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# Best Melbourne sporting school academies include Rowville, Box Hill, Parade College

These are the secondary schools giving budding stars the best shot of achieving sporting success, with amazing facilities and programs on offer.

[Kimberley Seedy](#)

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Some amazing sporting stars got their start at Melbourne schools.

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In a city obsessed with sport, these Melbourne secondary colleges are offering budding athletes the best shot at achieving amazing success.

A number of champion athletes have got their start at schools in Melbourne suburbs, which offer an incredible range of programs and access to elite coaches and facilities.

Check out some of the best.

**Rowville Secondary College – Rowville Sports Academy**



Students at Rowville Sports Academy.

This government school in Melbourne's southeast has been the breeding ground for a number of top athletes and there's no shortage of up-and-coming stars within its ranks.

The [Rowville](#) Sports Academy started in 2008 and began with three sports – basketball, soccer and golf, with 111 students taking part.

That has now grown to 760 students taking part in eight sports, including AFL, volleyball, cricket and tennis, and the school hopes to add badminton in the future.

The academy shows no signs of slowing down – demand is growing, with a massive increase of inquiries.

Those hoping to join have to enrol in the school and as part of determining their suitability for the academy, the school runs elite sporting coaching camps throughout the year for all year levels.

Students in the program take part in training during the school day using facilities at the Rowville Sports Precinct which houses three basketball courts, a state-of-the-art fitness centre, on-site physiotherapy, an ice bath and healthy cafe.

The school shares the facilities with RISE Health Group who provide RSA students with physiotherapy, podiatry, dietetic and psychology services.



Adelaide Crows star Jake Soligo is a former Rowville student. (Photo by Mark Brake/Getty Images)

All of the RSA directors of coaching have coaching/and all playing experience at international or national level, with former Essendon player Darren Bewick leading the AFL program and former South Australian state basketball captain Dean Kinsman leading the basketball program.

Year 7-10 students in the sports academy have coaching four times a week, all within the school day.

Year 11 and 12 students study five other subjects, with the sixth being coaching.



Rising soccer star Layla Habib, who has trialled with a number of European clubs, is also a member of the Rowville Sports Academy. Picture: Tim Carrafa

Two former students, [Nick Watson](#) and [Caleb Windsor](#) are tipped to be picked up in the upcoming AFL National Draft, while [Amber Clarke](#) plays for Essendon in the AFLW.

Jake Soligo (Adelaide), Connor MacDonald (Hawthorn) and Tyler Sonsie (Richmond) have also made it to the big time in the AFL, while basketballers Chloe Bibby and Nyadiew Puoch have played with the Australian Opals, and Luke Rosendale is part of the South East Melbourne Phoenix.

Soccer stars Jake Brimmer and Alanna Murphy, cricketer Mitchell Perry, and Australian Diamond representative Matilda Garrett are also former Rowville students.

Rowville Sports Academy operations manager Glenn Fankhauser said he felt an incredible sense of pride watching the school's former students achieve success.

“We also judge the success of the academy on student engagement – are they attending school more than they would more if they were at other schools? Are they improving in their sport? “But also are they improving and engaging in the classroom?”

Rowville Secondary College assistant principal Alex von Scheven said the school was focused on providing an education setting that offered students the chance to become successful in whichever pathway they wished to follow whether that be at uni or TAFE, apprenticeships or traineeships, entering the workforce, or playing professional sport.

He said Rowville had a focus on being a strength-based school.

“Students come here and they are a student first, and an athlete second,” he said.

“And they have that clear understanding that this is an education platform, a place where they are coming to learn, they know they have some strengths, and we really use that to help them identify new strengths.

“We have a very diverse range of students and we’re committed to developing really good humans and giving them the best opportunity to move into the best pathway for them.”

## **Parade College**

Bundoora, Preston



**Parade College**  
Waterford Oval Bundoora



**Parade College**  
Waterford Soccer Pitch

**Parade College**  
Bunjil Park Bundoora

**Parade College**  
Moore Hall Bundoora

**Parade College**  
Ambrose Treacy Oval

**Parade College**  
Bedford Centre

**Parade College**  
Dowling Centre Preston

Parade College students have incredible access to a range of sporting facilities and programs across the schools two campuses in Preston and Bundoora.

A range of sporting champions got their start at Parade, a private Catholic all-boys' school – including Richmond premierships captain Trent Cotchin, A-League player Raphael Borges Rodrigues, basketballer Mark Bilyj, and former Australian cricketer Adam Dale.

Current student [Nate Caddy](#) (Year 12 – Northern Knights and Victoria Metro) is set to be picked up in the AFL National Draft this month.

Darcy Parker, Year 8, is also the current 400m National Athletics Champion.

Students can represent Parade in the Associated Catholic Colleges inter-school competition, and undertake associated training in athletics, AFL, badminton, basketball, cricket, cross country, golf, hockey, lawn bowls, soccer, swimming, table tennis, tennis and volleyball. The school also runs a number of unique specialist sport programs that operate within the standard school timetable to support and enhance the experiences for student athletes.



Parade College has a partnership with Manchester City Football Club.

