



# **FERNBROOK SCHOOL**

16 CLEVEDON ROAD,  
THE BASIN, VIC 3154

**Annual Report**

# **2022**

# A Message From The Chair

## Kris Inkster

If we were to describe 2020 and 2021 as times of unpredictability and disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the school's relocation, then 2022 emerged as a welcome year of steadiness and consolidation for Fernbrook School.

We started the year hopeful that we'd seen the last of the lockdowns and the children could return to the normalcy of attending school on a daily basis, reforging friendships and social connections.

Term 1 started on an exciting note as we welcomed our first Grade 7's to the school after having gained approval for years 7 & 8 at the end of 2021. Along with new high school students came new staff, Melanie and Ralph joining the school as high school teachers. This group of students and teachers have a huge responsibility in paving the way for subsequent years and setting the standard for Fernbrook. Having watched both the children and teachers learn and grow as the year progressed we are all very proud of what they have achieved and how they represent Fernbrook. It will be exciting to watch the high school continue to grow in the coming years with the addition of Years 9 & 10, new enrolments and new staff.

The Primary School also saw the addition of new staff as we welcomed DD, Jo, Michelle and Naomi to the team in 2022. With the Primary School forming the core group of children during the covid pandemic it was great to see all the children return along with some new additions at the start of 2022. The new teaching staff brought a good range of enthusiasm and experience to the school and we saw some immediate and positive impacts to the children as a result.

In addition to teaching staff we welcomed Jasmin Williamson to the team as Business Manager. There are a lot of background processes and requirements to running a school and Jasmin provided much needed support in this area. The school saw a number of improvements on the business front as new communication methods were added with increased regularity and frequency, the addition of Sentral Student Management software and improvement and updating of policies and procedures.

The school also saw a number of improvements in facilities and teaching resources throughout 2022 including new laptops, interactive television screens, basketball hoops, sports equipment, new aircon and heating and upgraded internet and IT services. Improvement of facilities and resources will be a continued focus for the Board as we progress through the coming years and already in 2023 we have seen the installation of the shade sails.

In August, Nicolette, who had been part of the school for a year, decided to resign from her position as Principal to spend more time with family. Nicolette became a member of the school team during a pivotal period amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, offering an abundance of expertise and direction across all levels of operation. During her time with the school Nicolette often worked tirelessly behind the scenes, ensuring the foundations were in place for future success of the school and children. We are very thankful for the hard work Nicolette has done for the school.

Looking ahead to 2023 and beyond the school is now in a strong position. We have a talented and enthusiastic group of staff, a record number of enrolments for 2024, stable and predictable funding and an increasingly active community. Some of the focus areas moving forward will include increased and improved resources and facilities, and continued development and growth of the high school which is still in its early and formative years. It's exciting to think of where the school will be in a few short years.



# Members Of The Board 2022

## Currently Active

Chair / Treasurer:	Kris Inkster
Secretary:	Kelly Winters
Director:	Glenn Faulkner
Director:	Debbie Connelly
Principal:	Nicolette Correy (Jan-Aug), Rhys Thomas & Matthew Nye (Co-Principal Aug onward)

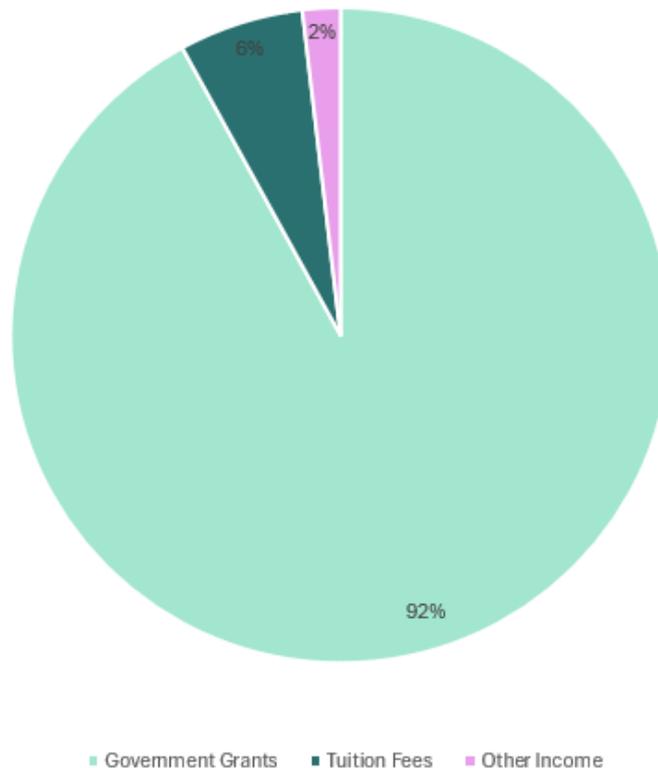
We would like to thank all former board members for their contribution to the school.

