

2020 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 2020 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 27 April 2021 at 05:22 PM by Adele Field (Principal)

The 2020 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 10 May 2021 at 09:31 AM by Sinead Bradley (School Council President)

How to read the Annual Report

What has changed for the 2020 Annual Report?

Improved appearance

The appearance of the Performance Summary has been updated to more clearly represent information and to assist interpretation and comparison of individual school's data with state averages.

School performance data

The Victorian community's experience of COVID-19, including remote and flexible learning, had a significant impact on normal school operations. This impacted the conduct of assessments and surveys. Readers should be aware of this when interpreting the Performance Summary.

For example, in 2020 school-based surveys ran under changed circumstances. Absence data may have been influenced by local processes and procedures adopted in response to remote and flexible learning.

Schools should keep this in mind when using this data for planning and evaluation purposes.

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

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

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 includes the following:

School Profile

- student enrolment information
- the school's 'Student Family Occupation and Education' category
- a summary of parent responses in the Parent Opinion Survey, shown against the statewide average for Specialist schools
- school staff responses in the area of School Climate in the School Staff Survey, shown against the statewide average for Specialist schools

Achievement

- English and Mathematics for Teacher Judgements against the curriculum

Engagement

Student attendance and engagement at school, including:

- how many exiting students go on to further studies or full-time work

Results are displayed for the latest year and the average of the last four years (where available).

How to read the Annual Report (continued)

What does 'NDP' or 'NDA' mean?

'NDP' refers to no data being published for privacy reasons or where there are insufficient underlying data. For example, very low numbers of participants or characteristics that may lead to identification will result in an 'NDP' label. For the 2020 Student Attitudes to School survey, specifically, the similar school group averages are replaced by 'NDP' where less than 50% of schools in a given similar school group did not participate in the 2020 survey.

'NDA' refers to no data being available. Some schools have no data for particular measures due to low enrolments. There may be no students enrolled in some year levels, so school comparisons are not possible.

Note that new schools only have the latest year of data and no comparative data from previous years. The Department also recognises unique circumstances in Specialist, Select Entry, English Language, Community Schools and schools that changed school type recently, where school-to-school comparisons are not appropriate.

What is the 'Towards Foundation Level Victorian Curriculum'?

The Victorian Curriculum is assessed through teacher judgements of student achievement based on classroom learning.

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

'Levels A to D' are not associated with any set age or year level that links chronological age to cognitive progress (i.e. there is no age expected standard of achievement for 'Levels A to D').

About Our School

School context

Western Autistic School is a multi-campus Prep- Year 3 school for autistic students based, until December 31st 2020, 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 other, 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 2020, the enrolment was 388, 84 female and 304 male. 23 percent of students have English as an additional language and 1 percent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

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 socio-economic band value is: Low - Medium, as calculated based on the Student Family Occupation and Education index (SFOE). The staffing profile is made up of 1 Principal, 2 Campus Principals, 2 Assistant Principals, 86 teachers, 56 full time equivalent Education Support staff, 1 business manager and 6 administration staff, 7 allied health staff, and maintenance staff. There are 4 staff at Autism Teaching Institute. 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. The schools worked closely with the department and the students and their families through the closure of the Wattle Program at the end of 2020.

Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO)

In 2020 the school's implementation of Key Improvement Strategies reflected the FISO dimensions of Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Positive Climate for Learning. Key improvement strategies (KIS) included:

- Improve school-wide consistency of implementation of the teaching and learning framework
- Develop a shared understanding of student voice, leadership and agency

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the impact of remote learning periods, it was also agreed that a focus on the following KIS also be prioritised:

- Improve parent participation as co-educators in their children's learning

To enable the implementation of these KIS teachers engaged in Professional Learning Communities. In Semester One this work focused on building an understanding of their students, including relevant assessments, and in Semester Two inquiry projects and individual student-conferencing with a focus on Building a shared understanding of student voice, agency and leadership. An external expert joined with staff on two occasions to share their knowledge around ASD and meaning making in autism. Staff were able to use this and other new knowledge to inform their teaching and learning with a specific focus on building student voice for all students.

