

2022 - Year in Review - Fitzroy Community School

2022 marked the first post-lockdown school year, and a year that while starting during a great swathe of covid cases, looked clearly like school closures were not a likely occurrence. In the end, the whole year ran closure free. The withdrawal of the likelihood of universal lockdown and universal school closures removed a sense of fear and foreboding, as did rules surrounding specific school closures, exposure sites and their imposed isolation periods, close-contact rules, stay at home periods and vaccine mandates, with all of these being rescinded by the beginning of third term. This removed a significant source of stress for staff and made staffing a much more predictable endeavour. The rolling nature of the withdrawal of these lockdowns contributed to a growing return to normal as the year rolled along. In addition to this, many school families (and members of their extended families), staff and friends and associated contracted covid over the massive December-January spike, which did wonders to annul and dispel many fears and the unwarranted anxiety surrounding the actual danger posed by covid to the young and healthy. The year at school benefited from all of these changes, adding a lightness and sense of relief and a feeling of security.

This return to normal saw many events, ritual, calendar items and traditions return and be re-instated, with an attempt made by the staff and school as a whole to find time and space to not just re-instate missing calendar items, but to attempt (an endeavour which was largely successful) to make up for missed events and rites of passage. Additional camps were added, staffed and enjoyed. Sports day ran twice, ending terms two and three. The school disco returned, as did parent-attended book reports. The end of year water park excursion ran. Parental afternoon teas were reinstated in the second half of the year, and the school play was performed live in a theatre, rather than via live-stream. Soiree returned to the calendar as did poetry for parents. These events were all were better attended than they'd been for many years, indicating a desire to be back together. The remnants of lockdown and the rules imposed during these many periods were seen in a continuing effort to run a significant proportion of classes outside, with better ventilated spaces and open door and windows a new priority, a change that continued to be seen all the way through to the end of the year. Fresh air has yet to prove a health hazard.

The joy of the school community as it re-engaged in-person was apparent, and due to the slow but ongoing rollback of the many restrictions imposed over 2020 and 2021 it felt that each month brought a new means of real connection. Plays, soirees, concerts, fetes, and the myriad other small events that punctuate a school year were all reinstated and embraced by school families, contributing to a really upbeat vibe flowing through each and every school day. It really felt that the community wanted to full-re-engage, to soak-up the community flavour of the school, to embrace and affirm the spirit of the school. A positive consequence of lockdown and the isolation of 2020 and 2021 appears to have been a raising of the awareness of the special community that our school is, and in this awakened knowledge, a desire to really connect and live the vibrant and happy community that marks Fitzroy Community School as a special place.

The new students quickly fitted in and happily engaged with the richness of our school. It is hard to know if we as a staff made a greater effort to quickly make connections and build relationships, or if this was a clear need of our new students, but it felt like the newbies more quickly than in the past found their place. This said, the losses and costs imposed by isolation was noted by most staff members, observing that many of our new students, and some of our returning students, lacked the social skills and interpersonal skills observed in past cohorts. Additional time and effort were put into developing these skills and providing additional opportunities for their growth and building social and personal skills. In the younger students, these lockdown and isolation-imposed costs had, in our school at least, mostly worked themselves and dissipated by the end of the year. In many of the middle level primary school students, isolation and the excessive screen time regularly associated with lockdown were still measurable as the year came to an end, and clearly exacerbated in a number of students who had not been on site during any of the six periods of school closure. The decision to run additional camps appeared to be a well-justified decision, and was part of the school's attempt to ameliorate the cost and loss imposed on children over the last two years.

Summer (first term) camps were again a highlight, and running early in the year, offered a real and enjoyable time for screen-free, interpersonal re-connections. These returned to Numurkah, Mansfield and east Gippsland. The camaraderie observed and experienced over these first term camps was abundant, and not held in check by the worry of a post-camp 5, 7- or 14-day period of isolation.

The year saw the school classroom assistants spending quite significant time covering missed content, addressing gaps in knowledge and getting the school's student's up to speed and actively re-engaged with their learning. Patience, tolerance and the ability to concentrate appeared to be a frequent consequence of lockdown and digitally delivered teaching.

As noted earlier, an attempt was made to provide a more-than-complete school experience, and to ensure that all of the traditional rites of passage and special events covered in the lockdown years were provided to the children. The year started with a slight modification on earlier years, with outdoor meetings more the norm, but finished with a return to an indoor venue for the graduation concerts. The outdoor graduations of 2021, while a charming events, had restricted numbers and modified formats, and so it was with a real sense of relief and celebration that these returned to an indoor theatre setting, and the additional richness offered by a theatre, and to have all of the younger students active witnesses of this significant, important ritual.

