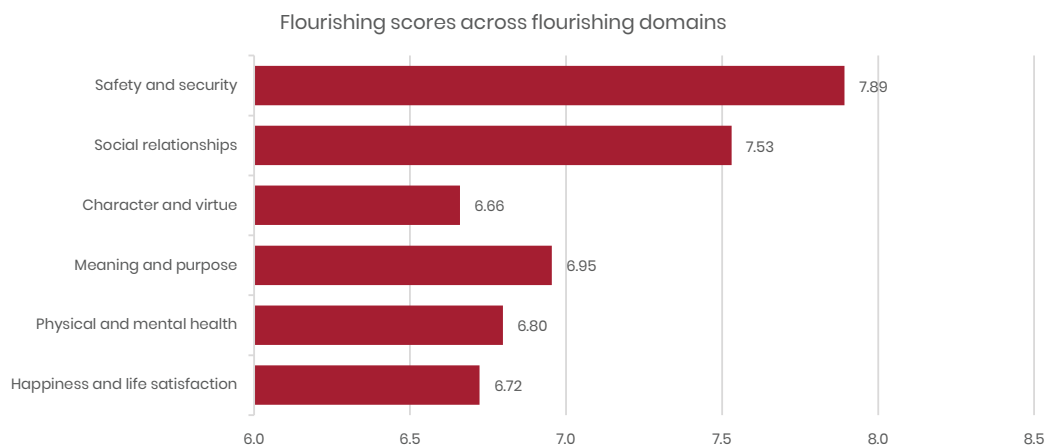
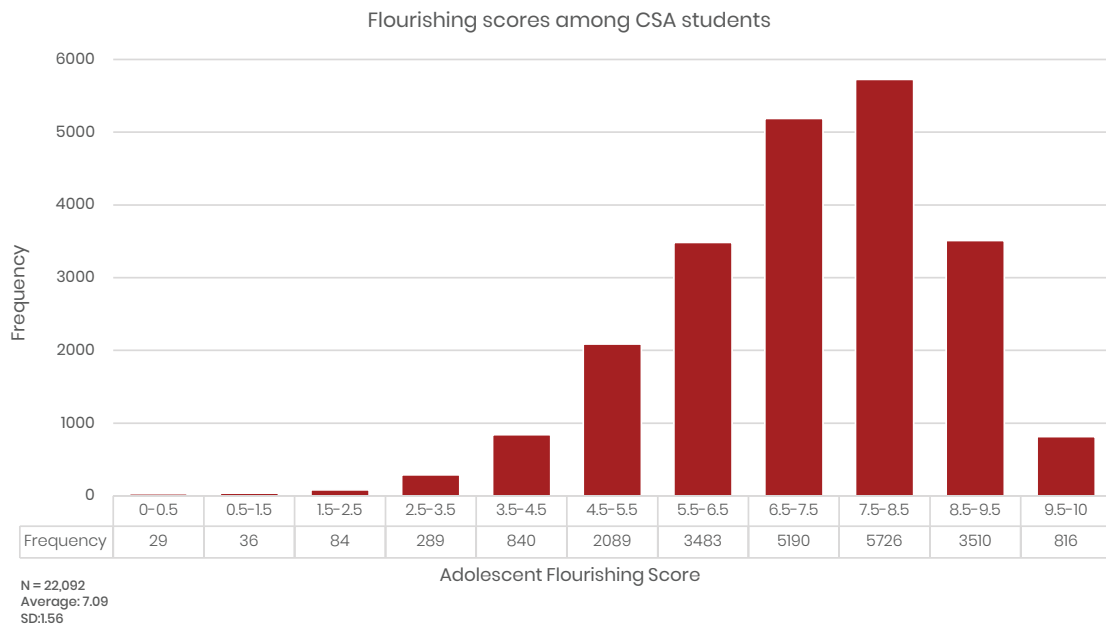
Christian Schools Australia (CSA) collaborated with researchers from Research Schools International and the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard to carry out a landmark study exploring student flourishing in CSA schools. The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard defines flourishing as “the relative attainment of a state in which all aspects of a person’s life are good, including the contexts in which that person lives.” It identifies six domains of flourishing: happiness and life satisfaction; mental and physical health; close social relationships; meaning and purpose; character and virtue; and safety and security. Schools can play an important role in cultivating student flourishing by implementing research-based practices known to support these key aspects.

