



FERNBROOK SCHOOL

16 CLEVEDON ROAD,
THE BASIN, VIC 3154

Annual Report

2021

A Message From The Chair

Kris Inkster

2021 was another year impacted by Covid with multiple lock-downs and remote learning periods. Despite this, the school started the year in a strong position and as we progressed through 2021 many foundations were laid that will bear fruit in the coming years.

Term 1 2021 started with us welcoming the students to the new campus in The Basin. A lot of hard work was done at the end of 2020 to prepare the site for the students, particularly by Di who worked tirelessly over the Christmas period both preparing The Basin site and winding down the previous Cockatoo campus. Term 1 2021 was also a time when we welcomed many new faces to the school with new enrolments, new families and new staff.

Despite a positive start to the year, 2021 was yet again impacted by the Covid pandemic with multiple lock downs, restrictions, mandates and uncertainty throughout the year.. The focus of the school has always been to provide the children with a friendly, comfortable and welcoming environment where they can feel part of a bigger community, this was challenging in 2021 however due to the efforts of the staff and the wider community we were able to make the most of a difficult situation.

In the second half of 2021 the school took some big steps forward. Nicolette Correy joined us in August 2021 with a wealth of experience and knowledge, enrolment numbers across all year levels were increasing at a steady rate and we received approval from the VRQA for years 7 & 8, a huge achievement for such a young school. We also saw stability in our funding that allowed us to reinvest in the school and the community with improvements in classroom resources, IT infrastructure, heating / cooling and air purification.

Fernbrook school has come a long way in the last few years despite the challenges we faced and this period has been formative for the school as many foundations were laid for future success. Already in 2022 we have seen many positives with Ralph, Melanie and the high school children forging a path ahead for the rest of the school to follow, we have welcomed new staff including Jasmin, Jo, Dee and the return of Rochelle. The application for years 9 & 10 has been submitted and we are hopeful of approval. There have been recent improvements in resources and infrastructure with the purchase of laptops for the classrooms, basketball hoops and sports equipment, additional heating / cooling for the high school and the soon to be installed shade sail and outdoor learning area adjacent to the sports court. Community events are now happening regularly which is something everyone missed due to covid restrictions.

Through both hard work and dedication both Matt and Rhys have now stepped up to the Principal role and bring with it abundant energy and enthusiasm. As we progress through 2022 and into 2023 we have many things to look forward too including new playground equipment, greater classroom resources, new staff and new enrolments.



Members Of The Board 2021

Currently Active

Chair / Treasurer:	Kris Inkster
Secretary:	Kelly Winters
Director:	Glenn Faulkner (appointed 22 May 2021)
Director:	Debbie Connelly (appointed 22 May 2021)
Acting Principal:	Di Varner (Jan to Aug)
Principal:	Nicolette Correy (Aug onward)

Former Members

Director:	Penny Fisher (resigned May 2021)
Director:	Brad Armstrong (resigned May 2021)
Director:	Lauren Armstrong (resigned May 2021)