In reflecting on not just 2022, but 2021 and 2020, it is with some pride (and significant sadness) that our school was unique in being the only school in the state to offer a full on-site and remote program, and to have managed this from the first day of lockdown-restricted schooling. The digitising of a significant proportion of the literacy program has already and will for years to come, enhance our offering and enrich our support our program and parent-school connection.

In looking back over 2022, and the two lockdown years, the ability and commitment of our staff, to not just work through these changes, but to strive to pick up the pieces and losses over 2022 is worthy of the highest commendation. Dedication and commitment of the highest order, and a good serving of ability, expertise and skill define our teachers.

In thinking of the richness of the FCS experience, while 2022 was, by the middle of the year, in terms of the day to day operations of the school, essentially back to normal, restrictions continue to apply in the aged care sector, meaning that our visits to spend time with, listen to, encourage and share with these, generally lonely elderly residents, had not yet been reinstated by the end of the year. It is hoped that these visits, for the joy they bring to these elderly, vulnerable members of our community are

reinstated in 2023. The art of letter writing, found and developed during lockdown, continued, if in a slightly reduced form. It is hoped that this continues to be part of these children's lives for the joy it brings the recipients.

The Shergold Review of Australia's pandemic response led to many, many messages being received by school, validating our position on school closures and the harms they were doing children, and the lack of evidence informing this decision, with this review writing of the 'unjustified closure of schools' as its primary finding. These messages were received with no sense of triumph, just sadness for the unnecessary harm inflicted on so many tens of thousands of young people.

The experience of the full complement of camps (plus some), the reinstatement of the outings typical of our school (zoo, museum, scienceworks, the library, galleries, etc) was well-received by the student body, and commented upon by school families. Life regained significant richness this year. The core mission of Fitzroy Community School, noted in earlier reports, is and continues to be, the raising of happy, empowered children. The mission was clarified during 2020 and 2021 and is better achieved when our full curriculum and co-curricular offerings are experienced by the all of the students. The benefits of our programs were clearly on display this year. Loss does sometimes reveal the value of what you have on offer.

Community, the loss of connection and closeness experienced during 2020 and 2021, and the value it brings, was embraced this year, especially in the second half of the year, when restrictions were fully lifted. Interestingly, while soirees and concerts have always been a time to give the children the opportunity to perform, their absence was also felt due to the inability of parents and staff to mingle as part of these events. In again looking back to 2020 and 2021, the school had made an effort to actively engage with all parents due to their absence. This year saw a continuation of this, with a more conscious effort made to reach out to the parents who are not doing the pick-ups and drop-offs, and who for various reasons cannot attend sports days, and poetry recitals. These efforts were well-received.

Normanby Avenue in 2022 was quite a different school to that of 2020 and 2021, having been closed for all of the lockdown periods during these years. The buzz at the start of the year probably even exceeded the buzz for the final month of 2021 as it felt that another lockdown was unlikely. In this, the

campus' ninth year, it is now the case that most of the children in most year levels started with FCS, but unlike the last two years, the school, led by true FCS Biggies, ran the full year, giving this year's Biggies the full opportunities and experiences that we aim to provide. And the Biggies did lead the school very well, jumping in to all that our school has to offer. Outings and outdoor classes defined Normanby Avenue, as did chess and basketball. Normanby Avenue Biggies participated in inter-school debating and regional and division netball competitions for the first time, marking this campus' continued growth.

The Dan O'Connell Hotel project continues to progress, but at a slower pace than hoped for and expected, with its opening now looking more likely for the 2025 school year, rather than part way through 2024. The benefits and opportunities offered by this site, and its proximity to so many amenities, has not diminished, and the plans and conversations surrounding this new campus continue to bubble along, highlighting the many benefits offered by not just the building itself, but the location, with its proximity to so many locations offering broad and expansive educational opportunities. The public transport connections are unmatched, and the bike path, quite literally on the doorstep, a gift. The iconic nature of The Dan O'Connell Hotel will certainly add to the status of the school. Our thanks to Richard Stampton Architects for their ongoing efforts pushing this project along.

People before Things – A Further Reflection

The motto, reflected upon last year, is worthy of another revisit, albeit tangentially. This motto stresses people, character and connection. In the move out of lockdown, the personal has again been allowed to flourish, throwing a new light upon the value of our motto, and the wisdom it offers.