These include the Senior Sport Academy – a VCE vocational stream, centred around athletic development and careers in sport, with students able to attain Certificates in Business and Sport Development and gain direct entry into a number of courses at La Trobe University, and

[Manchester City Football School](#) – which is about to enter its third year with nearly 200 students across four cohorts, either in the program or enrolled to commence in 2024 or 2025. This is a curriculum based, timetabled offering,



where students train directly under the supervision of its head coach from Manchester City, Mick Bennett.

Students train on three quality full size football (AFL) ovals, four soccer pitches (two synthetic and two grass), Moore Hall indoor sports stadium with three basketball courts, Garvey Cricket Oval, a synthetic athletics training track, Peter Bedford Centre Strength and Conditioning Facility (Bundoora), Dowling Centre Strength and Conditioning Facility (Preston), six tennis courts and full size hockey pitch, indoor training / cricket facility currently under construction, and numerous other recreation spaces.

## **Box Hill Senior Secondary College**



Box Hill Senior Secondary College: Years 9/10 Girls Basketball team won the State Secondary Schools Championship

Box Hill Senior Secondary College was the first school in Australia to establish a specialist sports program – and it has been labelled as the country’s [greatest basketballer factory](#).

The government school’s sports program started with tennis and basketball back in the mid 1990s – and has produced a number of talented athletes, including NBA star Ben Simmons.

Executive principal Warren Dawson said the school had a long tradition of providing students with a passion for sport access to specialised sport development programs.

The programs fit in and around students' regular school work, and the school works on building timetables for each individual student.

Students can take part in athlete development, basketball, AFL and AFLW, tennis and

soccer, using facilities including the school's basketball stadium, along with a community oval next door and tennis courts.

Mr Dawson is also hoping to see a FIFA standard soccer pitch and indoor courts built at the school, which could also be used by the community.

"Students get so much benefit out of being engaged with sport," he said.

"Coming out of what has been arguably the most difficult time in recent memory, we've got to have more resources allocated so our young people can see there are some positives out there."

The school has also helped a huge number of students get into the US College system.

Many Box Hill alumni have also gone on to compete in the TAC Cup and AFL and AFLW, including Port Adelaide champion Robbie Gray.

A number of former Box Hill students are also on the satellite tennis circuit.



Ben Simmons is a former Box Hill Senior Secondary College student.  
Picture: Andy Brownbill

Mr Dawson said the school offered students the chance to take part in a high-quality sports program led by experienced coaches.

“The challenge with the rise of sport programs in schools is there has got to be a lot more thought around them – you can’t have one in every single school and you’ve got to make it worthwhile and put the necessary resources into it in order to make it worthwhile,” he said.

Mr Dawson said the school employed a number of high quality coaches who had coached at a national or international level, and also ran sessions with the US Consulate for students looking to follow the US pathway.

“It’s really about building an entire education program around that passion (students have for sport),” he said.

The school has partnerships with a number of organisations including Collingwood Football Club, Basketball Victoria and Vida Tennis.

But Mr Dawson said the school wasn’t just focused on sport – it also offers an extensive art program and has a trade training wing, which has helped result in a 25 per cent increase in enrolments.

### **Maribyrnong College – Maribyrnong Sports Academy**



Students have access to synthetic pitches, basketball courts and more at Maribyrnong Sports Academy.

Demand is growing for entry into the respected high performance sports academy at government high school, Maribyrnong Secondary College.

The state government funded secondary school delivers a sport specialist program within it – the only school in Victoria that is funded to deliver the specialist program to high achieving athletes.

Experienced coaches, including past-Olympians, deliver high performance coaching in 15 sports – AFL, athletics, badminton, baseball, basketball, beach volleyball, cricket, football, golf, judo, hockey, netball, taekwondo, tennis, and volleyball.

Students have access to two basketball/netball courts, a six court badminton hall, (used for badminton and volleyball), synthetic soccer and hockey pitches, an athletics training track, six tennis courts and three beach volleyball courts.

The academy has produced a number of Olympians, paralympians, and AFL mens and women's players, including Port Adelaide star Zak Butters.

Current student [Jordan Croft](#) has nominated as a father-son selection for the Bulldogs in the upcoming AFL draft.

Talented student-athletes are offered a scholarship to attend the academy, and each student has access to coaching, strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, rehabilitation, performance psychology, dietitian and other experiences such as guest speakers.

Intake is from Years 7 – 12 with the largest entry point at Year 7, with about 100 scholarships offered at that year level.

The school was first established in 2006 and since then has grown from about 50 student-athletes to 570 student-athletes in 2023, out of a total student population of about 1300 students.



Zak Butters of the Power is a former Maribyrnong Secondary College student. (Photo by Paul Kane/Getty Images)

Students do their sports training before or after school, taking part in about two to three sessions a week.

Sports academy director Mark McAllion said sports academy students also took a high performance preparation subject instead of learning a language, where they are taught strength and conditioning skills in the gym, and learn about sport psychology, nutrition, and even get tips on how to pick a player manager.

“I think the high performance preparation subject, the science behind what we're doing there, is really strong,” Mr McAllion said.