# Financials 2022

## Revenue

In 2022 the majority of revenue was obtained from Government Grants in the form of recurring funding. This funding is calculated annually and is based on the number of enrolments at the school. Additional sources of funds in 2022 included tuition fees (6%) and sub-lease rental income (2%) from the on-campus property. This distribution of income is comparable with 2020 and 2021.

2022 Income



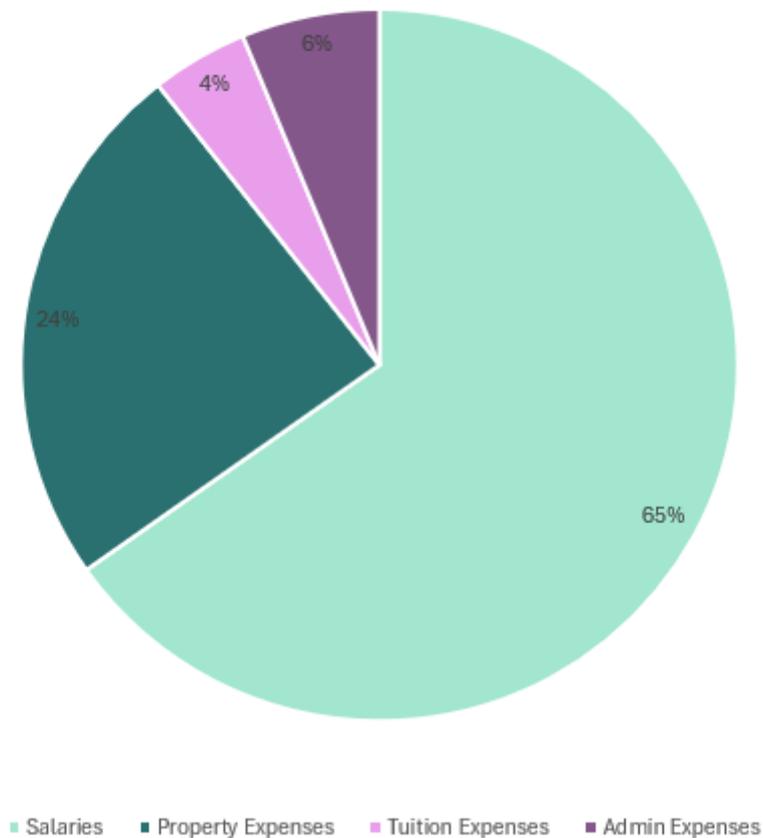
# Financials 2022

## Expenses

Staff Salaries are the biggest expense in schools typically accounting for 60-70% of all expenses. In 2022 we saw a slight increase in staff expenses (+5%) and property expenses (+2%) as the school increased staffing numbers and added several improvements to the grounds and buildings..

Both Admin expenses and tuition expenses remained consistent with regards to \$ spent compared with previous years however the % of weighting for both categories decreased due to the increase in staff and grounds expenses. Tuition expenses are forecast to increase in 2023 as necessary building works drop off and additional student resources are added.

2022 Expenses



# Principals' Report

## Matthew Nye & Rhys Thomas

Fernbrook School has entered an exciting era of physical growth, innovation, and consolidation of our unique pedagogy. Our student-centred approach to teaching and learning became our core focus and has been the single motive influencing all change and improvement occurring in the 2022 school year. We have actioned changes to student groups, physical spaces, health & wellbeing, along with many more pivotal facets of day-to-day operations at Fernbrook. Our classrooms and school yard are filled with laughter and collaboration, providing a nurturing and engaging foundation for students to develop both academically and socially.