Poetry

The two school poems also look to have been very well chosen. *If* by Rudyard Kipling, and *How the Little Kite learned to Fly* both speak to and reflect on character, and the qualities of endurance, striving and persistence. These were qualities demonstrated by the staff and students throughout the last two years. This year saw poetry return to its former, pre-lockdown prominence, with recitation being reinstated, and performances returning to the curriculum. Poetry for Parents (a short event where parents perform their favourite poems for their fellows, and the children, returned to the calendar after a

two-year hiatus, and was enjoyed by all. The joy of recitation, hard to achieve on Zoom was again experienced in classrooms, with laughs of joy testament to the easy manner in which children engage with this medium.

Around School

The return to school was a joyous occasion, and as noted earlier, the daily experience slowly returned to normal as the year progressed. RAT tests marked this year from the beginning until early summer, with the warmer months ending many viral fears. The return of parents (on-site) dropping kids off, picking them up and having many incidental chats (generally outside until quite later in the year) and the return of our volunteers returned a feeling of humanity to the school, and marked it as a place where adults feel comfortable. The many difficult logistical considerations imposed by lockdown rules slowly fell away, which added a lightness to the organisation of many events. And the return of nearly all staff on-campus was a marked change, with some members of staff having hardly been on-site for most of 2020 and 2021.

It is not easy to describe ‘normal’, as ‘normal’ is generally the point of reference for difference, but in the case of our school, ‘normal’ is a much loved and appreciated experience. Shared cups of tea, in-person conversations, providing a level of care and support difficult to match in a digital, remote format, felt more special due to their absences. The dedication to outdoor time implemented during 2020 and 2021 continued, with time in nature (parks, nature reserves, bushland) all continuing to be a daily lived experience of all students.

The friction and stress associated with the restrictions (and politics) of 2020 and 2021 similarly fell away, adding to a sense of lightness and positivity. These years have been politically divisive (in the broader community, if not especially so at school) and so the removal of lockdown and other associated restrictions helped shift political considerations, allegiances and perspectives out of many day-to-day conversations, and in doing so, helped build connections and reinforced bridges.

The children, to greater and lesser degrees, continued to display the symptoms of excessive screen time, with this slowly dissipating as the year moved forward, a change ran parallel to increased vibrancy and connection. Children, stuck at home for many months, did arrive back at school showing lowered social skills, reduced empathy and more limited tolerance. The hurly-burly of the school day acted as a slow-acting tonic, with nearly all children cured (at our school at least) and returning to relatively normal ranges by the time the year came to an end. It was noted by a number of staff, that the older children displayed a greater impact from lockdowns, school closures and other societal restrictions, with younger ones, in families where screens were not the sole daily diet, gaining (or regaining) normal levels of connection, energy, tolerance and age appropriate social skills more quickly.

The school's chaplains continued to play a significant role in supporting the teachers to support children and their families, underpinning nature-based adventures and connections with families. The value of camps was noted by all camp teachers in the first months of the year, in the ability to jump-start or boost reconnection and encourage creative, connected play. The many nights spent away by teachers this year needs to be acknowledged.

Highlights of the Year

The Brunswick Street play, *Shazam*, was perhaps the most successful play the school has ever put on, and had an energy that, despite all of our best efforts, was missing in a live-streamed environment. The buzz, as the play dates approached, was palpable. Lines were practiced and re-practiced before school, after-school and during breaks. The dances were created, worked upon, and practiced and practiced, with this group of year six students determined to make the play a very special event, tacitly and consciously noting the considerable difference a real theatre and live audience make. The buzz was explosive as play week arrived, and the performances reflected the effort, commitment and dedication of this group of year six students. The donning of costumes, the application of stage make up and the spraying of hairspray literally saw children bouncing in their seats, buzzing with excitement. The shows were enjoyed by all, with a post play ice-cream lasting for a couple of hours as lines, incidents (and a few bloopers) were discussed and laughed about.

A star of the 2021 play, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in the audience to support a younger sibling, reflected that there is nothing quite the same as having an audience. Rehearsing in the same room is quite a different experience to rehearsing at home via Zoom.

The play was presented later in the year, allowing a number of parents to contribute. This also added to showing the children that their effort was supported and valued by their broader community. Thanks Nikki for the props, Clare and Sue for the costumes, Lara for her direction and Chuby for choreography.

The Normanby Avenue play also returned to the theatre with a live audience, with the time honoured classic *The Wizard of Oz* marking this campus' 10th play, with a re-run of the inaugural play of this campus, albeit in the standard, 70 minute experience. The audience enjoyed the familiarity of the classic soundtrack, with *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, *We're Off to see the Wizard* and *Ding Dong the Witch is Dead* not losing any of their vibrance despite now being nearly 100 years old. This classic plot of good versus evil readily appeals to children, as does the dastardly nature of the witch and the quirkiness of the Lion, Scarecrow and Tinman. This play was a great success, enjoyed by children and their parents (and a good smattering of grandparents, finally back at school events). The students involved in this play deserve a special mention, for their creative talents and acting ability.

