

2019 Annual Report to The School Community



School Name: Western Autistic School (5290)



- All teachers at the school meet the registration requirements of the Victorian Institute of Teaching (www.vit.vic.edu.au).
- The school meets prescribed minimum standards for registration as regulated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) in accordance with the *Education and Training Reform (ETR) Act 2006*. This includes schools granted an exemption by the VRQA until 31 December 2019 from the minimum standards for student enrolment numbers and/or curriculum framework for school language program.
- The school is compliant with the Child Safe Standards prescribed in *Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards, Managing Risk of Child Abuse in School*.

Attested on 29 August 2020 at 02:45 PM by Mary Thomson (Principal)

The 2019 Annual Report to the school community:

- has been tabled and endorsed at a meeting of the school council
- will be publicly shared with the school community.

Attested on 29 August 2020 at 04:24 PM by Sinead Bradley (School Council President)

About Our School

School context

Western Autistic School is a multi-campus Prep- Year 3 school for autistic students based in Niddrie and Laverton in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The school's mission is to prepare students for mainstream classroom settings or local special schools. The school achieves this by providing intensive, individualised strengths-based teaching at the start of each child's schooling to then allow the students to use these strategies in an integrated setting.

Western Autistic School's values are Diversity, Respect, Learning as an ongoing process, Sharing and growth of knowledge, Collaboration. We respect ourselves, our school and each another, and understand that our attitudes and behaviors have an impact on the people around us. We model and demonstrate care and compassion and take every opportunity to help others that may be in need. We strive for excellence, which means trying our hardest and doing our best. These values provide us with a framework for how we achieve our vision.

In 2019, the enrolment was 373, and of those 130 were prep entry students. The Laverton Campus consists of four interconnected pods adjoining the main administration area. The grounds include separate children's playground and courtyards adjoining classrooms. The Niddrie Campus consists of three main wings of classrooms and small adjoining play areas. The school's SFOE is 0.34. The staffing profile is made up of 1 principal, 3 assistant principals, 86 teachers, 56 full time equivalent Education Support staff, 1 business manager and 6 administration staff, 10 allied health staff, and maintenance staff. There are 10 staff at Autism Teaching Institute including 2 Regional Autism Inclusion Consultants. The school has a Marrung Champion and two multi-cultural aides.

The school also contains the Autism Teaching Institute (Registered Training Organisation 21709) as the training arm of the school. The ATI maintains the high standards of our school as a centre of excellence and alignment to the Department of Education statewide inclusive agenda. The school also contains the Wattle Education Intervention Program which provides short term placement for adolescent students in collaboration with the students' host secondary schools.

Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO)

In 2019 the school's implementation of Key Improvement Strategies reflected the FISO dimensions of Evaluating Impact on Learning and Curriculum Planning and Assessment. Key improvement strategies (KIS) included:

- building teachers assessment literacy and capacity to connect student assessment with learning
- linking teacher literacy planning and interventions to individual student's communication and language goals

To enable the implementation of these KIS teachers engaged in inquiry projects and individual student-conferencing conversations about literacy and communication learning within their professional learning teams. An external expert joined with staff on Curriculum Day to share their knowledge around ASD and literacy. Staff were able to use this and other new knowledge to inform their teaching and learning with a specific focus on functional literacy.

There has been clear evidence of gains in teachers' use of a range of assessments. This has been particularly evident in the relationship between assessment and individual goal identification for each student. Since 2017, Staff Opinion Survey results for teacher endorsement related to understanding how to use data and monitoring effectiveness using data, have both risen significantly, as has use of high impact teaching strategies.

We have been successful in using the school's five learning specialists to model best practice and our leading teachers to coach & facilitate teacher learning across the school. Additionally, as each Professional Learning Teams learning focus reflected key school goals this further streamlined the performance and development process for school staff in a cohesive and robust manner that aligned key intentions with our planned development outcomes.

We have made significant progress in advancing student well-being over the past year, and in the four years of the

2016 – 2020 School Strategic Plan. This progress has been evident in the data from the parent opinion survey where positive endorsement in Safety rose from 82% in 2018 to 85% in 2019, bringing it in line with the state average. The staff opinion survey has also reflected this positive change in safety, with positive endorsement rising from 44% in 2016 to 57% in 2019.

Achievement

Given the unique learning needs of our students we prioritize expressive and receptive communication, functional adaptive and social skills development. These goals are addressed through Individual Learning Plans (ILP) for each student, delivered within the framework of the Victorian Curriculum.

Our pedagogical practice is informed by continuing engagement with evidence-supported research interventions.

Parent satisfaction with their child's schooling reflects the quality of the service offered by the school and the level of engagement between parents and school. The 2019 Parent Opinion Survey identified that 89% of parents surveyed were highly satisfied with their child's schooling overall, with 82% acknowledging the school is always aiming to improve the quality of education it provides.