The High School, comprising of our first Year 7 class, started off strongly due to the cumulative efforts of our principal, Nicolette, Mel, Ralph and our Board of Directors. An enormous amount of planning and administrative work by Mel and Ralph contributed to a successful start to the school year in a new era for Fernbrook School. The High School was created for our graduating Grade 6 class so that they had a continuation of the important, individualised education that they thrived in for their primary school lives. As a school, it was imperative for us to extend our beliefs around education into the High School years, for not only our beloved 2021 Grade 6 students, but for the community that aligns their expectations and beliefs of education with our own.

Our nation was still experiencing a challenging phenomenon stemming from the effects of Covid-19 mandates on education and the lives of our families and young people. Students of all ages across the country suffered physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually and were now expected to return to a normal schooling routine resembling pre-covid times. The experiences among our young people were many and varied, but attention was turned towards the students who struggled to return to routine. Fernbrook School acknowledged this challenge and provided an answer for a small group of students to participate in the Home @ Fernbrook program.

The Home @ Fernbrook program was designed to replicate home school with limited school hours and expectation and was extended to those students we identified as at risk. This program was composed by Nicolette, Rhys and Raymond, and included a range of hands-on, real-life experiences that aided the integration of our students back to the school environment. Home @ Fernbrook saw disengaged students form connections with peers, teachers and volunteers in an education setting that contributed to successful reintegration of most students to the High School by the end of Semester One.



The Junior Primary also started the year off strongly with a new teacher in Helen, guiding the Grade Prep to 2 class. Nature-based education also captivated our Junior class with their Inquiry units facilitating learning about life cycles of flora and fauna. Students engaged in hands-on learning by cultivating seedlings in class that were planted in our veggie patch. The class also welcomed and cared for a class tortoise.

The Upper Primary group continued to be guided by Matt, involving themselves in technology and social learning. The students led their learning by choosing their inquiry path, making our school values the focus of the first term. Students chose to create a movie together, complete with camera people, actors, and a director to



compose a film depicting a story that showed the everyday life of a student and how their experiences can relate to our own school values. The 10-minute movie was presented at a community event, the movie premiere. Students dressed up, walked the red carpet, and signed autographs before presenting the movie to their parents and school.

Jasmin, our office manager, joined the Fernbrook community in Semester One, enriching its people and administration efforts. An enormous administration load was carried by Nicolette for a long period of time and Jasmin's arrival gave her the room to focus more on important areas of school improvement. Important professional development opportunities were then organised with a highlight being a staff visit to Koonwarra Village School in South Gippsland. This visit enabled our team to witness how a more established alternative school had been able to implement curriculum, culture and processes in effective ways. Fernbrook staff walked away teeming with ideas to incorporate into our own context and we were incredibly grateful to the KVS team for welcoming us and exhibiting a proven method of democratic education.

Fernbrook School also held its first Cross Country event at Wick's Reserve. The training leading up to the event occurred each morning during exercise time and prepared our students for the race. It was a huge success with every student participating in the race. All younger students participated in the senior event as well.



Our end of term whole school celebration was held at Hardrock Climbing in Nunawading. This was such a fun and engaging activity for every age group and saw students challenge themselves and take risks in a new environment away from family. It was rewarding to see older students and teachers work together to belay each other during climbs and for young students put trust in others to help them climb up 5 metre rock walls. As always, it was wonderful to celebrate together as a school.

The beginning of Semester Two was another pivotal moment in the life of Fernbrook School, with Nicolette stepping away from the principal role. The Board of Directors elected to appoint two existing employees, Matt and Rhys, as co-principals, rather than finding an external person to take the helm at Fernbrook School. It was the belief of the board that Matt and Rhys, who understood and lived the culture of the school, could shoulder this important role together and contribute to the school's continuing evolution. Their initial efforts were sustained and supported by receiving training by Independent Schools Victoria. This provided experiences, a network and contemporary perspectives for Matt and Rhys to draw from as they commenced leading the school.

Further support arrived with the school in the form of a grant that funded the new shade sails erected beside our basketball court. The funding instilled excitement throughout the community as we drew closer to realising our vision for the physical spaces of the school. Support continued with the Parents and Friends Committee, which was re-established early in Term Three. The initial group of committed parents had immediate impact on community events held at the school and a major event at The Basin Music Festival. Our school performed songs to the community with the assistance of Sandi and created an activity stall for festival goers to create art, music and learn about our school.

