2020 Annual Report

Merriwa Central School
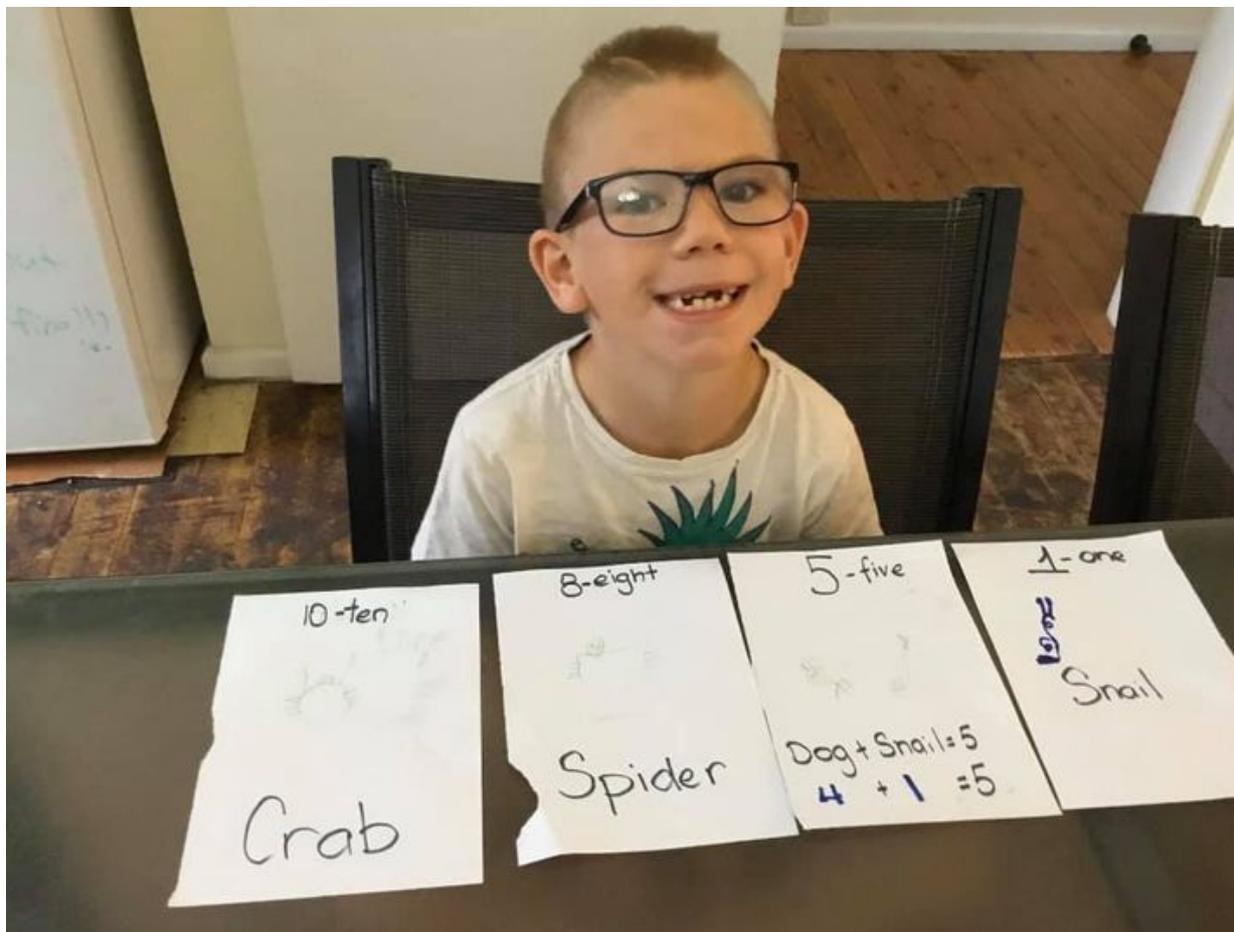
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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2020 is provided to the community of Merriwa Central School as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

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School vision

Our focus on quality teaching aims to ensure all students can achieve their true potential.

"Valuing individual potential - achieving personal best".