This *Student Flourishing in Australian Christian Schools* study examines the extent to which students are flourishing across CSA schools. This research considers overall flourishing as well as how flourishing varies across groups. In addition, it explores the implementation of practices associated with student flourishing, with a particular focus on Christian practices. We collected data at 57 CSA schools from students in Year 7 to Year 12 using online surveys. Participating students completed two surveys; one in February 2024 and another in late July / August 2024. A total of 22,092 students took part in this study, making it one of the largest studies of adolescent flourishing ever undertaken. This report highlights findings on student flourishing and the implementation of practices that support flourishing.



Student Flourishing

These findings show a distribution of flourishing scores across the full CSA sample for this project.

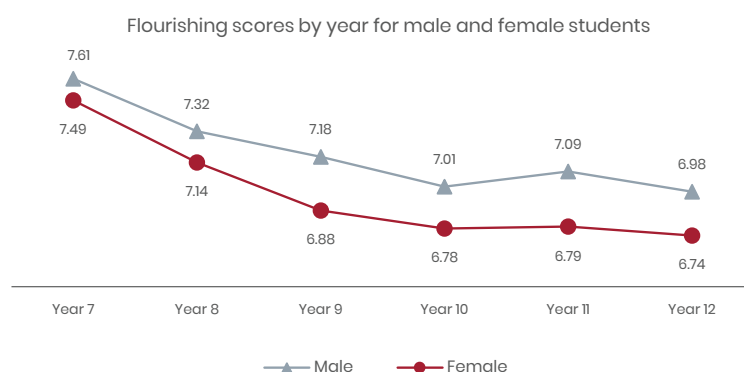
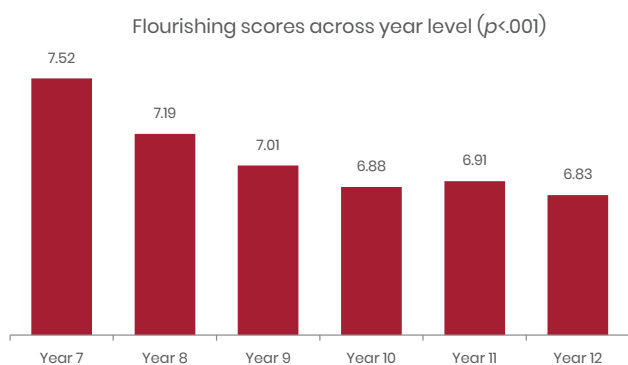


RESEARCH
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All graphs displayed represent the full sample of survey respondents (n=22,092).

Methodology: This two-wave longitudinal collaborative study explored the conditions, contextual factors, and practices that support student flourishing in Australian Christian schools. The two-wave survey was designed by researchers from Harvard’s Human Flourishing Program and RSI and measured self-reported student flourishing using the Harvard Flourishing Program’s adolescent flourishing scale and other validated relationship and character scales. It also examined the effect of various practices, including specifically Christian practices on student flourishing. In total, 22,092 students from Years 7–12 across 57 Christian schools participated, making it one of the largest studies of adolescent flourishing in Australian Christian schools.