As noted in previous reports, our annual plays are a highlight of the year, and so it was quite special to perform these and give the children the experience of the full-buzz of live theatre. The play experience was more real to the children with rehearsal this year not conducted via Zoom. The rite of passage of these plays was more real, and as such, special and meaningful, occurring in a theatre with the audience present. Many graduates have shared over the years that the play experience was not just special but has stayed with them for their post-school lives. This feedback is a strong motivator to keep the plays as such a central part of the year, and a core aspect of the year six experience. Thanks to Lara for her direction, Chuby for choreography, Nikki for make-up and the backdrop, Claire for props and a whole swag of parents for sewing costumes.

NAPLAN

NAPLAN was again tackled with enthusiasm, with the students sitting these exams all arriving at school on the test days in good spirits. This positive attitude to tests and exams is one that we've tried to instil in our students, and the manner in which NAPLAN was approached would appear to validate the success of our approach. As noted in earlier reports, our school has always been ranked as one of the highest performing schools in the country.

Camp has already been commented upon as an antidote to excessive screen time, and as a means by which connection and community are achieved and grown. Camp therefore plays a significant role in the experience of our students, with a slight boost in 2022 due to its ability to help repeal the negative social and emotional impact of lockdowns and school closures. Summer camps were happy, positive events, with the students all so happy to be back together, away together and in the great outdoors together. Walks, cricket, tennis, chats, and a plethora of games were the features of these camps, as were shared meals and moments of contemplation. Autumn camps were all reinstated, with bushcraft, cubby construction, face-painting, quizzes and card games all enjoyed by the children, who demonstrated a renewed enthusiasm for this time in nature. All students returned to school happy and content, if a bit tired and dirty, clearly enabled and empowered by their time away. Spring camps again took place in the Kinglake and Whittlesea districts as well as the Grampians. The weather during these camps was mostly fine, with fresh mornings mostly followed by fine days. While the visible joy and enthusiasm of being on camp this term was not quite as obvious as it had been at the start of the year, this was made up for by the withdrawal of covid associated protocols that made some aspects of camp logistics challenging.

This said, it was more than apparent to the teachers that this time on camp made a significant contribution to the general positivity, connectivity and wellbeing of all students. Camps connect students to each other, their teachers and the wondrous world of nature. A number of teachers reflected upon the gains in confidence made by quite a number of the children during these camps, and the value they provided to both individuals and the class. Growth in confidence and independence, were on display this year with a heightened perspective, perhaps due to the gains made through spending a few days away from one's parents being a far from normal event in two years of lockdowns and days on end spent exclusively with one's nuclear family.

Locations visited in camps this year covered: Numurkah, Mansfield, Gippsland, the Grampians (north and south) and Kinglake West. A big thank you to the staff who assisted in making these camps such special times for our students: Miranda, Wayne, James, Nikki, Ben, Joelle, Faye, Sue, Kate and Stefan. Thanks for sharing your time and energy, and this, combined with your experience and dedication to children, contributing to the success of these camps. The tradition of the Tinies camping with a parent was reinstated toward the end of the year, and the parents on these camps shared that these camps were a great opportunity to get to know the other parents.

The final camps of the year, in mid-late Spring included the Tinies (and some Littlies) on their first camps (or first camp without a parent) and were all great successes. It was (again) noted how quickly most children adapt to a no-tech nature experience, finding joy, interest and countless hours of entertainment in searching for bugs, whittlings sticks, mushing up clay for paint and assembling sticks to make cubbies. The simplicity of the children's experiences is charming, providing opportunities for the children to exhibit a collective creativity.

Building Projects / Maintenance / Repairs

This year saw more projects, improvements, renovations and minor works addressed than ever before. 2020 and 2021, with their exposure site rules had meant that only really urgent repairs had been attended to, with minor improvements, painting and renovations placed on hold. It was simply not worth having to close the school for 14 days due to having replaced a door lock, repainted a room or installed some new shelving. The removal of exposure site rules saw a significant increase in improvements, renovations and minor works that had been placed on the backburner for two years. Plaster was repaired, grips checked and re-stuck, rooms painted, drains cleared, hinges oiled, locks replaced and lighting upgraded. The south-facing louvres on the rear building at Normanby Avenue were replaced with fixed cladding, offering better heat, noise and damp protection than the louvres. New pinboards were installed, blinds upgraded and wind-protection investigated. Trip hazards were continually checked for.

The Dan O'Connell continued to see minor leaks attended to, with the number of places of water egress continuing to diminish, but frustratingly not quite solved. While a severe downpour no longer sees this

building act like a sieve, there remains a number of small, slow leaks that have not been entirely solved.