School context

Merriwa Central School is a K-12 school (232 students including 55 Aboriginal students) located within a supportive community in the Upper Hunter. It caters to students from the local town and villages servicing a largely rural community. It is one of the oldest schools in the State and was one of the first National Schools established in 1850. Merriwa Central School is unique in several respects. Firstly it is the only central school in the Hunter, and secondly it is one of four central schools in the State with a separate primary and secondary campus. The primary enrolment of 128 students is divided into 6 classes, some of which are multigrade. Some classes are also across stage. The secondary enrolment of 104 is divided into classes of the same year or stage group. In some cases the class may consist of the entire enrolment for that year group. Students are taught a wide variety of subjects delivered by classroom teachers, through video conference, by distance education and at TAFE. The Upper Hunter Trade Training Centre is a joint facility in collaboration with Scone High School, Muswellbrook High School and Scone Grammar School. The Merriwa Campus enables students to complete Certificate ll in Hospitality, as well as Certificate l in Metal and Engineering. The Early Action for Success (EAfS) initiative aims to improve students' performance through a targeted approach in the early years K-2. Geographic, cultural and socioeconomic disadvantage are issues for our students in a region which is dominated by the coal and electricity generation industries. The ongoing impact of the drought on our rural community has seen a significant reduction in local employment which will lead to a decline in school enrolments overtime.

The global COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on all elements of society including education in 2020. Disruptions to learning and the development of a blended learning model and learning from home were features of school life in 2020.

Self-assessment and school achievement

This section of the annual report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework and participated in an external validation. The Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. The Framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

Each year, we assess our practice against the Framework to inform our school plan and annual report. Every five years, our school undergoes an external validation process.

During the external validation process, an independent panel consisting of a Principal School Leadership and a peer principal considered our evidence and assessment of our school's progress against the School Excellence Framework.

Our self-assessment and the external validation process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework: https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability/school-excellence

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2020 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Delivering
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Delivering
LEARNING: Curriculum	Delivering
LEARNING: Assessment	Delivering
LEARNING: Reporting	Delivering
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Delivering
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Delivering
TEACHING: Professional standards	Delivering
TEACHING: Learning and development	Delivering
LEADING: Educational leadership	Delivering
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Delivering
LEADING: School resources	Delivering
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Delivering

Strategic Direction 1

Teaching and Learning

Purpose

Through a focus on Teaching and Learning every student is actively engaged in meaningful and challenging learning experiences that allow them to thrive at their own pace.

Staff undertake ongoing professional learning in order to enhance their practice and cultivate collaborative learning environments where they systematically and strategically review both student and staff progress based on evidence, self-reflection and feedback.

Improvement Measures

School data shows that student progress and achievement is greater than students at statistically similar schools on external measures, and this is consistent with strong student progress and achievement on internal measures.

Teachers employ evidence-based effective teaching strategies. Effective methods are identified, promoted and modelled, and students' learning improvement is monitored, demonstrating growth.

Teachers clearly understand, develop and apply a full range of assessment strategies - assessment for learning, assessment as learning and assessment of learning - in determining teaching directions, monitoring and assessing student progress and achievement, and reflecting on teaching effectiveness.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1:   Building Staff Capacity

Develop staff's capacity to effectively implement evidence based practices into teaching and learning - including an ongoing focus on literacy and numeracy.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
The Early Action for Success (EAfS) initiative provided targeted literacy and numeracy support for students and teachers K-2. The Instructional Leader Emma Garbellini worked with teachers to identify students who required additional support. Weekly focus meetings with K-2 teachers led by the Instructional Leader were able to review student data and target interventions accordingly. At the end of the year 54% of Kindergarten students reached or surpassed the EAfS benchmark/ L3 reading target (level 9 and beyond texts), 64% of Year 1 students reached or surpassed the EAfS benchmark/ L3 reading target (level 17 and beyond texts), and 81% of Year 2 students reached or surpassed the EAfS benchmark/ L3 reading target (level 21 and beyond texts). The school has a significant proportion of beginning teachers (55%) to experienced teachers and implemented various local induction programs for beginning teachers and newly appointed middle executive. Additional support was provided by Maree Angus PSL to build capacity of middle executive in understanding their role. Access to external face-to-face professional development was placed on hold due to the COVID guidelines implemented across the State. Middle executive participated in CESE'S Leading Evaluation, Evidence and Data (LEED) project to develop capacity to lead the effective use of data. Teaching staff completed feedback on CESE's What Works Best 2020. Self-reported data from teachers indicated staff feel comfortable using data to inform practice with a school average score of 3.9 out of 5. However following a review in our situational analysis and triangulation of data this initial feedback from staff may be somewhat aspirational.	Instructional Leader (EAfS) Emma Garbellini **Funding Sources:** • Early action for success ($100401.00) • Professional learning ($31115.00)