During 2019, an average of students' next level growth was derived, based on teacher ratings of Victorian Curriculum progress. Analysis of these results indicated in the English domain WAS students have an average next level growth of 1.38, over a period of 24 months. A very pleasing outcome given the school's focus on improving student learning in English.

The Staff Opinion Survey responses for teacher collaboration revealed a dip in 2019 with results at 70.03. However, there has been strong growth since 2017 when results were 63.73. To ensure the success of the team-teaching model this will continue to be a focus at the school, as it is reflective of the approach underpinning improved student learning.

A highlight identified by the school review was the restatement of the school's educational philosophy based on the child at the centre. The review panel concluded that the school's focus on curriculum planning for the child at the centre had reinforced the philosophy. In the 2019 staff survey we saw a continued increase in positive responses to planning differentiated teaching activities reaching 85.68, a practical reflection of the child at the centre model.

Engagement

Western Autistic School students are a diverse group in terms of their ethnicity, socio-economic class, language and family religion. We are proud of our efforts to understand every child uniquely and to engage parents in their children's learning. In 2019 teachers reported that 90% of parents had participated in at least one form of co-educator role such as, classroom involvement, attending an information session, or practicing a communication or learning strategy at home.

In 2019, the school continued to build its relationships with the regional Student Support Service SSS personnel in the region and school networks. The continuing work of the Parents Linkages Worker improved parent linkages with the school and with external support agencies. Together with the school's executive, learning specialists and leading teachers to build staff expertise in understanding the individual needs of students, the school strengthened its partnerships with families and thereby improved engagement of the student body.

The school paid for a web-based platform to trial collecting and managing student absences, and teachers logs of communication with parents. This has meant that all relevant information is available in one place. The availability of the information will facilitate timely responses of school leaders to chronic student absence and parent needs, and further assist school leaders to support teachers' work with parents.

This year, the school focused on students feeling connected to and engaged in their own learning and with the broader

community. The development of Junior School Councils at the Laverton and Niddrie campuses has been a significant step towards building student voice, with increased opportunities for students to come together and celebrate their achievements. There were several opportunities for the Junior School Councils to welcome the broader school community into the school for example, Harmony Day, Family Week, Book Week, Science Week, End of Year Concerts and Graduation parties at school.

Wellbeing

Western Autistic School addresses the well-being of all student through best practice, evidence-based teaching which identifies and equips them with the skills they need to be successful at school and in the wider community. As part of this, all students now have Functional Adaptive Skills goals developed in partnership with families, and explicitly incorporated into their Individual Learning Plan.

Over the last four years, the school has worked to develop a set of behaviour policies and protocols underpinned by the core practice of Functional Behaviour Assessment and aligned with updated Child Safe and DET guidance. The school has consolidated these renewed practices in a revised behaviour handbook aligned with a program of school-wide professional learning and supported by all staff setting themselves professional development goals around FBA each year. This evidence-based, proactive approach to supporting student behaviour has led to a reduction of incidents of restraint and seclusion across the school by over 30% since 2016.

To support student well-being, the school continues to make use of a range of internal, external and departmental resources. In the last four years, this has included the creation of a new parent linkages role and the employment of a first aid assistant at the Laverton campus. Outside of the school, we have worked to strengthen links with the regional Student Support Services team, and partnered with Professor Vicki Bitsika, from the University of New England, to develop a specialised program for a small group of teachers and leaders. Funded under the department's Safety for Specialist Schools Initiative, the work in this project was underpinned by the theoretical model of FBA in educational settings and the outcomes have built teacher capabilities to provide safe working environments.

Moving forwards, the school will continue to allocate resources to support student well-being by employing a Well-being Assistant Principal at the Laverton campus.

Financial performance and position

Western Autistic School maintained a very sound financial position throughout 2019. In addition to the Student Resource Package, in 2019 the school also raised \$76,858 locally and received \$49,421 in Equity Funding.

In 2019 the Autism Teaching Institute received funding for twenty scholarships for teachers statewide to undertake the Graduate Diploma in Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This is in addition to the fifty scholarships received in 2018. The 2018 cohort of fifty teachers graduated from the Graduate Diploma mid-2019.

The joint initiative with the Department of Education and Training and the ATI that was developed in in response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Services for People with Autism commenced in 2018 and continued in 2019. This initiative developed and delivered a State-Wide Inclusive School Practice Professional Learning Program, and in 2019 two Regional Autism and Inclusion Consultants continued their work with principals and school leadership teams across the state.

Throughout 2019 School Council continued to work with the Victorian School Building Authority on two building projects, namely refurbishment of the Wattle building at the Laverton Campus to create three new P-3 classrooms. This project was completed in early 2019. The second project was the redevelopment of the Niddrie Campus after the Premier's announcement of capital works funding in the 2018/2019 State Budget.