Digitising the Fitzroy Literacy Method

This work continued, albeit with less time and energy dedicated to it than in 2020 and 2021 when producing a quality remotely delivered curriculum was a high priority. The Easter holidays again saw Nick (and to a lesser degree Faye) continue to revise some recordings and content produced in a rush in 2020, and create and digitise further materials. It is hoped that this project will be finished in 2023, or by mid-2024, as while the content produced to date has been an amazing addition to our program, further extension activities, in-depth exercises and revision materials will continue to assist all of our students with their studies. Nick and Faye continue to earn the thanks and appreciation of the whole school community for the significant time and effort that they have, and continue to put into, the enormous project. This project has already made a massive contribution to our programs, and as it continues to grow and expand, enhances our offerings and depth of content.

Media

It was with some relief that 2022 was a year in which our school was not continually present in the media. The return to school for all students removed this issue, with the government at the end of 2021 adopting the position held by FCS since the first lockdown back in March 2020. This position was not a statement of anti-establishmentism, but a clear following of the scientific evidence and medical advice on children and schools. It was with some relief that 2022 witnessed the government finally placing children as the priority and prioritising the wellbeing of children. The Shergold Review of Australia's pandemic response, while not mentioning any specific school by name, did share that the closure of schools was the primary policy failure enacted by authorities, positioning the closing of schools as 'unjustified'. This review, reported in many media outlets led to the school receiving a number of messages acknowledging its courageous and principled stance, and the missteps made by governments in closing schools.

Sport / Park / Bush time

Protocols adopted in 2020 and 2021 that prioritized outdoor time and time in nature continued to inform many practices this year, with time outdoors in nature continuing to have a greater time allocation than they had in the pre-lockdown years. Summer terms were filled with swimming, Zombie Tiggy, various running distances and events, basketball and a range of ball and non-ball games.

Interschool sport resumed in second term, with the school participating in Cross Country, Netball and Basketball. A number of children performed very well at District Cross County level, progressing to Division and Regional levels. The netball team achieved its highest level of success, dominating District level and progressing to the play-off for State Championships, where it sadly went down 15 to 12. Hoop-time basketball resumed, and interschool Rounders and Handball were played in the Spring against a number of local schools.

Outside of more formal sporting classes and PE activities, nature and bush-time were a significant part of the school week, with the final term seeing their timetable allocation return to something akin to their pre-lockdown norm. Edinburgh Gardens, Merri Creek parklands, Pearl Reserve, Penders Park and Mayors Park continue to be well-utilised by our students.

Sporting Grants continue to be applied for and received, with these being used to significantly enhance and expand our swimming program. We again thank the Commonwealth Government for this additional funding, especially in this post-lockdown year, when extra time engaged in physical endeavours has had such a clearly beneficial impact on the children.

Blog

Timothy's Blog (his thoughts on education) continues to prompt conversation and examination of the educational landscape, with a termly reflection on a range of pedagogical and parenting themes the central tenets of exploration. Challenging, incisive, reflective and critical are all comments that have accompanied its publication, with some sharing that they've initiated long, deep and engaging conversations around dinner tables. The emails and short conversations that follow its circulation affirm that the topics covered are of interest to many families and educators. These blogs feature a few clear themes: raising empowered, engaged and caring children, and less often, policy issues that stress

the right of all children to a diverse, tailored and high-quality school experience, a school experience that reflects the values, faith and aspirations held by their family.

Visitors

Visitors did not return on-site until later in 2022, reflecting the school's commitment to keeping the children (and staff) well and on-site for as many days as was possible. The return of visitors to our school was one of the steps, noted earlier, that marked a return to normal. These represented prospective parents, teachers and school leaders, all interested in finding out a bit more about our approach.

MySchool Website

Our school continues to rank as one of the top performing schools in Victoria. Our results were again pleasing, especially the strong showing demonstrated in student improvement which we judge to be a truer measure of the quality of a school's programs. Our raw scores continue to place our students as significantly ahead of their peers in most schools, and the poor literacy and numeracy of the vast majority of the students who transfer to our school, anecdotally, affirms that reality behind the NAPLAN/MySchool data. It does feel tragic to us that so many children are failed by their schools. The importance of the NAPLAN data on student improvement, is in its ability to demonstrate the quality of our teaching program and school staff, as it highlights the impact of these to a student's literacy and numeracy levels. In looking at the raw NAPLAN scores, it is also worthy of note that our school dedicates a fraction of the time of most schools to the pursuit of literacy and numeracy: our camps, plays, adventures and diverse curriculum fit in around our literacy and numeracy program.