Process 2:   **21st Century Technologies**

Embed a strong focus on 21st Century Teaching and Learning programs, utilising and updating technology within the school and reviewing and imbedding engaging software to enhance learning school wide.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
The outbreak of COVID had a significant impact on teaching and learning in 2020 with a rapid shift toward blended learning. Professional development goals quickly pivoted in Term 1 to address the needs of students learning from home. Significant professional development was undertaken in a short period of time for staff to develop skills in on-line learning, video-conferencing, use of applications such as Zoom and Google Classrooms to meet the needs of students learning from home. Significant resources were used to audit the needs of children learning from home. Parents were contacted to determine what materials were best to met the needs of students and parents during this time. Parents reported "my child enjoyed the learning from home experience. The effort the teacher and school put in for our children was exceptional". As a result of the crisis and the importance of technology in blended learning all staff have greater skills in the use of technology to engage students in learning which is now embedded in classroom practice.	**Funding Sources:** • Literacy and numeracy ($15000.00) • Socio-economic background ($31000.00)

Strategic Direction 2

Wellbeing

Purpose

The wellbeing of every student is a priority. A whole school focus on student and staff wellbeing will enhance student engagement and reinvigorate staff. A collegial work environment supports staff to provide a range of rich learning experiences to students whilst maintaining an appropriate work-life balance.

Improvement Measures

Implementation of evidence-based change to whole school practices, resulting in measurable improvements in wellbeing and engagement to support learning.

Positive, respectful relationships are evident and widespread among students and staff and promote student wellbeing to ensure optimum conditions for student learning across the whole school as evidenced in VW and TTFM data.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Implement a whole school integrated approach to student and staff well-being in which students can connect, succeed and thrive at each stage of their schooling.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
A Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) action plan was developed in 2020. School wide implementation of the plan commenced with the development of. school wide expectations (Safe, Respectful, Learner) in consultation with staff, students and parents. A K-12 matrix of behaviour was developed to support the program implementation. Staff survey's have been collated and will continue to inform the action of the PBL Team. A consultation process has been completed with students and staff to determine the PBL mascot. Training of staff has been completed in universals and classroom. The official assembly to launch PBL has been delayed as a result of COVID - 19 and is scheduled for Term 2 2021.	**Funding Sources:** • Socio-economic background ($15000.00)

Process 2: Review K-12 Learning Support Team Policy and Procedures.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
As part of the School Excellence Framework (SEF)The school undertook a rigorous self-assessment and analysis of the schools current situation with respect to student outcomes and teaching and leadership practices. The school participated in an external validation process which provided an assurance that the school and system progress aligns with expectations in the School Excellence Framework. The external team were able to validate the schools results across the domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading. In the element of School resources it indicated the school is operating at Sustaining and Growing stage. The external validation process was able to inform the schools situational analysis and guide the development of the schools Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) 2021-2024.	External Validation team **Funding Sources:** • Socio-economic background ($4600.00)

Strategic Direction 3

Community

Purpose

The success of every student is based upon the successful partnership between the school, parents and the broader community. A shared vision ensures continued community confidence in Merriwa Central School and it's students. The school is embraced by the community with a shared vision and advocacy.

Improvement Measures

The leadership team measures school community (parent and student) satisfaction and shares its analysis and actions in response to the findings with its community.

School staff collaborate with the school community to use student progress and achievement data to identify strategic priorities, and develop and implement plans for continuous improvement.