The redevelopment of the Niddrie Campus was due to commence in October 2019, however this did not occur but the

planning continued throughout the year. The builder was selected through a request for tender process and the school continued planning the project with the VSBA and the newly appointed builder. School Council provided up to \$1.2M of school funds to support this project in 2019, this can be seen in the miscellaneous budget line.

In 2019 WAS continued to have difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified permanent teaching staff. As a result, \$2,871,037 was expended on hiring teachers and teacher assistants through an agency to cover staff leave and vacancies. This expenditure can be seen in the miscellaneous expenditure budget line and is the highest expenditure item after the student resource package.

At the end of 2018 there was a significant budget surplus, this surplus was carried over into 2019 and was committed to the building projects as listed above. During the 2019 school year these funds were expended, they were outside of the 2019 budget allocation thus causing a small deficit at the end of 2019.

The school management team and School Council continue to manage the school finances within DET policy and guidelines to support the achievement of educational outcomes and the operational needs of the school.




For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at
www.westernautisticschool.vic.edu.au

Performance Summary

The Government School Performance Summary provides an overview of how this school is contributing to the objectives of the Education State and how it compares to other Victorian Government schools.

All schools work in partnership with their school community to improve outcomes for children and young people. Sharing this information with parents and the wider school community helps to support community engagement in student learning, a key priority of the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes.

Members of the community can contact the school for an accessible version of these data tables if required.

Key: Range of results for the middle 60% of Victorian Government Special Schools:  Results for this school:  Median of all Victorian Government Special Schools: 

School Profile

Enrolment Profile

A total of 376 students were enrolled at this school in 2019, 75 female and 301 male.

25 percent were EAL (English as an Additional Language) students and 2 percent ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) students.

Overall Socio-Economic Profile

Based on the school's Student Family Occupation and Education index which takes into account parents' occupations and education.



Parent Satisfaction Summary

Measures the percent endorsement by parents on their school satisfaction level, as reported in the annual *Parent Opinion Survey*. The percent endorsement indicates the percent of positive responses (agree or strongly agree).

Data is suppressed for schools with three or less respondents to the survey for confidentiality reasons.



School Staff Survey

Measures the percent endorsement by staff on School Climate, as reported in the annual *School Staff Survey*. The percent endorsement indicates the percent of positive responses (agree or strongly agree).

Data is suppressed for schools with three or less respondents to the survey for confidentiality reasons.



Performance Summary

Achievement	Student Outcomes																																																																												
<p>Teacher Judgement of student achievement</p> <p>Percentage of students working at each Standard in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Mathematics <p>For further details refer to <i>How to read the Annual Report</i>.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Results: English</p> <table border="1"> <caption>English Results Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Level</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>A</td><td>~7%</td></tr> <tr><td>B</td><td>~23%</td></tr> <tr><td>C</td><td>~30%</td></tr> <tr><td>D</td><td>~24%</td></tr> <tr><td>0.5</td><td>~2%</td></tr> <tr><td>F - F.5</td><td>~13%</td></tr> <tr><td>1 - 1.5</td><td>~3%</td></tr> <tr><td>2 - 2.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>3 - 3.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>4 - 4.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>5 - 5.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>6 - 6.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>7 - 7.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>8 - 8.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>9 - 9.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>10 - 10.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>11 - 11.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>NA</td><td>0%</td></tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>Results: Mathematics</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Mathematics Results Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Level</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>A</td><td>~9%</td></tr> <tr><td>B</td><td>~25%</td></tr> <tr><td>C</td><td>~27%</td></tr> <tr><td>D</td><td>~20%</td></tr> <tr><td>0.5</td><td>~1%</td></tr> <tr><td>F - F.5</td><td>~16%</td></tr> <tr><td>1 - 1.5</td><td>~4%</td></tr> <tr><td>2 - 2.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>3 - 3.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>4 - 4.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>5 - 5.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>6 - 6.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>7 - 7.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>8 - 8.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>9 - 9.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>10 - 10.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>11 - 11.5</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr><td>NA</td><td>0%</td></tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Level	Percentage	A	~7%	B	~23%	C	~30%	D	~24%	0.5	~2%	F - F.5	~13%	1 - 1.5	~3%	2 - 2.5	0%	3 - 3.5	0%	4 - 4.5	0%	5 - 5.5	0%	6 - 6.5	0%	7 - 7.5	0%	8 - 8.5	0%	9 - 9.5	0%	10 - 10.5	0%	11 - 11.5	0%	NA	0%	Level	Percentage	A	~9%	B	~25%	C	~27%	D	~20%	0.5	~1%	F - F.5	~16%	1 - 1.5	~4%	2 - 2.5	0%	3 - 3.5	0%	4 - 4.5	0%	5 - 5.5	0%	6 - 6.5	0%	7 - 7.5	0%	8 - 8.5	0%	9 - 9.5	0%	10 - 10.5	0%	11 - 11.5	0%	NA	0%
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Performance Summary