He said the academy staff were incredibly proud of the students who had gone on to achieve amazing success.

“We have a lot of students doing some really cool stuff,” he said.

“It’s really cool to watch them come from Year 7 and see how hard they work over a six-year period – it’s awesome, we get a lot of joy out of it.

“The reality is it’s a small percentage that make it to the elite level but we also take a lot of joy from kids who go on to study sport-related courses or work in the sports industry or just be great local athletes and still have a love of sport.”

## Wesley College



The Wesley College gym.

Wesley College is another Melbourne secondary school with a proud sporting culture.

Alumni include tennis great Mark Philippoussis, swimming champion Michael Klim, former Australian netball captain Sharelle McMahon and GWS captain Toby Greene.



Toby Greene of the Giants is a former Wesley student. (Photo by Dylan Burns/AFL Photos via Getty Images)

The co-ed private school, which has campuses in Glen Waverley, Elsternwick and St Kilda Rd, provides expansive facilities for sport to cater to its students' interests including playing fields and ovals, indoor multipurpose sport centres, swimming pools, an athletics track, a rowing centre, tennis courts, netball courts, basketball courts, hockey pitches and state-of-the-art fitness gymnasiums.

Students from Years 5 to 12 compete in the APS (Associated Public Schools) and the AGSV (Associated Grammar Schools of Victoria) in a range of sports including tennis, athletics, basketball, swimming, football and soccer.



The Wesley College pool.

Students are guided by experienced head coaches and there's been no shortage of team success this year, with the school celebrating seven premierships cups, securing premierships in the boys' basketball and a historic trifecta of its 'triple double' -winning both the boys' and girls' competition premierships cups in cross country, athletics and tennis.

## **Carey Baptist Grammar School**





Carey Baptist Grammar School

Carey has a proud history of producing sporting stars and is celebrating the success of three former students in particular this year – Tom Mitchell, Darcy Moore and Nick Daicos starred for Collingwood as the Pies won the AFL premiership.



Nick Daicos is a former Carey student. Picture by Michael Klein

Carey students use the Carey Bulleen Sports Complex to hone their skills, which includes seven playing fields that are used for sports including cricket, soccer, football, rugby and softball.

Students also have access to the 25m eight lane indoor heated Geoffrey Stevens Swimming Pool; and two netball/basketball courts at the Gerard Cramer Physical Education Centre.

## **Caulfield Grammar**



Caulfield Grammar School sports facilities.

Sport also plays an integral part of life for students at Caulfield Grammar school, a co-ed private school with campuses in Wheelers Hill, Malvern and Caulfield.

Students compete in the Associated Public Schools of Victoria (APS) and Associated Grammar Schools of Victoria (AGSV) competitions, and can take part in a range of sports including badminton, cricket, athletics, AFL, soccer and basketball.

The school describes its sporting facilities as “world-class” with a gym with multipurpose indoor courts, swimming pool and diving pool at the Wheelers Hill and Caulfield campuses

and a gym, oval, tennis and basketball courts, cricket nets and a running track at the Malvern campus.

Students can also use a range of external sporting facilities.

[Past students](#) include AFL champion Chris Judd, athletics champ Tamsyn Manou and legendary runner John Landy.

## **Xavier College**



Xavier College pool.

Sport also plays a key role for students at private boys' school Xavier College, which has two campuses in Kew.

Facilities include the Xavier Sports Centre at the senior campus which includes a heated indoor pool, weight training room, two basketball/netball courts, an indoor cricket area and nine outdoor floodlit synthetic tennis courts.

Students from across both campuses enjoy the use of these facilities as part of their PE classes and APS Sport competitions.

“Old Xavs” who have gone on to achieve sporting success including AFL champs Jobe Watson and Luke Ball.

## **Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School**



The gym at Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School. Picture: [maxiplay.com.au](http://maxiplay.com.au)

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School, a member of the Associated Grammar Schools of Victoria, offers students the chance to take part in a number of summer and winter sports, including athletics, cricket, basketball and football.

The private co-ed school, which has campuses in Moonee Ponds, Essendon and Keilor East, offers students the chance to enjoy “outstanding sporting facilities” including six ovals and a [\\$25m gym and basketball stadium](#).

Past students who achieved sporting success include Essendon great Dustin Fletcher and Western Bulldogs champ Scott West.

## **Presbyterian Ladies College**



An artist's impression of the Presbyterian Ladies College new sports centre. Students at all-girls' private school PLC in Burwood will soon have access to a world-class new [sports, aquatic and fitness centre](#).

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The multimillion centre will include three basketball courts; a 50m, eight lane swimming pool, a learn to swim pool, diving towers and seating for 400 visitors; and a gymnasium and spin room, multipurpose spaces for aerobics, dance, relaxation, table-tennis and class teaching, staff areas, collaborative meeting spaces for students and staff and an underground carpark.

The school is a member of Girls Sport Victoria and students can take part in a range of sports including athletics, tennis, netball, volleyball and gymnastics.

Sporting stars who attended PLC include Catherine Phillips (AFLW player).