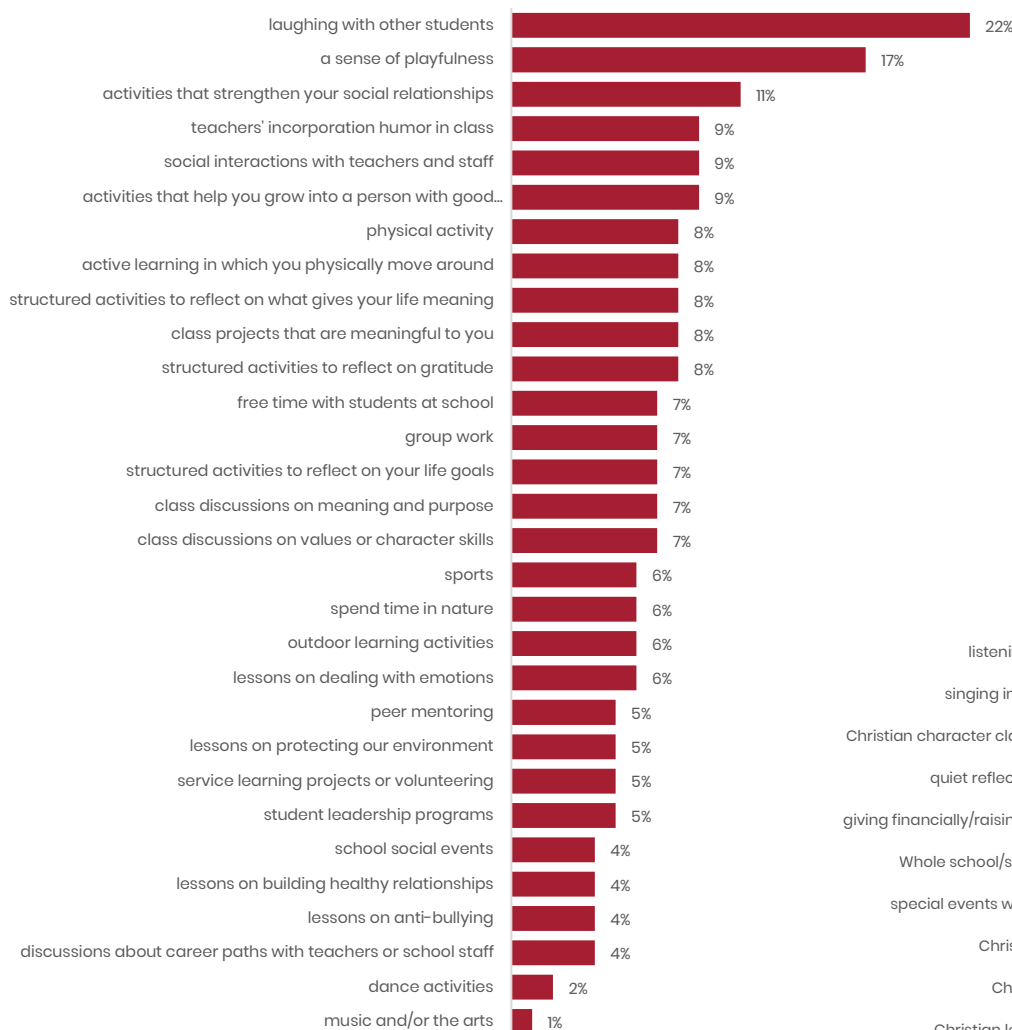
Key findings from this project show that student flourishing scores decrease across Years 7 – 12, and that girls are flourishing less than boys, on average. These results echo well-established trends in flourishing among adolescents in many countries around the globe. The findings from this study demonstrate the importance of supporting students as they advance through adolescence and spotlight the gender gap in flourishing during these formative years for young people.



Practices that Support Flourishing

Flourishing increases when engaging in these practices at least once a month

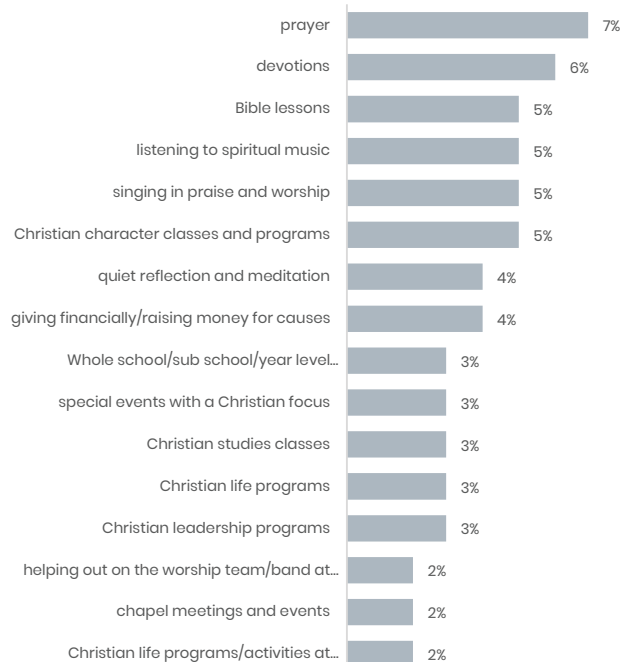
Evidence-based practices



To examine the relationship between practices and student flourishing, the research team used a modified outcome-wide longitudinal design for causal inference. This method controls for prior levels of practice engagement and flourishing, along with sociodemographic characteristics (Van der Weele et al., 2020).

The results provide evidence that flourishing increased more for students engaging in these practices. We therefore encourage schools to implement these practices.