Strategies implemented reflect research on best practice and include ongoing monitoring of success.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Implement a whole school integrated approach to involving parents and the community in school events and learning activities.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
The development of COVID-19 had a significant impact on school operations in 2020. Many school activities and events were cancelled due to social distancing requirements in accordance with Department of Health guidelines. As a result parents had limited access to school sites, and opportunities for traditional face-to-face meetings and orientation activities were restricted or cancelled. The School had to rely on other forms of communication (newsletters, Facebook page, Skoolbag App) to engage with parents. As a result many of the planned activities had to be cancelled during this period. Feedback was sought from parents during this time and will be reported separately.	**Funding Sources:** • Socio-economic background ($2500.00)

Process 2: Implement strategic partnerships with external organisations to enhance wellbeing, engagement and learning outcomes of students.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
Students participated in the Tell Them From Me survey in 2020. The results in snapshot 1 77% of primary students indicated a positive sense of belonging which was completed shortly after returning from the extended period of learning from home. There was a significant improvement in the secondary students sense of belonging throughout the year identified in a 16% improvement in snapshot 2 to 63% which is close to the State average.	

Key Initiatives	Resources (annual)	Impact achieved this year
Aboriginal background loading	**Funding Sources:** • Aboriginal background loading ($66 337.00)	Additional Learning Support Officers were engaged to provide on-on one literacy and numeracy support for students. Additional programs such as Reading Eggs, Mathletics and Quicksmart were implemented to support Aboriginal students. Technology support with laptops and wifi dongles was provided to families without these devices during the learning from home period.
Low level adjustment for disability	**Funding Sources:** • Low level adjustment for disability ($68 000.00)	Through the School Excellence Framework (SEF) self-assessment process the school reviewed student outcomes and teaching and leading practices. The school assessment was validated by the external validation team based on the evidence presented. The process provided a focus to guide the next phase of the school improvement cycle.
Socio-economic background	Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing Quicksmart program **Funding Sources:** • Socio-economic background ($167 335.00) • Socio-economic background ($66 337.00) • Aboriginal background loading ($64 442.00)	Resources were allocated to students during the learning form home period to provide access to technology during this time. Additional on-line resources were purchased to support student learning and engagement. The school has established an additional Equity funded Deputy Principal position to support student wellbeing. The position has enable targeted support for students and parents and been fundamental in the establishment of a secondary support class in 2021. The Quicksmart numeracy program supported 59 students in Year 4-9. In terms of accuracy students average scores on Division increased by 29.931%, an Effect Size showing substantial improvement. PAT-M assessment indicated an average gain for students based on pre and post testing. Aboriginal students showed improvement although this was slightly less that the rest of the Quicksmart group.
Support for beginning teachers	**Funding Sources:** • Support for beginning teachers ($52 193.00)	Additional release was provided to beginning teachers to assist with planning and meeting accreditation requirements. Induction programs were led by school executive in regard to school systems and procedures. Access to external face-to-face professional development was limited due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Two teachers completed the accreditation process gaining proficiency in 2020.

Student information

Student enrolment profile

	Enrolments			
Students	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Boys	135	128	122	114
Girls	149	132	116	108

The recent drought continues to have an impact on student enrolments. Disaster staffing supplementation is provided by the Department to maintain the breadth of curriculum for students with a maintenance on staffing levels.

Student attendance profile

School				
Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
K	92.5	89.4	93.5	94.5
1	90.4	88	91.2	91.8
2	92.7	90.2	94.8	93.5
3	88.3	88.4	90.6	92.8
4	91	88.6	91.9	92.1
5	92.3	89.3	88.9	90.2
6	89.9	89.9	89.5	89.5
7	91	88.7	84.9	92.7
8	81.8	77.5	86.1	86
9	83.9	72.4	84.7	90.2
10	82.5	82.8	76.7	87.4
11	81.1	81.5	78.4	82.5
12	76.4	84.8	87.8	90.6
All Years	87.3	85.6	87.6	90.6
State DoE				
Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
K	94.4	93.8	93.1	92.4
1	93.8	93.4	92.7	91.7
2	94	93.5	93	92
3	94.1	93.6	93	92.1
4	93.9	93.4	92.9	92
5	93.8	93.2	92.8	92
6	93.3	92.5	92.1	91.8
7	92.7	91.8	91.2	92.1
8	90.5	89.3	88.6	90.1
9	89.1	87.7	87.2	89
10	87.3	86.1	85.5	87.7
11	88.2	86.6	86.6	88.2
12	90.1	89	88.6	90.4
All Years	92.3	91.5	91	91.1