Yours,

Timothy Berryman (Principal)

The following part of this document are aspects of school operations that we are obliged to write on. Perhaps jump to the final paragraph, Schooling for Life.

Student Learning

Students at this school continue to make great gains socially, emotionally and academically. Participation in standardised testing (NAPLAN/MySchool) shows that our school is one of the top performing schools not only in the State, but in Australia, finishing within high echelons of primary schooling in the country. Our (pre-lockdown) flow of visitors from schools across Asia report that our level is comparable with that achieved in their schools. We would like to add to this that we achieve this with far fewer hours dedicated to literacy and numeracy. Our high achievements in literacy and numeracy continue to reinforce the approach we take to literacy and numeracy. It remains encouraging that a growing number of schools have contacted us and sent staff to investigate our program and methods. The benefits to wellbeing, health, connection, agency and independency achieved by our curriculum are not as a result of sacrificing academic successes, they are achieved alongside them.

Attendance

We officially report our attendance data to the Commonwealth, and in this, demonstrate our high levels of attendance. The reports (and Senate Committee investigation) of 100,000s of students having failed to return to school or retuning only in a haphazard way after 2020 and 2021 are not reflected in attendance at our school. There did appear to be extra bouts of illness this year, but this did not appear to make a much statistical difference to attendance. It is really pleasing that attendance issues (or lack of) are not an issue of concern.

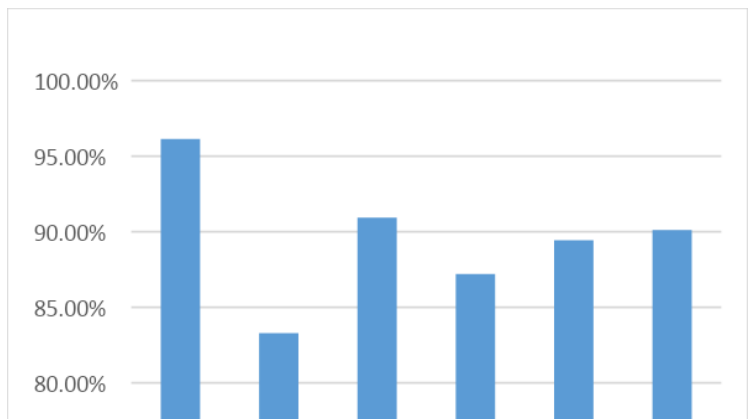
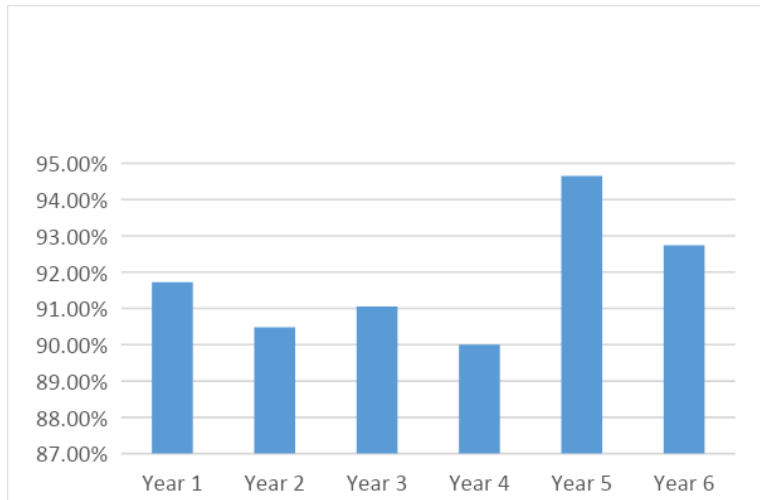
While significant absences and truancy are not major issues, attendance monitoring is not without some frustrations. While we continue to remind families to notify us of student absences early in the day (unwell or other cause of absence) this does not always occur. Chasing absences does continue to waste teacher and staff time. We continue to request and encourage all families to call or email when they know that their child will be absent.

