

2021 Annual Report to The School Community



School Name: Yarra Road Primary School (4219)



- 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 2021 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.

«PrincipalSignDescription»

- This 2021 Annual Report to the School Community has been tabled and endorsed at a meeting of the school council and will be publicly shared with the school community

«PresidentSignDescription»

About Our School

School context

The Yarra Road vision, 'Outstanding Engagement, Exceptional School' underpins our purpose of developing confident, engaged learners with the cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills to connect them to their expanding world. Our five focus values of Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Excellence and Confidence are reflected in all aspects of our daily practice.

In 2021 we had an enrolment of 318 students. Of these, 2% have an indigenous background, 2% are non-English speakers and 16 qualify for additional funding under the Program for Students with Disabilities. The Student Family Occupation and Education (SFOE) Index band in 2021 was low, which reflects a low level of socio-educational disadvantage.

Fourteen classrooms operated, including nine straight year level classes, four multi-age groupings in Year 3/4 and one in Year 4/5. All students had weekly specialist lessons in Visual Art, Performing Arts, Physical Education and Indonesian. Prep students also had weekly perceptual motor program sessions. Throughout remote and flexible learning periods during 2021, specialist programs continued with additional co-curricular options being offered in wellbeing and social engagement.

In 2021 the school had 1.8 Principal Class Officers, 2 Learning Specialists, in Literacy and Numeracy, a total of 20.7 teachers, and 9 Education Support Staff (5.8 EFT). Following the retirement of the incumbent, a new Principal commenced at the beginning of Term 4 and initiated action for our school review to be completed in Term 1, 2022. We are excited about the opportunities the new School Strategic Plan will bring as the school sets a new direction.

Yarra Road Primary School is situated in the leafy outer suburb of Croydon North. The school features light, bright classrooms. Each is equipped with a sound field system to clarify and amplify teacher and student voices. Large screen televisions provide excellent audio/visual displays. The grounds are beautifully treed and include upgraded and engaging play spaces, a synthetic grassed oval and basketball courts. Very well-equipped specialist learning facilities include a gymnasium, performing and visual arts classrooms, a LOTE – Indonesian classroom, and a well-stocked library.

The use of technology is a feature of the school. As a result of extensive fund raising, the school equips every student with a Chrome Book computer. This, and our extensive use of the Google platform, enabled continuity of learning throughout lockdown period and no digital divide was experienced by students. All students were able to take home their Chrome Book, and learning materials, enabling seamless transition and consistent teaching and learning during all periods of remote and flexible learning.

The school's instructional practice follows the workshop model with a focus on explicit teaching. Cooperative learning, a differentiated approach to meet student needs and a focus on consistency across the school, are key drivers in all curriculum areas. In 2021, the school focused effort on continuing to improve our differentiated approach, especially in writing and enhancing the use of feedback to support student learning and further develop student voice. This approach was consistent throughout face to face and periods of remote and flexible learning.

Emphasis on the physical and creative development of our students is a high priority. Programs operate to support students' performance and sporting skill development. These include an annual full school musical production and extensive participation in intra and inter-school sports, as well as after school and Hoop Time basketball programs. During 2021 these programs started strongly in Semester 1 but were greatly reduced or cancelled due to COVID-19 lockdowns in the second half of the year. After students returned to onsite learning in Term Four we were exceptionally pleased to be able to bring to the stage two performances of our musical production, 'Ali Baba and the Bongo Bandits'.

Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO)

The driving goals for the Yarra Road 2018-2021 Strategic Plan (SSP) were to strengthen the culture of professional practice to improve student-learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy, and to increase student motivation by empowering them to be self-regulated learners with high levels of cognitive engagement.

In 2021 our emphasis was on achieving the DET Priorities Goal and our SSP student learning goal. Professional Learning Community (PLC) groups were established for each of our goals and we started by reviewing and embedding the PLC process.

The Learning Catch Up and Extension PLC implemented the key improvement strategy of using evidence based high-impact teaching strategies for this priority. They supported teacher collaboration in implementing effective teaching practices, and ran professional learning of the high impact teaching strategies and improving data literacy. We introduced PAT online testing to set baseline data on student achievement which helped in the identification of students to participate in the Tutor Learning Initiative (TLI) and was used to measure growth. Work was done to ensure individual education plans were in place for all students requiring support or extension and that these were consistent across the school.