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

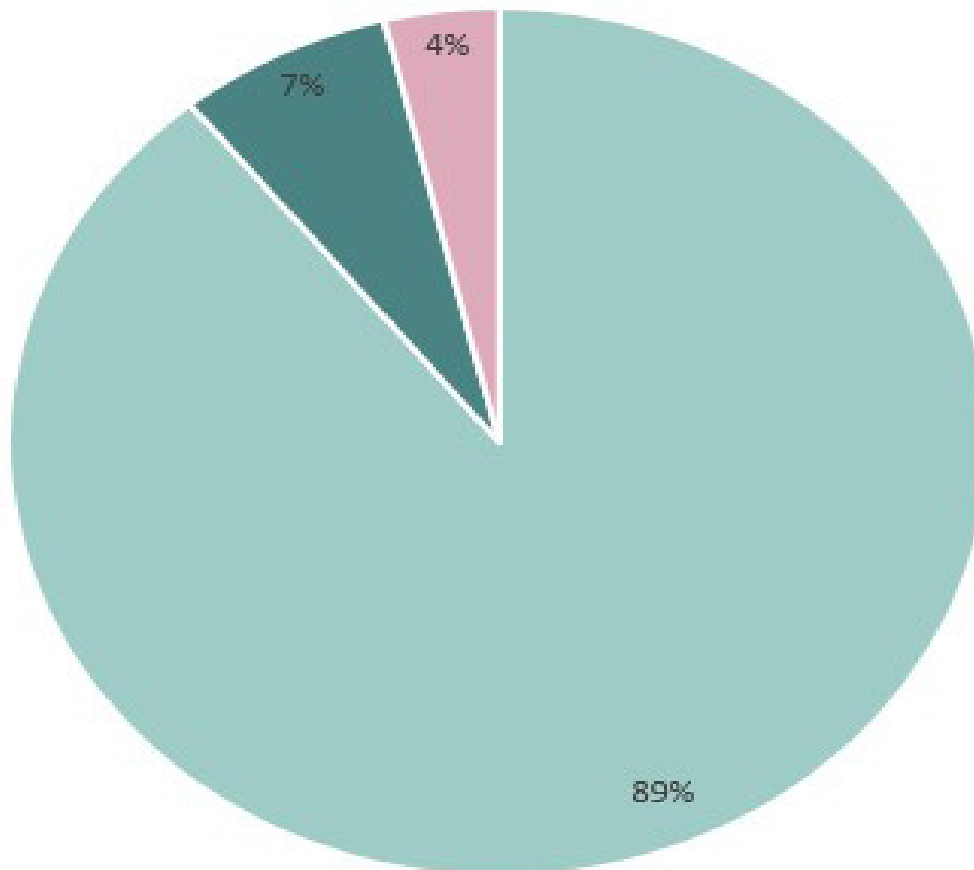
Financials 2021

Revenue

In 2021 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 2021 included tuition fees (7%) and sub-lease rental income (4%) from the on-campus property. This distribution of income is comparable with 2020.