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 positive 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 Team's 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 outcomes.

Achievement

Given the unique learning needs of our students, we prioritise 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.

In 2020 the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic required that the school significantly alter and adapt how teaching and learning was delivered to students. This involved adoption of new technologies and teaching approaches, and close collaboration with parents as partners in their child's learning. Student reporting was also adjusted, in line with departmental guidance, and focused primarily on achievement against Individual Learning Plan goals, alongside the Victorian Curriculum domains of English and Mathematics as well as the Personal and Social Capabilities.

Parents' overall 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 2020 Parent Opinion Survey identified that 85% of parents were generally satisfied with their child's schooling overall, with 82% acknowledging the school is always aiming to improve the quality of education it provides.

In 2020 the parent opinion survey canvassed the views of parents of their experiences of remote and flexible learning. Overall, 77% of parents who took the survey were satisfied with the school's approach to remote and learning. Whilst only 21% of parents surveyed felt their children can learn just as effectively from home as they can in the classroom, 94% of parents agreed that they could contact their child's teacher when they needed to and 86% of parents felt supported by the school and teachers to help their children learning from home.

The Staff Opinion Survey responses for teacher collaboration revealed a dip in 2020 with results at 55.0%. However, there has been strong growth since 2017 with results in 2019 at 70.1%. 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.

After re-articulating the school's educational philosophy based on the child at the centre, the focus on individualised curriculum planning saw a continued increase in positive responses from staff to planning differentiated teaching activities. In 2020, 87.7% of teachers agreed that the school planning differentiated learning activities up from 85.68 in 2019, a practical reflection of the child at the centre model.

Engagement

In 2020, the school strengthened its relationships with the regional Student Support Service SSS, school networks and Parents Linkages Worker to improve student and staff wellbeing and improve parent connections with the school and with external support agencies. During the remote learning period the school offered specialised wellbeing SSGs for vulnerable families whose children attended the on site program or who struggled to support their children with learning from home. These extra SSG meetings strengthened the partnerships with families and thereby improved student engagement. The school's web-based platform was fully utilised during the remote learning period with relevant

absence and parent communication information available in one place. The availability of the information facilitated timely responses of school leaders to chronic student absence and parent needs, and further assisted school leaders to support teachers' work with parents. The school is committed to continue the specialised SSG program with vulnerable families to further support the wellbeing of individual families and student engagement. Alongside this we will continue our school-wide focus on student voice and agency, and work to deepen our understandings of how our students can be leaders in their own learning.

Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing supports for students and staff were prioritised throughout the year, in response to the ongoing impact of the pandemic on school operations. The wellbeing team built processes around the facilitation of special SSGs, to support families and their contacts to establish a model for continuity of care during the lockdown periods. This included utilising the Team Around the Learner (TAL) framework to collaborate with the student, their family, and NDIS-funded practitioners to devise routines and structures that enabled learning support offered by the school and functional living supports for in the home, offered through the NDIS. The SSS psychologists were contacted to offer a suite of supports for staff including two professional learning sessions on managing stress, and small group and individual sessions for staff following significant incidents. The SSS Team Leader also facilitated risk assessments for students at risk of self-harm. Additionally the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was arranged to offer both on-site and virtual counselling sessions for staff at all sites. The school's leadership team committed to high-level communication strategies that included the addition of a weekly parent letter from the principal to students and their families, a staff wrap up that consisted of photos to acknowledge achievements made across the week and a health and wellbeing survey for all staff, which informed the planning and design of all H&W strategies. This work will inform continual improvement in this area in 2021, specifically the facilitation of specialised SSGs supported by the Assistant Principal- Wellbeing.

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. In 2020, there was 93% positive endorsement from parents that their children feel safe at school. The staff opinion survey has also reflected this positive change in safety, with positive endorsement rising from 57% in 2019 to 60.7% in 2020.