**Fitzroy Community School
Attendance Rates 2022
Brunswick Street Campus**

Year 1	91.72%
Year 2	90.48%
Year 3	91.05%
Year 4	90%
Year 5	94.65%
Year 6	92.74%

**Fitzroy Community School
Attendance Rates 2022
Normanby Avenue Campus**

Year 1	96.13%
Year 2	83.28%
Year 3	90.92%
Year 4	87.2%
Year 5	89.43%
Year 6	90.12%

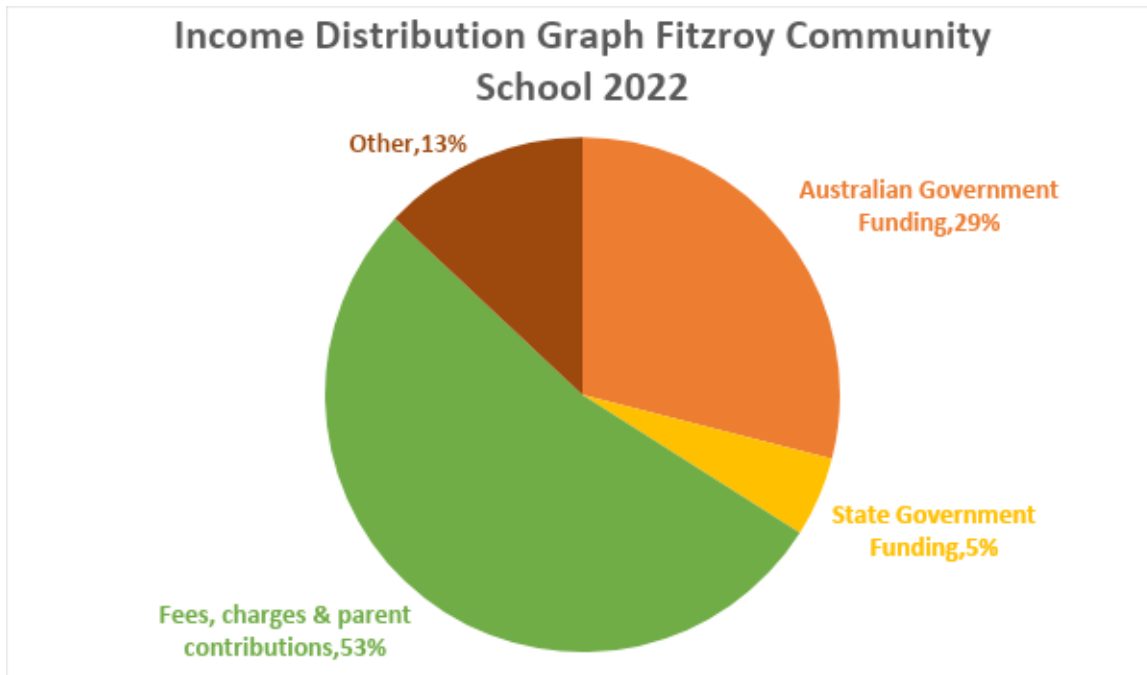


School Finances

Fitzroy Community School receives approximately 2/3 of its income from school fees, a quarter from Commonwealth Grants, and a 1/20 from the State Government as recurrent grants. In acknowledgement of the fact that the majority of the school's income is derived from school fees, fee collection is necessarily an important task. Fees (issuing and collection) are one of the principal tasks of the bookkeeper, with the principal providing assistance when and if necessary. This year saw fee deferrals return to pre-lockdown levels (very few, approaching zero) and the ease of fee collection continue to improve (seen through a reduction of reminders sent to families). The bookkeeper is acknowledged in performing an important role in maintaining the school's strong financial position, and minimising late, slow and non-payers. The school continues to have an enviable position with regard to bad debts, reflecting not just the professionalism of the bookkeeper, but the quality of the teachers and teaching program. Happy kids contribute to happy parents and easier fee collection. In examining the financial position, it does not appear that bad and doubtful debts will become a significant issue in the future.

The school engages an external accountant to prepare budgets (adding expertise and independence) and to provide an outsider's perspective on the school's finances and financial position. The last few years have seen a marked increase in the value of Commonwealth Government funding, bolstering the school's financial position and feeding into minimal fee increases. The very low increases in fees in recent years reflect a commitment to keep our school as accessible as possible to families on average incomes, and to pass on all additional Government funding. The additional funds received under the FAM funding model are passed directly on to families with Health Care Cards. In taking a longer perspective, the benefit of having moved to a two-campus model continues to pay an economic dividend, with some compliance and administrative costs shared over a larger student body.

Income Distribution Graph



The school did not receive any Commonwealth Capital Grants in 2022. Maintenance, small improvements, repairs and a couple of room re-allocations and renovations best sum up 2022. Painting is a constant in school. 2022 also saw a number of electrical improvements undertaken. In short, our maintenance program continues to repair, repaint and monitor our school site for areas of wear and tear, as well as potential hazards.

Teacher Standards/Qualifications/Satisfaction

The school only employs the most talented and engaging teachers, reflected in both our ongoing successes and parent and student satisfaction. The school continues to be encouraged by the number of talented student teachers undertaking their placements in recent years, and we feel that this situation bodes well for the profession as a whole. Sadly, the number of placement requests does occasionally exceed the school's capacity to accept all student teacher applicants. We have again received comments from our graduates, after they have moved into secondary schooling, on the quality of their primary school teachers: their talents and abilities align with our commitment to recruit teachers of the highest standard, and we then give them the space to be themselves and to offer their best.