2021 Income



■ Government Grants ■ Tuition Fees ■ Other Income

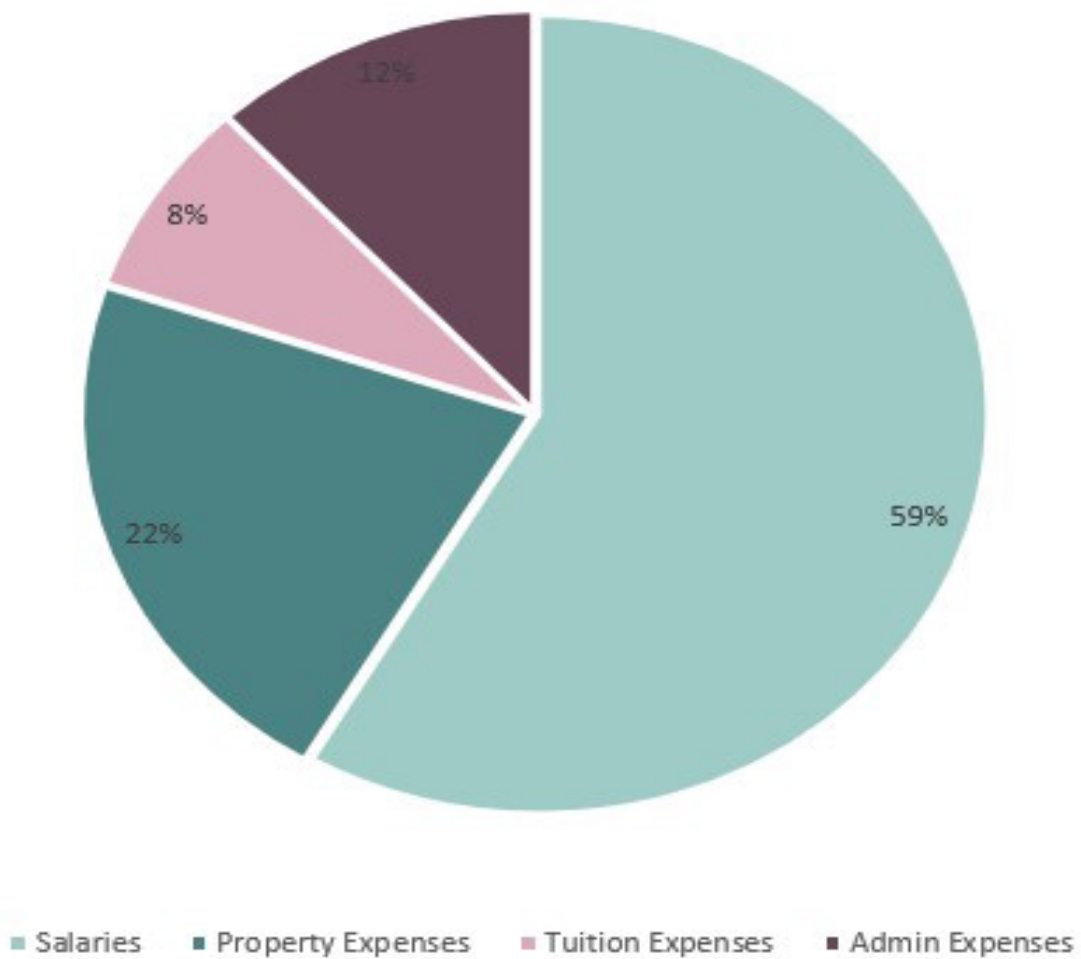
Financials 2021

Expenses

Staff Salaries are the biggest expense in schools typically accounting for 60-70% of all expenses. Admin expenses are the second biggest expense after salaries however account for a much smaller percentage overall. Tuition expenses such as classroom materials account for just under 8% of all

expenses which is again typical in most schools and comparable with 2020. Property expenses are the other main category making up 22% of expenses, up from 9% in 2020. The increase in property expenses relates mainly to improvements in infrastructure and resources such as IT and furniture etc.

2021 Expenses



Principals Report

Rhys Thomas / Matthew Nye

The new year started with optimism and excitement for the preparation of classrooms at our new school campus in The Basin. With multiple working bees and extra help on the weekends, the community pulled together with the vision of creating spaces and resources the students could enjoy onsite. A "Parents and Friends" committee was established to help streamline jobs and responsibilities for the school to flourish.

We started Term One with our main goal being a smooth transition to onsite school. The emotional and mental well-being was at the forefront of everyone's mind leading up to day one. Teachers created a dynamic environment with the students spending most of their time learning in multi age groups and supporting each other socially. We planned collaboratively to integrate as much as we could into their curriculum with Visual Art, Wood Technology and whole school inquiry units spanning 5 week blocks.



22nd October, 2021

The easing of restrictions and return to school following another, and likely final, lockdown



28th January 2021

The first day of term at our new campus in The Basin after relocating during the Christmas Break



Little did we know we would be back for a short time only due to ongoing Covid-19 lockdowns and constant disruptions throughout Term One. Students and parents continued to try their best during remote learning but due to the nature of some high needs students we opened the school to those who could not learn from home for multiple reasons. Teachers sent home concrete materials to support students remotely and frequent Zoom sessions supported those in need.

The staff used the time of remote learning to build up school resources and further organise the classroom spaces. Multiple spaces had changes to benefit the students on their return. On the outside, plans were made to improve the school grounds and the bushland was made "fire safe" with consultation of the local CFA.

Principals Report cont.

We established relationships with multiple maintenance partners to begin repairing and maintaining small issues around the school including an ongoing groundskeeper who keeps the outside spaces at a beautiful standard on a weekly basis. This allowed us to renew our optimism for when the students would return at the end of lockdown and we could provide some new routines and normalcy in their disrupted lives.

The beginning of Semester Two saw a continuation of lockdowns and remote learning. Fernbrook School was in an exciting period of change, employing a new full-time teacher to replace Kristina. Matt joined our community and quickly established positive relationships with students and parents. With the repeated extensions of lockdowns for all schools, emphasis was placed on using effective means to provide education remotely. Further professional development was undertaken so that Di and Matt were able to use ClassDojo more efficiently to send home learning activities to remote learners. A healthy balance was achieved of providing this remote education whilst still delivering a carefully considered educational program to those students who were still eligible to learn at school.