Christian practices



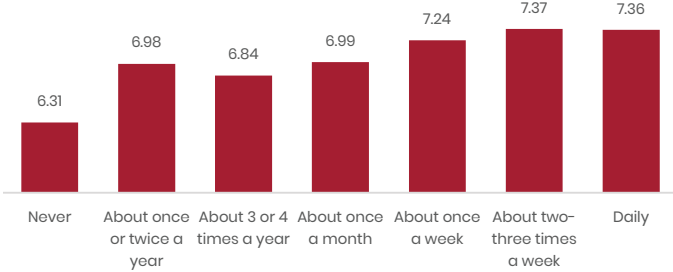


Flourishing & Family: Practices of Bonding

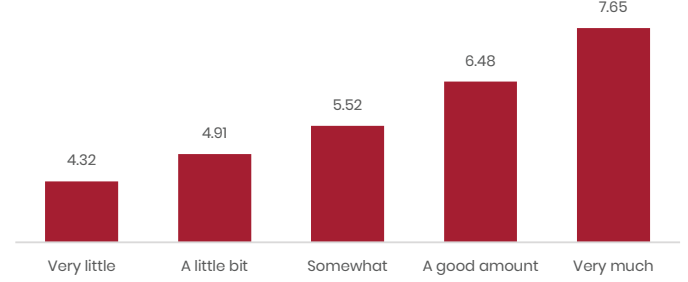
Student flourishing scores are higher for students who feel more loved by their parents/guardians, and who more frequently visit with extended family or friends. Additionally, flourishing scores are higher for students whose families engage more frequently in religious practices and for students whose parents are married.



Flourishing scores across frequency of visits with extended family or friends ($p < .001$)



Flourishing scores across degrees of feeling loved by parents/guardians ($p < .001$)



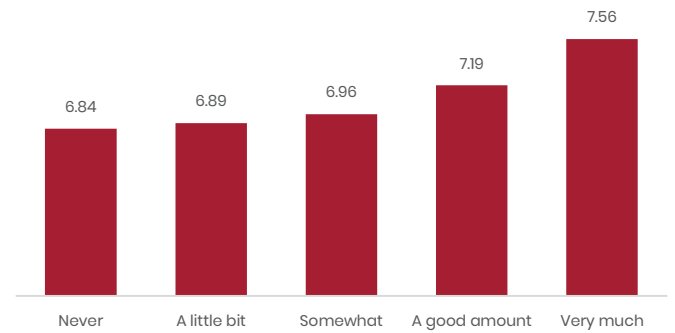
These findings suggest the important role that parents and extended families contribute to the overall flourishing of adolescents. The findings also reaffirm the value of spirituality and consistent religious practices in family life.



Student flourishing scores are higher for students with parents that are married compared to not married ($p < .001$)



Flourishing scores by how often students families engage in religious practices ($p < .001$)



NB. Results in these graphs are descriptive only and should not be interpreted causally

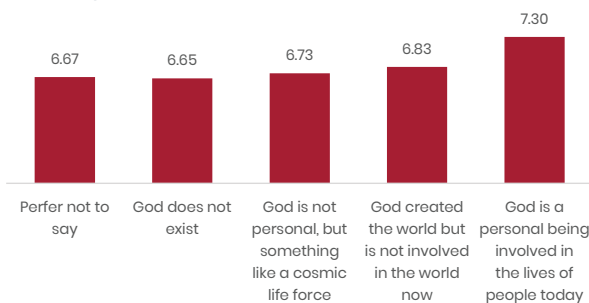


Flourishing & Spirituality: Practices of Expressing

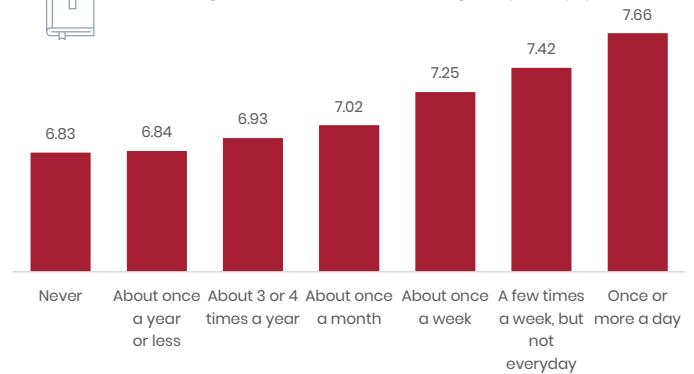
Students who profess Christian beliefs and engage in Christian practices had higher overall flourishing scores. Specifically, we find that students who place greater importance on spirituality, practices and who engage more frequently in Bible reading and prayer had higher flourishing scores than those that did not.