Financial performance and position

Western Autistic School maintained a sound financial position throughout 2020. In addition to the Student Resource Package, in 2020 the school also raised \$10,553 locally and received \$55,684 in Equity Funding.

The Autism Teaching Institute received funding for 2019/2020 for thirty scholarships statewide for teachers to undertake the Graduate Diploma in Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Due to the coronavirus Covid19 pandemic, ATI operations ceased for Term 2 2020. In second semester of 2020 operations resumed and online training delivery and in person visits delivered in the latter part of the year. The 2020/21 mid-year scholarship intake did not proceed in mid-2020. This intake of twenty scholarships began in Semester 1 2021.

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 and 2020. This initiative developed and delivered a State-Wide Inclusive School Practice Professional Learning Program, and in 2020 an Evaluation Report of the Professional Learning Program was prepared for the Department of Education.

Throughout 2020 Western Autistic School Council continued to work with the Victorian School Building Authority on the redevelopment of the Niddrie Campus after the Premier's announcement of capital works funding in the 2018/2019 State Budget. The redevelopment project of the Niddrie Campus is due for completion in June 2021. The Niddrie Campus de-merged from WAS as a stand alone school on the 1/1/2020. The new school council of the Niddrie Autistic School has assumed oversight of the Building Master Plan for the Niddrie site.

In 2020 WAS continued to have difficulty in recruiting suitable permanent teaching staff. As a result, \$1,289,087 was expended on hiring teachers and teacher assistants through an agency to cover vacancies and some leave. This expenditure can be seen in the support services budget line and is the highest expenditure item after the student resource package.

At the end of 2020 there was a budget surplus, this surplus can be connected to the school spending less than budgeted on Casual Relief Teachers due to many staff working remotely as a result of COVID19. Western Autistic School also de-amalgamated at the end of 2020 and a portion of the surplus was to be held to transfer to Niddrie Autistic School in the 2021 school year. The school management team and School Council continue to manage the school finances within DET policy and guidelines to support and achieve the goals and targets of the Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan.

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

Performance Summary

The Performance Summary for government schools 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.

Refer to the 'How to read the Annual Report' section for help on how to interpret this report.

SCHOOL PROFILE

Enrolment Profile

A total of 388 students were enrolled at this school in 2020, 84 female and 304 male.

23 percent of students had English as an additional language and 1 percent were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Overall Socio-Economic Profile

The overall school's socio-economic profile is based on the school's Student Family Occupation and Education index (SFOE) which takes into account parents' occupations and education.

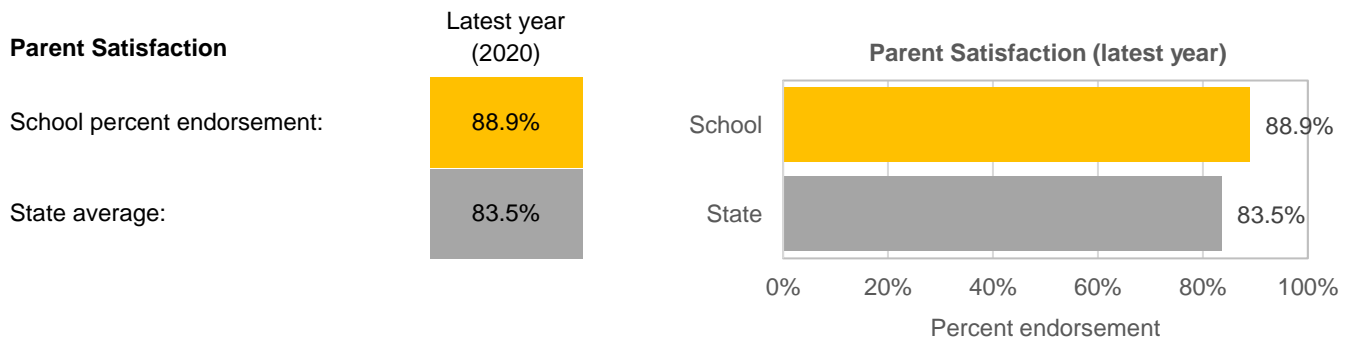
Possible socio-economic band values are: Low, Low-Medium, Medium and High.