STAFFING

Teaching Staff 2021

Di Varner:	F-6 & Acting Principal
Rhys Thomas:	F-6
Krystina Fisher:	F-6
Matthew Nye:	F-6
Nicolette Correy:	Principal
Ralph Horn:	Casual Relief Teacher
Melanie Thomas:	Casual Relief Teacher

Learning Support Staff 2021

Rochelle Benning: Classroom Learning Support

Administration Staff 2021

Sarah Hawthorne: Office Administration

NAPLAN

Due to the ongoing pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, our small school did not participate in NAPLAN in 2021. Constraints on staffing availability, continued disruption to learning and establishing the school on its new site, rendered the task of implementing the assessment too imposing on our students and staff.



Principals Report cont.

A broad range of student-led learning programs ensued throughout the semester. Some of these were; a book study of *The BFG*; Human anatomy; passion projects; research on various Youtubers; and Olympics-based activities. Throughout all learning projects, students' physical, emotional and mental well being was the priority in all communication and expectations set.

The advent of Term Four saw the easing of restrictions for students so that they could return to school in a staggered manner to ensure a safe and sustained return to schooling. A vital staffing change was also made with Nicolette being appointed as principal of the school. She brought with her a plethora of experiences in alternative education and school compliance that provided necessary advances in the establishment of our school. Fernbrook adhered to the strict guidelines set by the Department of Education to provide clean and safe learning environments for our students. Outdoor learning became a focus for our school as we are privileged to learn on a property with 16 acres of bushland. An exciting learning unit ran for the entire term across the school that used the children's picture book, *Weslandia*, as its basis for learning concepts that were covered. Clothing, food, shelters, currencies, even religions were discussed, created and used as learning opportunities that related back to the real world. Students also learned important social skills throughout the process of creating their own civilisations and the elements that make up its creation.

Fernbrook school and its founders pursued the application to establish Years 7 and 8 for 2022. Due to the hard work of board members and Nicolette, we were able to receive approval for the application and begin enrolling students to fill spots for the inaugural high school class of Fernbrook School. With the growing structure and enrolments, two new teachers, Ralph and Melanie were acquired during Term Four. They played fundamental roles in planning for the beginning of the 2022 school year, establishing connections with the community and assisting in school events and initiatives on a casual basis.

Towards the end of the school year, exciting work began on producing a Christmas concert for all community members to come and enjoy. Students and teachers worked hard to practise singing carols, performing with instruments and creating decorations. The concert also received integral support by a number of parents and all of this effort culminated into a pleasant evening that re-established connections in the community that lay dormant throughout the lockdown periods.

Principals Report cont.

Assessment & Reporting

Throughout 2021, the assessment and reporting initiatives of 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.

The reporting method of Fernbrook remained the same throughout 2021 which also provided familiarity to families. There was also a cohort of new families that experienced this style of reporting for the first time, raising new perspectives of how the clarity of student achievements could be enhanced. Feedback was accepted by the board and teaching staff and initiatives were implemented to acquire a whole school administration management system that could assist us in this area.

Marketing

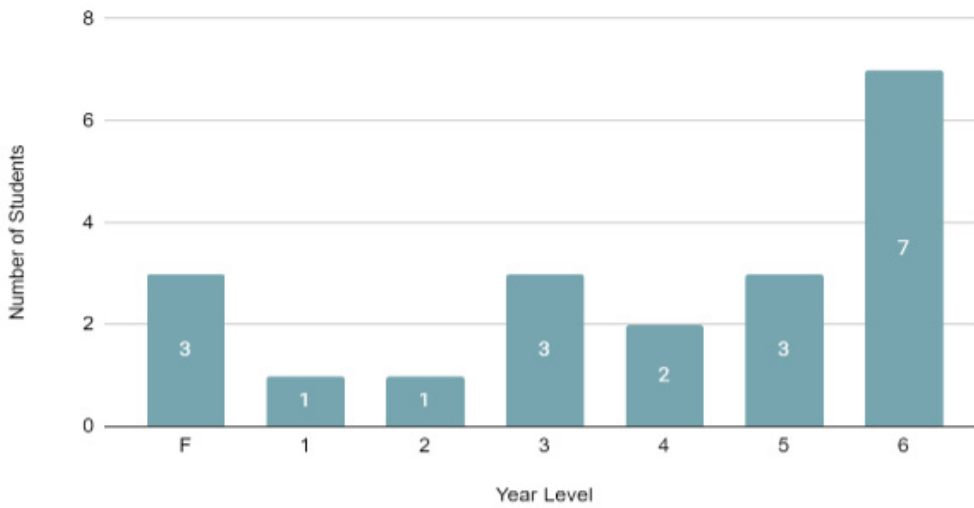
Due to the recently established website from 2020, a steady flow of families showed interest in attending our school. We also relied on a positive word of mouth among home-schooling groups and the current families' experiences that were shared among their circles. The latter proved to be the reason for our success in attaining an increase in both primary and secondary schools as we looked forward to 2022. No further pamphlets or paper advertisements were delivered to the community in 2021.