The High School continued a nature-based inquiry, extending to the surrounding community as they explored bodies of water around the Dandenong Ranges region. The second semester saw a city excursion, learning about landmarks and navigation. Students also worked together to repair and construct a new portion of our fence after the much-needed removal of the Bamboo Forest.



The Upper Primary class went through a transformation with the appointment of Matt to co-principal. Students were pleased to learn that both Matt and Rhys would share the teaching load of the class. The students began a new approach to learning by completing learning agreements. Learning agreements are a list of autonomous activities that students are to complete during a week of learning. Tasks directly relate to the explicit instruction received at the beginning of the week. Students also attended Scienceworks Museum as they learned about solids, liquids, and gases.

The Junior Primary class also had a change in teacher with Jo arriving as a nature-based educator with both early years and primary school experience. The addition of Michelle came part way through the semester and a team was formed to share the teaching load of that class. Students engaged in play-based learning and followed a Reggio Emilia approach.



During Term 4, another staff member in DD joined the Fernbrook team. DD brought her passions of environmental science and design to each class as a science specialist teacher. Some of the activities that students completed were sculpture making, the study of insects and construction of insect hotels.

Finally our year ended with school photos being taken by Courtney Laura Photography. We were so pleased with the individual portraits and group shots with our beautiful bush as the backdrop. As always we finished off the year with the Christmas concert. It was a wonderful celebration that showcased individual student talent on guitar and drums, whole school carol singing and a dramatic Christmas play to finish it off! As always the community thoroughly enjoyed the night - even with the downpour we received during the final item.

## Assessment & Reporting

The assessment and reporting at Fernbrook School remained the same as the previous year. This gave our teaching staff the opportunity to consolidate the assessment practices implemented last year and provided familiarity to the students when assessment occurred. The schedule comprised a combination of summative assessments (PAT Maths/PROBE analysis of Reading Comprehension/PM Benchmarking/SA Spelling Test) together with formative/diagnostic assessments (writing samples/portfolios/teacher observations). This allowed for a twice-yearly snapshot of learning to monitor students' ongoing progress.

With the addition of NAPLAN in 2022, we were able to cross-correlate our data to receive confirmation of our own progress monitoring. Due to our student numbers being very low, it skews the data when comparing against the national average and our data is not shared on the MySchool website. As we grow our data will be eligible for sharing as a comparison to national and state averages. Our NAPLAN data showed that on

average, our students scored mostly within or above the correct band for their age.

Our reports took on a new look and structure in 2022. With the advent of Sentral, our administration platform, we were also supported in designing a new report layout. This new layout received overwhelmingly positive feedback from families that shared how their children's results were much clearer to understand and they appreciated the language used to describe performance.

## Marketing

Our website continued to supply interest and a steady flow of applications for 2022. There were increased efforts for Fernbrook to become known within the community through performing at The Basin Music Festival and replacing signage both private and council. Flyers were delivered to Early Learning environments in the area that promoted the school name and our approach to learning.

## STAFFING

### *Teaching Staff 2022*

Nicolette Correy	Principal (S1)
Rhys Thomas	Co-principal & G3-6 (S2)
Matthew Nye	Co-principal & G3-6 (S2)
Jo Johannes	F-2 (S2)
Michelle Buckley	F-2 (S2)
Helen Geraghty	F-2 (S1)
Ralph Horn	Y7
Melanie Thomas	Y7 and Arts
Denise Dempsey	Science