This school's socio-economic band value is: Low - Medium

Parent Satisfaction Summary

The percent endorsement by parents on their school satisfaction level, as reported in the annual Parent Opinion Survey.

Percent endorsement indicates the percent of positive responses (agree or strongly agree) from parents who responded to the survey.

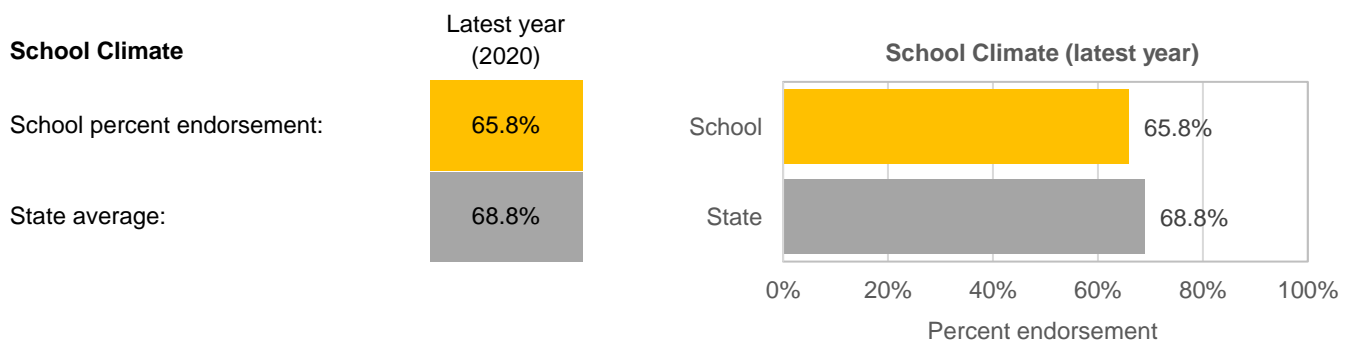


School Staff Survey

The percent endorsement by staff on School Climate, as reported in the annual School Staff Survey.

Percent endorsement indicates the percent of positive responses (agree or strongly agree) from staff who responded to the survey.