Engagement	Student Outcomes												
<p>Average Number of Student Absence Days</p> <p>Average days absent per full time equivalent (FTE) student per year. Common reasons for non-attendance include illness and extended family holidays.</p> <p>Absence from school can impact on students' learning.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>2016</th> <th>2017</th> <th>2018</th> <th>2019</th> <th>4-year average</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Average absence days</td> <td>22.6</td> <td>24.9</td> <td>22.9</td> <td>25.6</td> <td>24.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	4-year average	Average absence days	22.6	24.9	22.9	25.6	24.0
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	4-year average								
Average absence days	22.6	24.9	22.9	25.6	24.0								
<p>Exit destinations</p> <p>Percentage of students going on to further studies or full-time employment.</p> <p>Note: This measure uses data from the previous year. Data excludes destinations recorded as 'Unknown'.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>2016</th> <th>2017</th> <th>2018</th> <th>2019</th> <th>4-year average</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>% of students to further studies or employment</td> <td>100.0</td> <td>99.1</td> <td>100.0</td> <td>100.0</td> <td>99.8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	4-year average	% of students to further studies or employment	100.0	99.1	100.0	100.0	99.8
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Financial Performance and Position

Commentary on the financial performance and position is included in the About Our School section at the start of this report

Financial Performance - Operating Statement Summary for the year ending 31 December, 2019

Revenue	Actual
Student Resource Package	\$16,076,742
Government Provided DET Grants	\$3,596,928
Revenue Other	\$76,858
Locally Raised Funds	(\$7,772)
Total Operating Revenue	\$19,742,756

Financial Position as at 31 December, 2019

Funds Available	Actual
High Yield Investment Account	\$1,375,796
Official Account	\$55,721
Other Accounts	\$44,500
Total Funds Available	\$1,476,016

Equity¹

Equity (Social Disadvantage)	\$49,421
Equity Total	\$49,421

Expenditure

Student Resource Package ²	\$15,094,942
Books & Publications	\$6,388
Communication Costs	\$34,017
Consumables	\$138,534
Miscellaneous Expense ³	\$3,596,921
Professional Development	\$39,957
Property and Equipment Services	\$463,926
Salaries & Allowances ⁴	\$269,341
Trading & Fundraising	\$8,730
Travel & Subsistence	\$36,020
Utilities	\$195,555
Adjustments	\$10
Total Operating Expenditure	\$19,884,341
Net Operating Surplus/-Deficit	(\$141,585)
Asset Acquisitions	\$262,973

Financial Commitments

Operating Reserve	\$758,230
Capital - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	\$674,700
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	\$43,086
Total Financial Commitments	\$1,476,016

(1) The Equity funding reported above is a subset of overall revenue reported by the school

(2) Student Resource Package Expenditure figures are as of 26 February 2020 and are subject to change during the reconciliation process.

(3) Misc Expenses may include bank charges, health and personal development, administration charges, camp/excursion costs and taxation charges.

(4) Salaries and Allowances refers to school-level payroll.

All funds received from the Department, or raised by the school, have been expended, or committed to subsequent years, to support the achievement of educational outcomes and other operational needs of the school, consistent with Department policies, School Council approvals and the intent/purposes for which funding was provided or raised.

How to read the Annual Report

What does the *About Our School* section refer to?

The About Our School page provides a brief background on the school, an outline of the school's performance over the year and plans for the future.

The 'School Context' describes the school's vision, values and purpose. Details include the school's geographic location, size and structure, social characteristics, enrolment characteristics and special programs.

The 'Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO)' section includes the improvement initiatives the school has selected and the progress they have made towards achieving them

What does the *Performance Summary* section of this report refer to?

The Performance Summary reports on data in key areas:

Achievement

Student achievements in :

- English and Mathematics

Engagement

- student attendance and engagement at school
- how many students leaving school go on to further studies or full-time work (secondary, P-12 and specialist schools)

What is the meaning of '*Data not available*' or '*ND*' mean?

Some schools have too few students enrolled to provide data. There may be no students enrolled in some year levels, so school comparisons are not possible.

New schools have only the latest year of data and no comparative data from previous years.

The Department also recognises unique circumstances in Specialist, Select Entry, English Language and Community Schools where school-to-school comparisons are not appropriate.

Towards Foundation Level Victorian Curriculum

The 'Towards Foundation Level Victorian Curriculum' is integrated directly into the curriculum and is referred to as 'Levels A to D'.

'Levels A to D' may be used for students with a disability or students who may have additional learning needs.