The Happy, Active and Healthy Kids PLC undertook health and wellbeing actions to support achievement of this priority. As a member of the Maroondah Positive Education Network this focus underpins all of our actions. This PLC provided professional learning for staff in developing our whole school approach to social-emotional belonging and engagement included PERMAH training, Friendology, Respectful Relationships and the Berry Street Educational Model providing a trauma-informed approach to supporting students.

The Connected School Priority PLC did what was possible, under the circumstances, in building communities through provision of online engagement activities for families. Frequent Friday night Family Kahootz were very well attended and maintained connections and engagement with the school community during lockdowns.

We continued work on our SSP goal of 'strengthening a positive culture of professional practice to improve student outcomes in numeracy', with the building practice excellence KIS of 'implementing consistent assessment practices and use of data to inform differentiated learning in Mathematics to improve student numeracy'.

Planned actions completed by this PLC included ensuring the YRPS Mathematics Scope and Sequence developed in 2020 was being followed across the school. A new Assessment Schedule for Mathematics was developed with Essential Assessments a feature. The existing Instructional Model for literacy was adapted for Mathematics, and trialled by a number of teachers, however long periods of remote and flexible learning in Semester 2 interrupted this work. During this time the Numeracy PLC team were able to ensure the focus on Mathematics was continued with the emphasis on teachers' building their professional practice by investigating and using a range of digital resources for student learning and providing differentiated support and targeted support and feedback to students through additional small group Google Meets.

Building on the Bastow Leading Mathematics professional learning undertaken in 2019, four members of the Numeracy PLC, continued to develop capacity by participating in the Bastow Leading Differentiated Teaching in Mathematics online course during remote and flexible learning in Terms 3 and 4. Whilst the loss of opportunities to apply this learning face to face had an impact, it enabled the development of a professional learning plan to be implemented in 2022.

Achievement

In the final year of our four-year strategic plan (2018-2021) the goal we focused on was strengthening the culture of professional practice to improve student outcomes in numeracy. As described above we were able to apply some efforts towards this goal but were curtailed by COVID-19 in some aspects.

Teacher judgement of student learning over 2021 showed that the percentage of students from Prep to Year 6 who were working at or above expected level in English at 90.5% and Mathematics at 92.8% was above the percentage in similar schools and above the state.

NAPLAN results in 2021 showed an increase in the percentage of students performing in the top two bands in Year 3 Reading at 77% and Year 5 Reading at 58%, Year 3 Writing 60% and Year 5 Writing 36%, achieving our 4 year SSP targets. Although, in Numeracy we did not quite meet our SSP top 2 band targets with Year 3 at 29% and Year 5 at 34%, this was still a significant gain from our initial baseline data. When the top three bands are considered in 2021 we exceeded both similar schools and the state in Year 3 and 5 Reading and Year 5 Numeracy, and whilst exceeding the state, we are just below similar schools in Year 3 Numeracy. Our 4 year averages exceed similar school and the state in Year 3 and 5 Reading and Numeracy

The established strong use of technology and extensive use of the Google platform enabled smooth transitions between periods of remote and onsite learning, and supported students to maintain high levels of independence and engagement in their learning. We continued to apply a consistent, whole school pedagogical approach to the creation and delivery of teaching and learning practices, and programs throughout 2021 periods of remote and flexible learning. Leadership and staff worked to monitor and use a variety of structures and strategies to support growth in student outcomes and ensure that learning was achievable and challenging in the home situation.

All students supported by the Program for Students with Disabilities have an individual education plan outlining how learning is differentiating to meet their needs. Many attended onsite during lockdown periods and all were carefully monitored and supported, whether onsite or learning remotely.

At the end of 2021 the majority of the community demonstrated their high level of support for the school through surveys, with all sectors responding with high positive endorsement percentages:

- 83% of parent responders are satisfied with the school overall, ahead of the state average of 81.8%
- 95.5% of our students from Year 4 to 6 feel connected to school which is well above the state and similar school averages
- 84.2% of staff feel positive about school climate, which is well ahead of the state average of 75.8%

The school community, especially students and staff, should be pleased with their achievements given the exceptionally challenging demands of the second year of the COVID-19 global pandemic. We look forward to developing and implementing a new SSP upon completion of the school review in Term 1, 2022.