### *Learning Support Staff 2022*

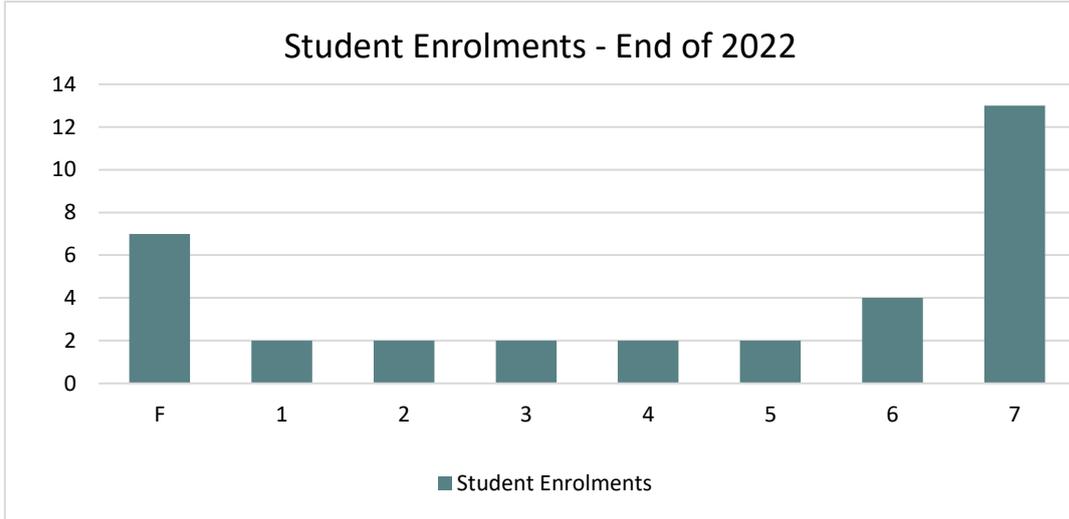
Rochelle Benning	Classroom Learning Support
Naomi MacTaggart	Classroom Learning Support

### *Administration Staff 2022*

Jasmin Williamson	Business Manager
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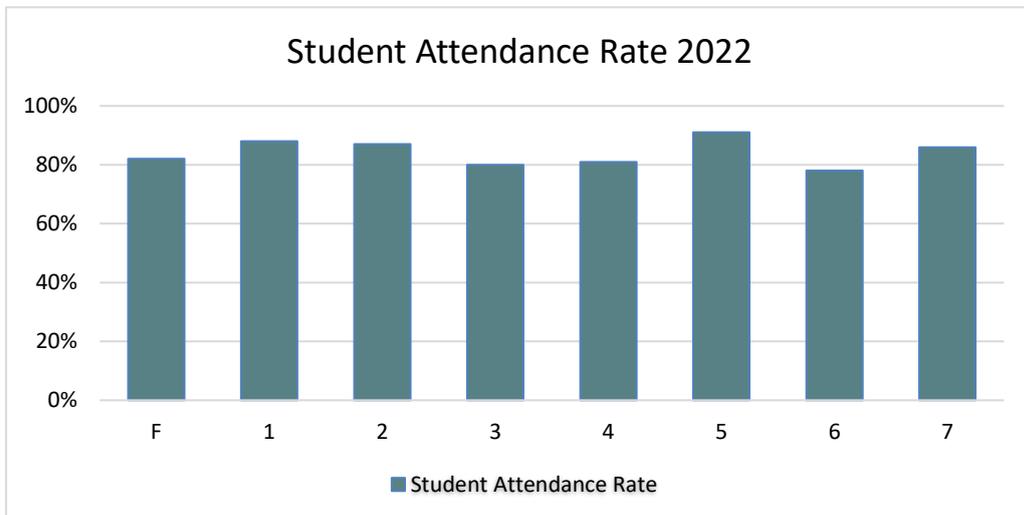
## Student Enrolments

2022 saw our numbers begin to boost and class sizes grow. It was an exciting time for our students especially as their friendship groups grew. Fernbrook School continued to trial and invite students to join throughout the entirety of the year, inviting new families to the community as well. With the addition of our High School, the school's enrolments are ready to expand further into the future.



## Student Attendance

Attendance continued to waiver for individual students in particular, however, starting our first official year post-COVID provided some much-needed stability that comes as a result of students' and families desire to resume the kind of education they were familiar with three years' previous. Our students shifted and readjusted to the expectations of attending school each day, some more successful than others. By mid-year, with the success of our Home @ Fernbrook program, we saw vast increases in attendance rate for particular students.



# Acknowledgements

As we look forward to 2023, there is an element of anticipation and excitement for what progress will unfold. All evolution has required hard work and has been selflessly given by a beautiful school community that share the vision of the Board of Directors and teaching staff. The board and staff are among those that give selflessly of their time and form the driving force that will take our school to unprecedented experiences in education.

None of this would be possible without the special young people that are proud to be Fernbrook students. We see their smiles, hear their laughter, and applaud their achievements. Every duty performed is for their health, wellbeing, and education. We value their character and experiences they currently endure - as real experiences that we feel we want to support them through. We give our students opportunities to be decision makers, creators, and collaborators so that they are and will become responsible, contributing citizens wherever their journeys take them.