Principals Report cont.

Student Enrolments

2021 was a period of growth and a time where processes and efforts regarding enrolling new students were streamlined and prioritised. With the arrival of Nicolette and her avid determination to increase the enrolments at Fernbrook School, we saw important growth in the area which provided a diversified community along with necessary funding required for the continued success of the school. We finished the year with a range of prospective families trialling in preparation for 2022 and our final enrolment number was 20. At the end of Term Four, the enrolments were as follows:

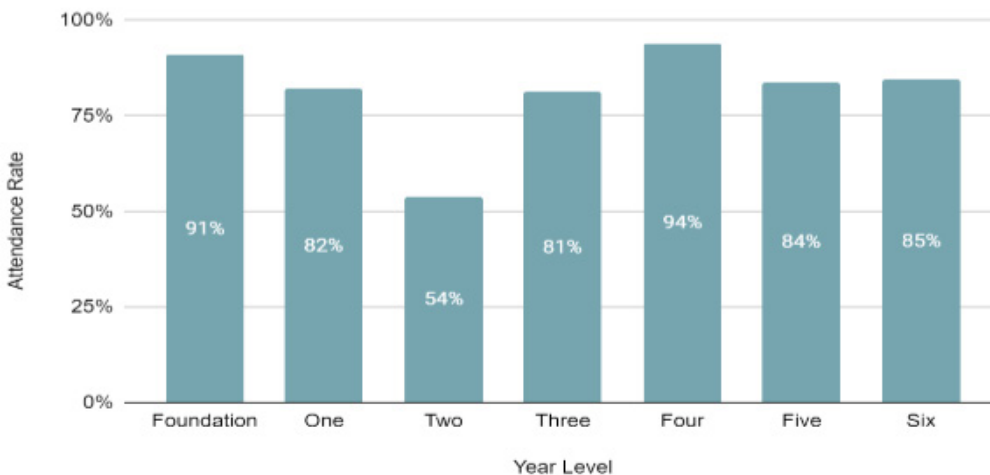
Student Enrolments - End of 2021



Student Attendance

Student attendance continued to prove difficult to monitor with the ongoing remote learning situation in 2021. With relatively high staff absenteeism throughout the year, processes were at times difficult to maintain but overall we found with our small number of students, it was achievable to maintain. Our attendance rates are outlined in the following table:

Student Attendance Rate 2021



Acknowledgements

This school year was a period of growth and revitalisation. As the community came out of lockdowns, a renewed eagerness for involvement and learning was evident among students, staff and parents. School-wide events such as working bees and the Christmas Concert were enthusiastically planned with a broad range of old and new families pitching in to help. Incoming staff members contributed new skills and ideas that perpetuated the ideals and culture of the school.

Through a transformative year for Fernbrook School, we acknowledge the hard work and selflessness of our past and current staff. These attributes are often required by members of our small community to instil our values and assist in the stability and growth of the school. Our context is unique and requires the same of its community. Krystina and Di were revered in the community as teachers who always prioritised the students first in their decision making. It is because of our past and current members of staff that we can look confidently into the future and see the realisation of Fernbrook School's potential as a safe and engaging learning environment, that will be a leader in delivering alternative education to the younger generation in the area.