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



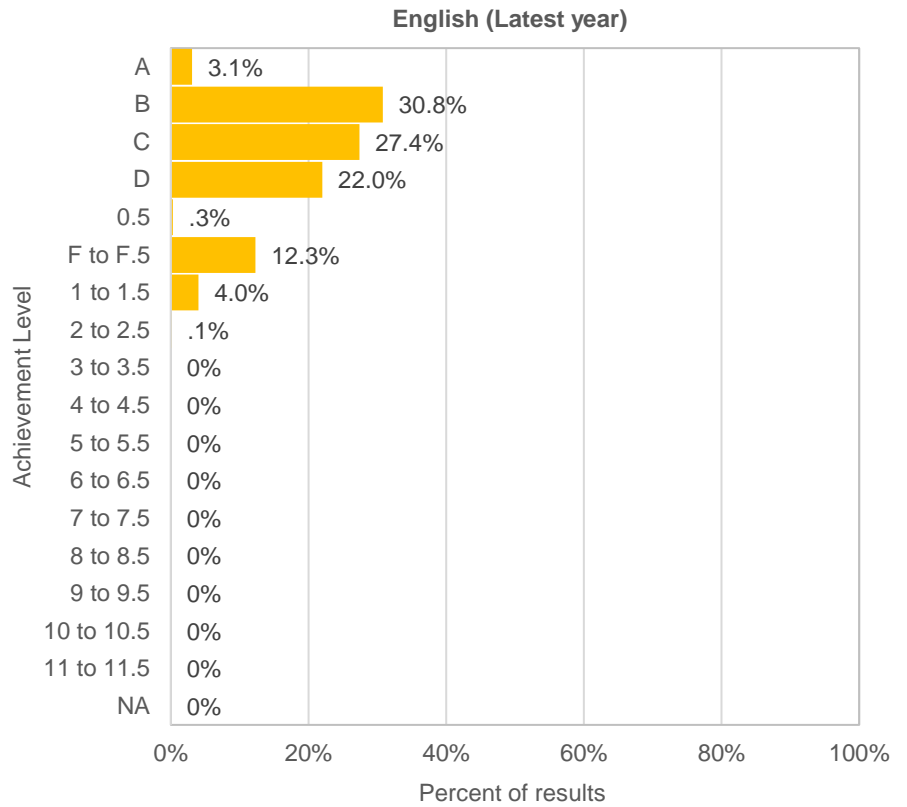
ACHIEVEMENT

Teacher Judgement of student achievement

Percent of results at each achievement level in English and Mathematics.

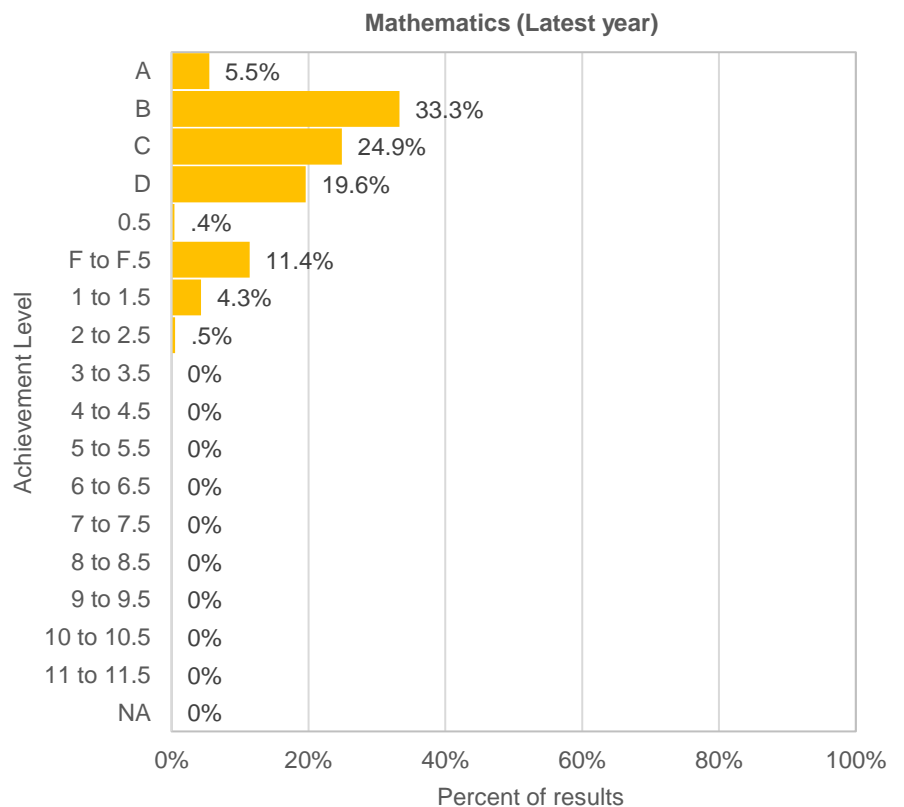
English

Achievement Level	Latest year (2020)
A	3.1%
B	30.8%
C	27.4%
D	22.0%
0.5	0.3%
F to F.5	12.3%
1 to 1.5	4.0%
2 to 2.5	0.1%
3 to 3.5	NDA
4 to 4.5	NDA
5 to 5.5	NDA
6 to 6.5	NDA
7 to 7.5	NDA
8 to 8.5	NDA
9 to 9.5	NDA
10 to 10.5	NDA
11 to 11.5	NDA
NA	NDA