Engagement

At all times we aim to provide a safe, stimulating, and creative learning environment, where students feel empowered, engaged, and connected. The first semester of 2021 was heavily focused on reintroducing routines including group events, social activities, shared learning experiences and community events to reengage and connect students and families to the each other, and the school. Working with COVID safe guidelines a huge number of events were achieved. Our Literacy Learning Specialist was released from the classroom to provide full time learning support through the Tutor Learning Initiative. This was supplemented by the provision of Minilit and Maqlit literacy intervention programs. Focused support was given to students who had not made expected growth and / or were struggling with their literacy.

Additional efforts were implemented in the second half of 2021 where students were again disconnected physically from school, friends and activities. During the extended period of remote and flexible learning staff and students implemented new strategies and monitoring to support each child's engagement with learning, friends and community.

The school continually addresses the issue of absenteeism, by ensuring every child is accounted for every day and by supporting parents to understand the importance of students being at school each day, on time.

During onsite learning periods parents are notified by SMS if a student is absent, without notification, in the morning

session. A further follow up SMS and then a phone call, to account for them, occurs if necessary. Attendance rates showed an improvement of 2% from the previous year. Although this is a small percentage improvement, the average attendance rate from Prep to Year 6 is 93%.

During 2021 lockdown periods maintaining connections and supporting students to participate in learning was of high importance. To account for attendance we aimed to see and speak with each child, every day via class Google Meets. Staff were diligent in following up online absences. Where needed, they established extra small group and individual Meets to reengage and connect students. Onsite learning was provided for children of essential workers, at risk students and those we identified as most likely to disengage from learning, resulting in a large cohort of students being supported in their learning by staff for the duration of the lockdown. All teachers shared responsibility for providing onsite supervision and support during this time, whilst planning, managing and supporting students who were learning remotely.

Wellbeing

Developing a strong sense of wellbeing amongst the students, families and staff is a major commitment at Yarra Road. The school is responsive to student needs through workforce planning with a particular emphasis on small class sizes, differentiated teaching programs and wellbeing support. In 2021 the school funded a full time student wellbeing teacher who is strongly connected to students and families. The role included supporting families in need. This was particularly important during the extended lockdown which led to both physical and mental hardships.

The work of the Happy, Active and Healthy Kids PLC team, coordinated by the wellbeing teacher, has been pivotal to the overall positive climate in the school. We continued to embed Positive Education. In Term 2 the whole school focused on implementing URSTRONG Friendology, empowering students with a skills-based strategies incorporating child friendly concepts, skills and language to help them build and maintain healthy friendships. This also gave staff a common language and approach to support positive social relationships and assist children encountering difficulties with their social connections.

Throughout Semester 2 there continued to be a focus on pastoral care programs, Respectful Relationships and Circle Time. These programs and other wellbeing initiatives looked a little different online but were maintained to support students and their families. We worked particularly hard to develop resilience in students and maintain social connections with online events and sessions provided for families and students.

Preparing Year 6 students to transition to secondary school and preschoolers into Prep was an area of challenge during 2021, with limited onsite opportunities available. Through a strategy of small group online activities, and, when possible, small group onsite activities, our Prep 2022 students were able to prepare for the next stage of learning and were able to meet their peers and staff. Year 6 teachers provided as many opportunities as possible for that cohort to take on increasing responsibility. A highlight was the students planning, preparing and running their Bizarre Bazaar social service fundraiser.

Finance performance and position

The school ended the year in a sound financial position. Targeted spending in 2021 was directed towards ground improvements - mulching of school playground, skylights in Junior School Building, retaining wall and routine School Based Maintenance tasks, including new sewerage works and the maintenance of our trees after storms caused a lot of damage and compromised some of our more mature trees. Expenditure on the removal of old damaged furniture was also an expense that we were able to accommodate that has led to working spaces being less cluttered. Our High Yield investment account holds \$349,253 receipted in advance for 2022 for compulsory items and a portion of voluntary payments. At the end of 2021 we received \$20,000 in State funding – which will be directed to a new shade sail covered area and \$486,000 in further State funding which is to be utilised to redevelop our basketball court areas

and provide the school with an all weather covered basketball court. The balance of funds are being held for maintenance and larger scale projects including the refurbishment of the school toilets. Replacements and upgrades of our 1:1 chromebook program will be another investment required in 2022.

Our SRP did end in a 33,000 deficit and with dropping enrolments this will be needing to be managed closely throughout 2022.

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at
<https://yarrardps.vic.edu.au>