Fitzroy Community School is committed to providing a happy, fun, engaging and challenging learning environment. Many of our part-time teachers visit the school on their day off, again reflecting their enjoyment of their working environment, and the friendships and community that constitute their work environment.

List of Teachers and their Qualifications

Principal - Timothy Berryman Bachelor of Arts (Melbourne), Graduate Diploma in Education (Melbourne), Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Studies (Melbourne), Bachelor of Letters (Melbourne), Master of Letters (University of New England), Master of Arts (Universidad Jaume I – Spain). Doctorate of Education (submitted).

Teachers

Vice Principal - Jeannette Howden Bachelor of Education (comprised of Diploma of Kindergarten Teaching Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers' College and Graduate Diploma in Curriculum Melbourne College of Advanced Education)

Faye Berryman Bachelor of Arts, Diploma of Education, Diploma of Social Work, Master of Arts

Warren Howden Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Music, Master of Teaching

Miranda Frankel Bachelor of Arts (Melbourne University), Diploma of Education (University of Western Australia)

Wayne Wearn-Jarvis Bachelor of Education (Flinders University)

Joelle Wearn-Jarvis Bachelor of Education (Flinders University)

Nicholas Berryman Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Law, Master of Applied Positive Psychology Melbourne University, Graduate Diploma in Education (with Honours) Charles Sturt University

Lara Brooks Bachelor of Arts (Musical Theatre), Master of Teaching

Kerrie Bolton Bachelor of Education (Music Major, Deakin University), Bachelor of Music (Voice, Performance stream - Melbourne University Conservatorium), Master of Music Performance (Victorian College of the Arts)

Susanna Campbell Bachelor of Speech Therapy, Bachelor of Arts, Certificate of English Language Teaching, Master of Education, Master of Teaching (Primary)

Craig Dowell Bachelor of Education (Primary), NVQ Level 3 in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair, BTEC National Diploma Vehicle Repair and Technology, NVQ Level 2 in Aircraft Engineering Maintenance

Stephanie Leo Bachelor of Communication Design, Master of Teaching (Primary)

Workforce Composition

The school believes that one of its strengths is the diversity and composition of its teachers and assistants. The school has a broad mix of genders, ages and experience (with teachers of forty plus years' experience working side by side with teachers in their first year), a good mix of men and women, and a range of cultural and religious backgrounds. The school does not currently employ a staff member who identifies as Aboriginal but has a couple of teachers with extensive 'on the lands' teaching experience, having taught and lived in Aboriginal Australia for a number of years, and then in schools with significant Aboriginal populations.

The single greatest hindrance to our school (and many other workplaces) in Australia employing a more diverse workforce is compliance in the form of licensing, qualifications and certification. This results in, for instance, a foreign-born teacher, a graduate of a prestigious foreign university, being denied registration to teach in Australia irrespective of their language skills, teaching ability or former teaching experience, despite competence and experience in schools, and having demonstrably higher language skills than their Australian-born counterparts. If governments were serious about workforce composition rather than virtue signaling, schools would not be required to comment on composition of their workforce but would rather be allowed to employ suitable, qualified and able teachers, a move that would instantly contribute to an expansion of the teaching profession across class, language, race and nationality. Teaching ballet or French should be measured on one's ability to dance and language skills, and an ability to impart these skills, not whether a Victorian recognized qualification has been completed. In a country where 25% of the population were born overseas, this restriction is especially problematic. Sadly, in Victoria, it would appear that well-intentioned regulations hinder an expansion of diversity within the teaching profession, and in doing so, lower the quality of the classroom experience for a significant number of children. The current framing of regulators, preferencing the geographic location of the awarding institution hinder the ability of schools to employ teachers of the

highest calibre. If the Victorian Government was actually focused on the ability and composition of the teaching workforce, then skills and teaching ability would be the sole qualification required of teachers. Still, in the weird bureaucratic dystopia we exist in, writing on this seems to have greater importance than actually empowering schools to employ a more able, diverse group of teachers. It is ironic that schools are required to write on workforce composition while at the same time being denied the right to expand it.

Schooling for Life

We work to maintain a school lifestyle in which camps are enjoyed, hi-fives are acts of spontaneous camaraderie, chasey is played, skipping is fun, applying Band-Aids is an act of a caring adult, and shows of affection regarded as a standard expression of friendship.

Timothy Berryman (Principal)

BA DipEd GradDipEdStud BLitt MLitt MA