Mathematics

Achievement Level	Latest year (2020)
A	5.5%
B	33.3%
C	24.9%
D	19.6%
0.5	0.4%
F to F.5	11.4%
1 to 1.5	4.3%
2 to 2.5	0.5%
3 to 3.5	NDA
4 to 4.5	NDA
5 to 5.5	NDA
6 to 6.5	NDA
7 to 7.5	NDA
8 to 8.5	NDA
9 to 9.5	NDA
10 to 10.5	NDA
11 to 11.5	NDA
NA	NDA



ENGAGEMENT

Average Number of Student Absence Days

Absence from school can impact on students' learning. Common reasons for non-attendance include illness and extended family holidays. Absence data in 2020 may have been influenced by local processes and procedures adopted in response to remote and flexible learning.

Student Absence	2017	2018	2019	2020	4-year average
School average number of absence days:	24.4	23.8	26.1	24.8	24.8

Students exiting to further studies or full-time employment

Percentage of students going on to further studies or full-time employment.

Note: This measure refers to data from the previous calendar year. Data excludes destinations recorded as 'Unknown'.

Student Exits	2017	2018	2019	2020	4-year average
School percent of students with positive destinations:	99.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.5%

Financial Performance and Position

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - OPERATING STATEMENT SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER, 2020

Revenue	Actual
Student Resource Package	\$18,679,546
Government Provided DET Grants	\$2,189,310
Government Grants Commonwealth	\$0
Government Grants State	NDA
Revenue Other	\$73,926
Locally Raised Funds	\$10,553
Capital Grants	NDA
Total Operating Revenue	\$20,953,334

Equity ¹	Actual
Equity (Social Disadvantage)	\$55,684
Equity (Catch Up)	NDA
Transition Funding	NDA
Equity (Social Disadvantage – Extraordinary Growth)	NDA
Equity Total	\$55,684

Expenditure	Actual
Student Resource Package ²	\$16,638,151
Adjustments	NDA
Books & Publications	\$3,945
Camps/Excursions/Activities	\$26,934
Communication Costs	\$34,080
Consumables	\$114,363
Miscellaneous Expense ³	\$58,780
Professional Development	\$34,440
Equipment/Maintenance/Hire	\$180,028
Property Services	\$294,741
Salaries & Allowances ⁴	\$126,406
Support Services	\$1,417,290
Trading & Fundraising	\$11,563
Motor Vehicle Expenses	\$30,943
Travel & Subsistence	\$120
Utilities	\$207,116
Total Operating Expenditure	\$19,178,900
Net Operating Surplus/-Deficit	\$1,774,433
Asset Acquisitions	\$140,556

- (1) The equity funding reported above is a subset of the overall revenue reported by the school.
- (2) Student Resource Package Expenditure figures are as of 02 Mar 2021 and are subject to change during the reconciliation process.
- (3) Miscellaneous Expenses include bank charges, administration expenses, insurance and taxation charges.
- (4) Salaries and Allowances refers to school-level payroll.

FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

Funds available	Actual
High Yield Investment Account	\$1,080,810
Official Account	\$52,470
Other Accounts	\$23,393
Total Funds Available	\$1,156,674

Financial Commitments	Actual
Operating Reserve	\$388,017
Other Recurrent Expenditure	NDA
Provision Accounts	NDA
Funds Received in Advance	\$17,526
School Based Programs	\$30,000
Beneficiary/Memorial Accounts	NDA
Cooperative Bank Account	NDA
Funds for Committees/Shared Arrangements	NDA
Repayable to the Department	NDA
Asset/Equipment Replacement < 12 months	NDA
Capital - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	\$150,000
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds < 12 months	\$93,000
Asset/Equipment Replacement > 12 months	NDA
Capital - Buildings/Grounds > 12 months	NDA
Maintenance - Buildings/Grounds > 12 months	NDA
Total Financial Commitments	\$678,448

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.