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to previous years due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NSW Government encouraged students to learn from home, where possible, for a seven week period from 24 March to 22 May. During this period, schools monitored engagement with learning to determine whether students were marked present. This changed the attendance measure. There was also some evidence of varied marking practices as schools adjusted to the learning from home period, with some schools recording higher attendance rates while others recording markedly lower rates.

Management of non-attendance

Attendance at school has a big impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people. When a child is not at school they miss important opportunities to learn, build friendships and develop their skills through play. Regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working together we can have a positive effect on supporting our children and young people to regularly attend school.

Our teachers promote and monitor regular attendance at school and all our schools have effective measures in place to record attendance and follow up student absences promptly. They are guided by the School Attendance policy which details the management of non-attendance.

Post school destinations

Proportion of students moving into post-school education, training or employment	Year 10 %	Year 11 %	Year 12 %
Seeking Employment	0	0	0
Employment	7	18	45
TAFE entry	0	0	0
University Entry	0	0	45
Other	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	10

Year 12 students undertaking vocational or trade training

66.67% of Year 12 students at Merriwa Central School undertook vocational education and training in 2020.

Year 12 students attaining HSC or equivalent vocational education qualification

91.7% of all Year 12 students at Merriwa Central School expected to complete Year 12 in 2020 received a Higher School Certificate or equivalent vocational education and training qualification.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Deputy Principal(s)	1
Assistant Principal(s)	2
Head Teacher(s)	3
Classroom Teacher(s)	14.57
Learning and Support Teacher(s)	1.2
Teacher Librarian	1
School Administration and Support Staff	7.09
Other Positions	0.2

*Full Time Equivalent

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce composition

The Department actively supports the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees through the use of identified positions, and scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2020, 3.7% of the Department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People.

Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark[1]	2020 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation[2]
School Support	3.30%	6.30%
Teachers	3.30%	2.80%

Note 1 - The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014-17 introduced an aspirational target of 1.8% by 2021 for each of the sector's salary bands. If the aspirational target of 1.8% is achieved in salary bands not currently at or above 1.8%, the cumulative representation of Aboriginal employees in the sector is expected to reach 3.3%.

Note 2 - Representation of diversity groups are calculated as the estimated number of staff in each group divided by the total number of staff. These statistics have been weighted to estimate the representation of diversity groups in the workforce, where diversity survey response rates were less than 100 per cent. The total number of staff is based on a headcount of permanent and temporary employees.

Teacher qualifications

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers in NSW public schools must hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach. Teachers with approval to teach must be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, and hold a recognised teaching degree. All NSW teachers must hold a valid NSW Working With Children Check clearance.

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional learning is core to enabling staff to improve their practice. Professional learning includes five student-free School Development Days and induction programs for staff new to our school and/or system. These days are used to improve the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff in line with school and Departmental priorities.

In 2020, an additional School Development Day was included at the start of Term 2 to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff to focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, such as online and remote learning.

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with Department policy requirements.

	2020 **Actual** ($)
Opening Balance	1,284,971
Revenue	4,988,713
Appropriation	4,942,534
Sale of Goods and Services	14,304
Grants and contributions	21,504
Investment income	3,398
Other revenue	6,972
Expenses	-4,649,660
Employee related	-4,128,544
Operating expenses	-521,115
Surplus / deficit for the year	339,053
Closing Balance	1,624,024

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

School contributions were waived for parents due the COVID pandemic.

Staffing shortages are impacting on the schools ability to implement some funded programs.

Application was made to School Infrastructure as part of the Regional Renewal Grants Program for capital works with funds allocated for future expenditure. Fund were allocated to major capital works programs to provide for a school hall, canteen upgrade, storm water upgrade, and outdoor learning facility on the school agriculture plot..