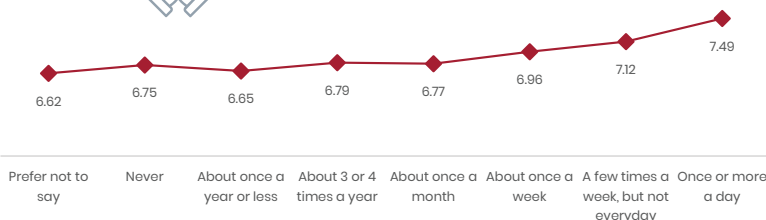
Flourishing scores and belief in God ($p < .001$)



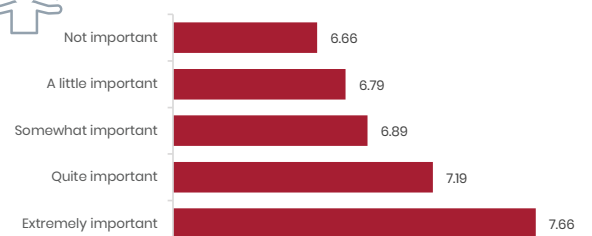
Flourishing scores and Bible reading frequency ($p < .001$)



Flourishing scores and praying frequency ($p < .001$)



Flourishing scores and importance of spirituality ($p < .001$)



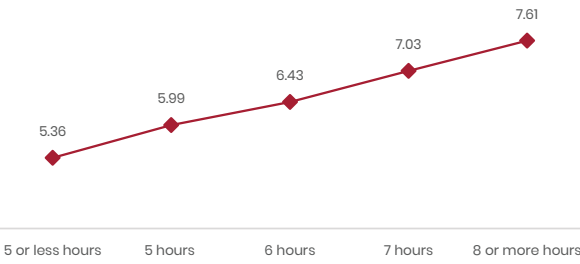
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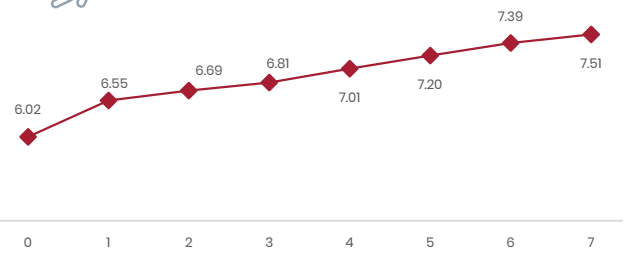
Flourishing and Student's Daily Life Practices

Sleep: Student flourishing is significantly lower for those who report sleeping fewer hours each night.

Flourishing scores across hours of sleep ($p < .001$)



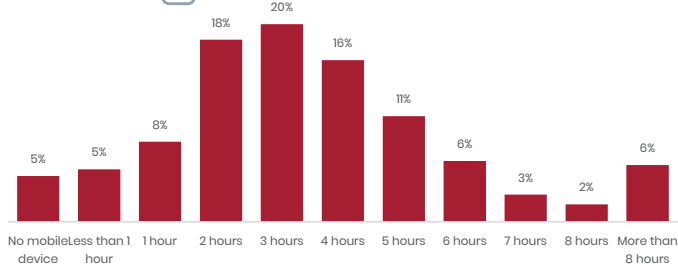
Flourishing scores across days of physical activity (at least 30mins each day) ($p < .001$)



Physical activity: Student flourishing scores are significantly higher for students who are engage in physical activity for more days in the past week (at least 30 minutes a day).



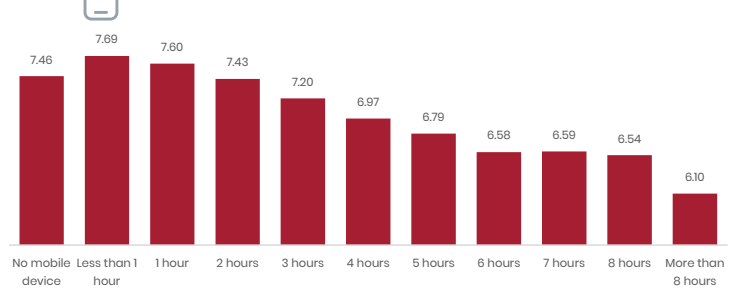
Hours of smartphone use per day



Smartphones: Smartphone use is associated with lower flourishing scores. Students who report using their smartphone for more hours in a day have significantly lower ($p < .001$) flourishing scores.