Financial summary - Equity loadings

The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2020 **Approved SBA** ($)
Targeted Total	179,418
Equity Total	622,562
Equity - Aboriginal	81,876
Equity - Socio-economic	354,828
Equity - Language	821
Equity - Disability	185,036
Base Total	3,575,103
Base - Per Capita	57,024
Base - Location	119,970
Base - Other	3,398,109
Other Total	302,001
Grand Total	4,679,083

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

School performance - NAPLAN

In the National Assessment Program, the results across the Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy assessments are reported on a scale from Band 1 to Band 10. The achievement scale represents increasing levels of skills and understandings demonstrated in these assessments.

The My School website provides detailed information and data for national literacy and numeracy testing. Go to myschool.edu.au to access the school data.

2020 NAPLAN

As agreed by the Education Council, the National Assessment Program (or NAPLAN) did not proceed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff to focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, such as online and remote learning.

The Education Council also agreed to defer the full transition to NAPLAN Online from 2021 to 2022 and the continuation of current NAPLAN governance arrangements through 2021.

School performance - HSC

The performance of students in the HSC is reported in bands ranging from Band 1 (lowest) to Band 6 (highest).

The information in this report must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies. Where there are fewer than 10 students in a course or subject, summary statistics or graphical representation of student performance is not available.
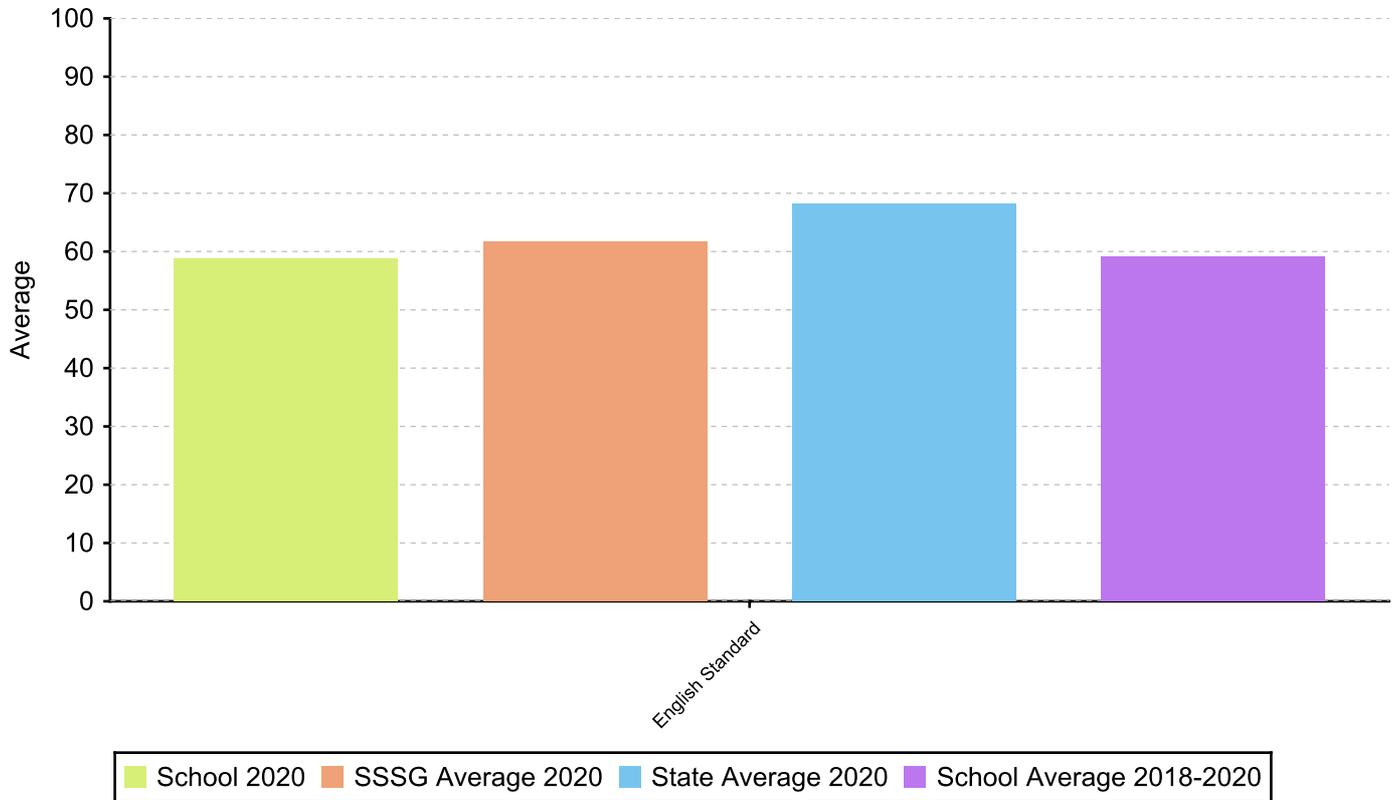
Subject	School 2020	SSSG	State	School Average 2018-2020
English Standard	58.8	61.7	68.1	59.2