Flourishing scores across hours of smartphone use per day ($p < .001$)



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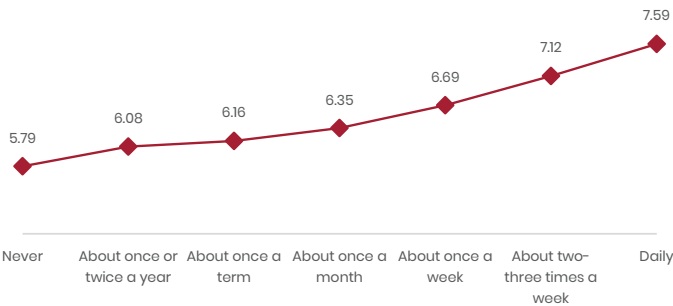


Flourishing & Learning: Practices of Engagement

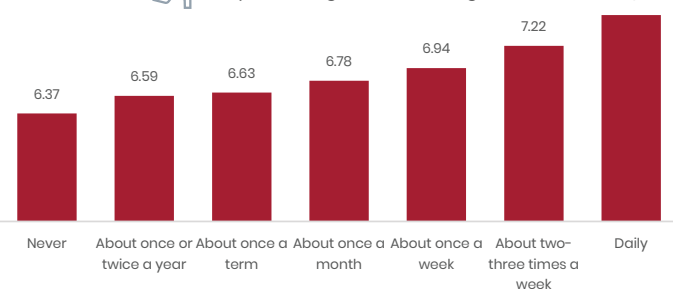
Increased student engagement in many of the evidence-based practices is associated with higher average flourishing scores among students. The full frequency graphs displayed here show how valuable these practices are for flourishing.



Flourishing scores across frequency of experiencing a sense of playfulness at school



Flourishing scores across frequency of experiencing active learning

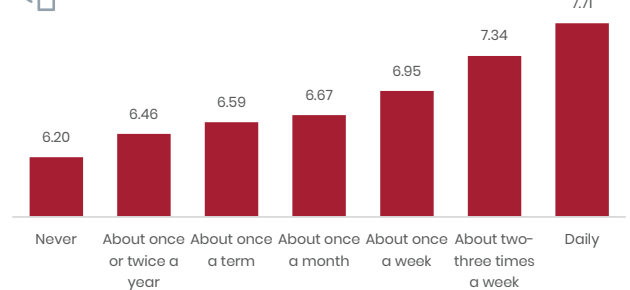


Flourishing & Relationships: Practices of Belonging

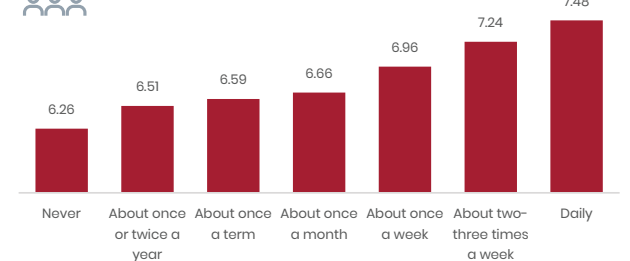
The findings illustrate how crucial social bonds are for flourishing. Students who report engaging in these activities more than once a month have higher flourishing scores.



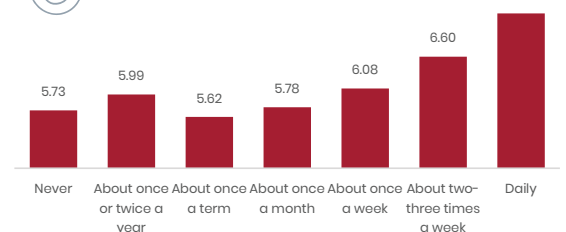
Flourishing scores across frequency of participating in activities that strengthen social relationships



Flourishing scores across frequency of social interaction with teachers and staff



Flourishing scores across frequency of laughing with other students



NB. Results in these graphs and the graphs of section, Flourishing & Relationships: Practices of Belonging are descriptive only and should not be interpreted causally