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

The school regularly seeks feedback from parents, caregivers, students and teachers on a range of issues throughout the school year.

Learning From Home

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on school operations in 2020. The sudden closure of schools had teachers, students and parents struggling to adjust to the 'new normal" which became learning from home. This was a very difficult period which saw teachers excel in adapting to the new learning environment very quickly.

When school resumed to full-time operation feedback was sought from parents about the schools response to the COVID-19 lockdown and the learning from home period which was announced suddenly on March 23, and continued through the first 4 weeks of Term 2. For some students in families with vulnerable health conditions this arrangement lasted much longer.

A parent survey was distributed through the new school app Skoolbag at the end of Term 2 when students had returned to school.

Results

21 parents responded to the survey which represented approximately 40% of families.

Survey questions and responses

90% parents either agreed or strongly agreed that the school responded quickly to learning from home.

95% parents either agreed or strongly agreed that the school sort my opinion about what would work best (hard copies or online materials.

95% parents either agreed or strongly agreed that staff contacted me to offer support.

95% parents either agreed or strongly agreed that communication from our school was clear about the changes.

38% parents agreed that they struggled to engage their child with learning from home.

61% parents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Additional comments

-my children took to learning from home so easily

-home learning after the holidays was more organised

-thank you to the staff for their help and support during the difficult time

-in a very difficult time I thought everything was done accordingly

-I think our teachers did a fantastic job adapting to the new learning platform and tough circumstances. The office staff were there every day to answer all our questions.

-secondary had better communication than primary

-my child enjoyed the learning from home experience. The effort the teacher and school put in for our children was exceptional.

Summary

A separate technology survey of parents was undertaken early in the learning from home period to identify technology needs of parents. Laptops and dongles were then distributed on a needs basis based on the survey results.

Overall feedback from parents was very positive in regard to the schools response to COVID-19 during the learning from home period.

School Uniform

A review of the secondary school uniform was undertaken in Term 3. Feedback was sought from students, staff and parents in regard to uniform with a particular focus on the secondary winter uniform.

Students were asked about about what they thought of the uniform and the community perceptions based on how students present when representing the school.

The Student Representative Council then used the feedback from these surveys to design and procure a new secondary winter jersey to be introduced in 2021.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal Education Policy

The responsibility for enacting the Aboriginal Education Policy rests with all Departmental staff. The policy should underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

Evidence of effective implementation of the policy included:

- Establishing, building and strengthening relationships with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal people and communities.
- Providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population.
- Implementation of Personalised Learning Pathways for all Aboriginal students in a school culture of high expectations.

Anti-Racism Policy

All teachers are responsible for supporting students to develop an understanding of racism and discrimination and the impact these may have on individuals and the broader community. Principals are responsible for examining school practices and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policy. All schools have an Anti-Racism Contact Officer who is trained to respond to concerns in relation to racism.

Ms Narelle Smith Deputy Principal is the schools Anti-Racism Contact Officer.

Multicultural Education Policy

Teachers address the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. Principals are responsible for ensuring that school policies, programs and practices respond to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the school community, and provide opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes.