



2025 – Year in Review – Fitzroy Community School

The Year in Brief

2025 was a good year at school. The school day continues to be active, fun, engaging and, at times, challenging. The new students all quickly settled in, again well supported and cared for by the older children. The Biggies' daily example and acts of care and kindness continue to filter down through school, contributing to a warm, welcome feel and a strong sense of community. This culture of care and support, expected and enacted by the staff, establishes and maintains a school experience that all children enjoy, and means that the school is a happy, much-loved place.

The cyclical events of the school year – the many significant moments and rites of passage and simply daily events – play a significant role in building a sense of community: soirees, sports days, concerts, plays, poetry recitals and adult afternoon teas all contribute to the school being a fun place; and a place where all members of the community acknowledge, known and welcome. The adult dinners this year were especially well attended, and the extra Sports Day double the fun. The children brought a feeling of positive lightness to the school day with their energetic joy. Both Sports Day were embraced with significant enthusiasm by children and parents alike, with the noisiest event continuing to be the inter-campus parents' tug-of-war. This event reverses the normal experience of parents cheering on their children, and if anything, the children cheer their parents with even greater enthusiasm. There was an upset this year, with the Brunswick Street parents, for the first time in a decade, being victorious. The disco was thoroughly enjoyed by all the children. Pyjama Days were less frequent than in past-years but just as fun, while the parents' poetry morning was bigger than ever, with, like 2024, a number of parents presenting original works. Biggies Oral book reports (at the Fairfield Amphitheatre) were well attended, and adult afternoon teas ranged from busy to busting. A special thank you to those school families who contributed baked items to the afternoon teas. The school plays again showcased the school, with participation and talent on equal display. Soirees were all well-attended, with some of the music staff raising the standard with their performances, including of original works. And in speaking of original works, the last couple of years has seen one of our Biggies performing his own compositions, and one occasion, having a duet performed by the music staff. The



children show no end to their enthusiasm for performing in front of their family and friends, and continue to gain in confidence through this experience. Adult contributions are a bonus.

The joy of connection was felt and daily experienced by all members of the school community. As shared in previous years, the children continue to organise the school fetes, which were again colourful, happy events. There is nothing quite like a swarm of children with bright painted faces, glowing nails and rainbow hair to bring a festive feel to an event. This year's Biggies again appeared to really thrive on the organisation and responsibility required to run this event.

The new students quickly fitted in and happily engaged with the breadth, depth and richness of the FCS school week, with the school, post-Lockdown continuing to be aware of the importance of connection, and so striving to actively extend welcomes and invites to new students and their families. The school's (generally) tech-free status continues to be identified as contributing to stronger connections and better social skills. The school staff, when approached by parents with queries about the use of screens (at home, on drives, at events) continue to share that any benefit (outside of the instant distraction) brought by screens is unclear, while the costs are apparent. The school's classrooms are predominantly screen-free; the student learning experience continues to be individual device free. Sadly, the negative impact on focus, concentration, creativity and connection common to screen-based childhoods continues to be noted by the school's staff.

Summer Camps ran in Mansfield and East Gippsland, and for the first time, Bell Brae (Torquay). These camps continue to be times of adventures and are always times of enhanced connection; camp plays a growthful role in boosting and strengthening friendships. Camps continue to be an integral part of our school's program, with staff, year after year, sharing the observed gains camp brings to our students. Camps, through their significant place on the calendars, clearly demonstrate the school's mission of growing competent, brave and community minded citizens. Camps also offer a clear forum in which the learning of independence, promotion of patience and the expansion of tolerance occur, through the adaptations necessarily required by living side-by-side during these times away with friends.

The significant outdoor time experienced over a week at FCS continues to be both a surprise and shared reflection of our overseas visiting students. Our overseas visitors (parents of visiting students) continue to be



taken aback by the amount of exercise their children do over a day at our school, often sharing that their children are clearly fitter after just a week or two with us. The FCS experience is not a sedentary one. The long walks conducted on some outings leave the children healthy, tired and alive with the glow of a day in the outdoors. Ruddy cheeks are an uncommon feature of a day out and about.

The rites of passage marked by plays and concerts continue to be happy, fun and at times magical events. These events, requiring significant practice and rehearsal over many weeks (or even months) are important for the older students, while also giving the younger students' an opportunity to witnesses (and aspire to match) the ability and challenges of being a central performer in a play, song or poem. Time and effort continue to be allocated to making these events special successes, due to the gains that they bring to all involved.

A school term at FCS includes many outings to a wide variety of venues and experiences (zoo, pool, museum, Scienceworks, library, galleries, playgrounds, parks and gardens). This richness of the weekly offerings continues to be commented upon by school families, and is a clear point of reflection by those families who join our school partway through their children's primary journey. Quite a number of families, in the months after they join our school are astounded by the number of adventures our students have.

The core mission of Fitzroy Community School is and continues to be, the raising of good children. This mission is supported and enhanced through the school's curriculum and co-curricular experiences. The benefits of this wide range, and the frequency of these experiences, is regularly shared by school parents with school staff.

The community of Fitzroy Community School continues to be a lived, real and acknowledged part of our school. Connection is not a platitude, aspiration or ideal at our school, it is a living, breathing reality. The size, style and ethos of FCS play a significant role in promoting connections and underpinning community. Connection, demonstrated in care and attention, is seen in the manner in which the students interact with each other, and is a lovely aspect of our school commented upon by visitors. Community was again alive and well this year.



Normanby Avenue continues to be led in exemplary fashion by Wayne and Joelle. They, as coordinators, daily exhibit care, dedication and a very high level of pedagogical insight into their leadership of this campus, all backed up by fine teaching and a carefully planned curriculum. Wayne and Joelle are highly capable teachers who daily demonstrate compassion and dedication, a combination of traits that deliver a quality educational experience to all students. Outings, swimming, chess and tea-parties continue to have a weekly presence on the timetable.

Outings are central to the FCS experience, with Miranda, Sue and Kate regularly taking the children to a wide range of spaces, with nature-based adventures and explorations the most common. Sport, general fitness and ball-skills play a part in each week. Formal sporting competitions in cross-country running, rounders, basketball and netball were all entered this year. This year saw some success at Hooptime (basketball) and also witnessed the school's netball team progress to Regional level competition after winning the District round robin. Cross-country competitions were enthusiastically attended, with the school dominating at District level, and winning ribbons at Regional and Division level competitions, and even participating at State Level. A big thanks to our teachers for not just their enthusiasm here, but for even putting on their running shoes and accompanying the children during practice.

The leadership provided to the school by the Biggies again illuminated a group of older students who were actively engaged in the day-to-day, including daily involving themselves in the lives of the younger children. These older students, over the course of the year, continued to contributed to a lovely feel and an active, compassionate school experience for the younger students, following on from the very good example set in 2024.

Writing (Prose and Poetry)

Creative writing, as both prose and poetry is an activity beloved by the children. They get a real buzz from transforming their ideas, creativity and imagination into a written text, something that allows them to share their efforts with their friends and teachers (and later parents). The writing of stories and poems typically includes sharing them with the class and teacher, in which ideas, expression and vocabulary are discussed, dissected and collectively improved. Creative writing and poetry have specific time allocations on the timetable (as part of the school's English program). The school continues to enter its students in a number of local, state and national level poetry competitions, and this year received a large number of commendations, special mentions and awards.



The school's two official poems, *If* by Rudyard Kipling, and *How the Little Kite learned to Fly* by Katherine Pyle, continue to be recited at soirees and concerts. These beautifully written, inspiring poems reflect on character via the qualities of endurance, effort and persistence. This is not to claim that the recitation of poetry is the sole ingredient in the transmission of these qualities. Still, education embeds the understanding that our experience forms us, and it is this understanding that is reflected in the choice of these specific poems, and our dedication to the children learning them. The hope of the school is that these poems will act as a small stepping stone to growing good, empowered children. Stories and poems, in the experience of our staff, offer a simple, accessible medium through which aspirations can be shared, and qualities of character enhanced.

Creative Writing continued as a stand alone subject this year. While clearly an aspect of the English curriculum, its status has been raised through it having a dedicated time allocation / standalone aspect. This change has meant that unlike when it fell under the umbrella of English, and was on occasion bumped or given less weight due to time pressure, this is now a much rarer occurrence. This subject sees the children writing, reviewing and revising their imaginative creations, an activity that often concludes with the reading and sharing of their stories.

The Anxious Generation (and social media ban)

The publication of *The Anxious Generation* (Jonathan Haidt) continues to inform, and contribute to, many conversations around school, especially with the enactment of the social media ban as the school year came to a close, a ban that followed the publication of this book and the discussions that followed. The school aspires to, acting collectively with parents, raise active, enabled children. Our staff felt that the publication of *The Anxious Generation*, in conjunction with the media discussions surrounding the social media ban, gave greater traction to the position of the school and its staff re: children and screens. As noted last year, *The Anxious Generation* includes a chapter on education, with the suggestions and findings quite closely mirroring the approach and practices of FCS. It is clear that chaotic, disruptive classrooms are places of stress for many children and contribute to the raising of anxiety, while parental over-surveillance (and a general absence of independence) similarly contribute to the anxiety. And that screens act as barriers to connection and the development of social skills. The FCS experience, inadvertently referenced by Jonathan Haidt, stresses independence as well as actively, connected young people. The active energy of our school sees its students happy, engaged, active and caring of each other. The classes are orderly, while also being



creative and educative. The FCS way it turns out, aligns with a clearly documented pathway for good mental health. Screens and social media conversely have a documented negative impact on mental health. Many staff members have, feeling better informed through their knowledge of Dr Haidt's work, have engaged in encouraging parents to limit screen time at home. Sadly, despite our efforts and advocacy here, it appears that some students continue to spend a significant amount of time on devices before and after school, and on weekends.

Around School

The Wednesday BBQ at Brunswick Street continues to be a weekly highlight, with each week trying to better earlier culinary efforts. The school's staff continue to reflect upon the value of the incidental chats between staff and parents during pick-up and drop-off, reflecting that these incidental moments contribute to a sense of connection, as well as enhancing a shared understanding of the needs and strengths of the children.

Singing, especially the energy of whole-school singalongs (Tuesday at Normanby Avenue, Thursday at Brunswick Street) continue to be times of significant fun and joy. Chess on Monday afternoon at Normanby brings a happy buzz, as does dance at Brunswick Street on Tuesday. Sport is well-loved and frequently a high-energy demeanour.

As shared in earlier Annual Reports, the school's chaplains perform an important role. In addition to supporting the children, they are also often the first point of call for families, and so play a role in connection and community building. Additionally, they play a weekly role in exploring natural spaces on their many outings, with these non-structured times in nature bringing significant benefits.

The value of camps continues to be noted by the school's teachers, reinforcing the school's commitment to continue to organise as much time bush/nature time as possible. Additionally, the predominantly non-structured nature of FCS camps continues to be seen as enhancing interpersonal connections, while additionally playing a substantial role in the emergence of creative play. The school appreciates its teachers' commitment to camp, demonstrated in their willingness to spend time away on camp.



Highlights of the Year

The Brunswick Street play, *Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat*, was a great success. This show is traditionally big on colour, and our version was no different. The hilarious over-egging of the disco theme added to our production added extravagance: rainbows, flares and big hair were on prominent display.

The Biggies, accompanied by the younger children, put a great deal of gusto into the songs, with a mix of pre-recorded and live allowing ample opportunity for audience participation. The energy of the night was special, with parents hanging around in the foyer for quite some time at the show's conclusion, not quite ready to depart home and put the night behind them. Our productions that include both singing and dancing typically bring an enhanced energy, and Joseph was no exception.

The two-month rehearsal time was filled with song in the yard and corridors, and added colour as the costumes were tried and fitted in the final weeks before the performance. Lines were practised and re-practised, with scripts on hand over the two month process, thereby allowing the Biggies a chance to grab an extra five minutes of rehearsal time between classes. It was not uncommon to see the children huddled together reciting their lines while eating their lunches. In some years the year fives roles are not as central or connected as these parts were in *Joseph*, so this year saw the whole Biggie class connected and committed to *Joseph* being a great show. They were all heavily invested in its success.

The buzz increased as the week of the performances arrived, and with the trying on of the costumes, and discussions regarding hair and make-up adding to the children's excitement, which in the end infected everyone.

The three performances were all great successes, indicative of the effort and dedication of the Biggies. As the children arrived at the theatre, donned their costumes and applied their make-up, the energy was electric. The shows were enjoyed by all, and were, in the days and weeks following, re-lived through the singing of songs and reminiscing around funny lines and standout moments.



Thanks to everyone who made this play a success: Elinor for her direction, Chuby for his choreography and Sue for the costumes, Warren for the songs and Elinor's dad for his contribution to the props.

The Normanby Avenue play, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, tracked quite close to C.S Lewis's original story, with the clear difference being the addition of songs and dances. The performances were again held at Richmond Theatrette, where parents, grandparents and the wider school community were charmed by the children's presentation of this modern classic. Lewis's four siblings, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy were skillfully portrayed, while the Witch's nastiness and Aslan's care balanced this enthralling story. The addition of song and dance added to the energy of the show, and provided ample opportunity for the younger children to feel part of the show. The older students acted with considerable skill, ensuring that the performances were engaging and the show, over its three sessions, a success.

The annual plays require significant time and effort to stage, effort that continues to be made due to the continuation that they make to the children's growth. In addition, the plays are a highlight – there is a very special buzz associated with live performance that other experiences struggle to replicate. The play, year after year, has a visceral impact on the children who carry the show – the Biggies. The lines, movement and dances that they learn, when delivered to an audience, involve both courage and responsibility – something that is hard to reproduce in other areas of children's lives. As noted in earlier reports, many graduates have shared that their year six play experience was more than special; that it continues to be a significant milestone in their life's journey. This feedback is an ongoing reminder that, despite considerable effort and disruption involved in putting on a play, the effort is worth it. A large thank you to Elinor for her direction, Chuby for choreography, Warren and Kerrie for their contribution to song, and Sue and many others, for finding, sewing, sticking, cutting and general participation on the costume making effort.

Adult Dinners were a mix of delicious cuisine and engaging company; there are some very talented chefs in the school population and some great conversationalists. It was also refreshing to have a few families bring take-out – reflecting busy lives and little spare time – and the daily juggle of children and work. These dinners, at both Normanby and Brunswick Street, were a mix of old and new, families with long histories with the school, and families only recently joined. Adult dinners are an enjoyable tradition, a lowkey social event that builds and strengthens kinship, offers an opportunity to make new acquaintances and is more simply just an opportunity to spend adult time together.



NAPLAN – Exam Participation

NAPLAN has been since its inception, a (minor) highlight of the year. The teachers present it to the children as a fun, exciting challenge, an approach that has to date seen our students rise to challenge. This year was no different – the children arrived at school with a positive, excited and slightly nervous demeanour, which felt like the perfect mindset with which to tackle the reading, writing and mathematical tasks. The teachers administering the tests shared that they were proud of our children's can-do attitude, and that they not only did the tests in a positive frame of mind; they departed them in a similar vein.

This positive attitude to tests and exams is something that our school feels is an important trait to transmit to our students; acknowledging that over their lives they'll have countless exams, presentations, deadlines, reviews and assessments, and that these are best tackled in a no-fuss, can-do manner. And we are proud that, to date, we've succeeded. NAPLAN for our school is an opportunity to transmit this attitude, which for a high performing school such as ours, is a far more important achievement than a numeracy test score for an eight year old. This year again saw our students approach NAPLAN as a fun challenge; something important, yet not dauntingly stressful.

In acknowledging that exams, assessments, reviews, deadlines and presentations will be a re-occurring, it seems incumbent on schools to impart to no-fuss attitude toward them. This understanding underpins the school's approach, and sees our students developing a positive attitude toward formal assessments from their first encounter with them.

Our programs and teaching quality (and can-do attitude toward exams) continue to see our school ranked as one of the highest performing schools in the country. In looking to the offerings of other schools, some of which are also high performing, we are unaware of others with such a commitment to the outdoors, physical education and creative endeavours. Our results are achieved in conjunction with fewer hours devoted to literacy and numeracy than any school we are aware of.



Camp continues to see significant gains in the children's confidence, connection and independence, and continues to be a time when they find joy and interest in a slower life. Camp sees the children playing unprompted in a bush setting, enjoying a time of simple, physical and imaginative fun. And for some it seems to be the only time in which a disconnection from screens occurs. It is a sad fact that screens appear to fill in many after school and weekend hours for a considerable number of children.

The Anxious Generation (already mentioned) records that unstructured time in nature is a form of inoculation against anxiety. The FCS experience is not rooted in anxiety, but its antithesis, confidence. We observe that camp, year after year, builds confidence, and through enhancing and strengthening connection, offers a means by which increased confidence is fed and maintained.

Summer camps were happy, positive events, with the students all keen to spend time away together and in the great outdoors. Walks, cricket, tennis, swims, chats, and a plethora of games (cerebral and physical) were the features, with the long days allowing a game of tennis-cricket between dinner and bedtime. Aside from the games and activities, there was the easy pleasure of preparing and sharing meals, and many moments of quiet connection. Children initiated activities included many aspects of general bushcraft, and specifically cubby construction, face-painting, dramatic creations and performances, navvying, bug catching, flowered arranging and dam building. More formal games and activities included the trampoline, swings, card and board games, and bushwalks.

Camp was again both a staple and highlight of the FCS year. The end of camp saw, without exception, our students return to school happy and tired (but not quite as dirty as in many previous years due to most camps copping near perfect weather this year). Autumn and Spring camps mostly went in the Kinglake / Whittlesea area, with the Grampians also being visited twice. And while the weather was generally relatively mild for many of this year's camps, even the moments of dampness and cold could not dampen the spirits of the children.

The school's teachers continue to share their observation on the impact of time in nature on general positivity, connectivity and well-being of our students. Camps connect students to each other, their teachers and the wondrous world of nature. A pleasing end of camp observation, shared by many teachers, regards



the social gains made by many children during their couple of days spent in the bush with their classmates. Another frequent observation is the gains in confidence seem in many children. These observations highlight the value of this time in away in nature. Our school's ongoing experience is that camp contributes to better, stronger, more-effective friendships, greater confidence, and the emergence of new connections. The absence of camp, and / or minimal commitment to it in many schools is a point of sad reflection.

Locations visited this year included: Bell Brae, Mansfield, Gippsland, the Grampians (north and central) and Kinglake West, as well as the Mornington Peninsula. A big thank you to the staff who assisted in making these camps such special times for our students: Miranda, Wayne, Craig, Nick, Ben, Joelle, Sue, Kate, Gabby, Marie and Stefan. Teachers and assistants, thanks for sharing your time and energy. This, combined with your experience and dedication to children, played a significant role in ensuring the success of these camps. The tradition of the Tinies camping with a parent continued. Beyond the lovely time in nature, these camps present an opportunity for Tinies' parents to get to know each other. There was a change this year, which saw this camp being a combined campus event.

The final camps of the year, beginning in mid-late Spring, again saw the Tinies head off for their first night in the bush without parents – with this year's children demonstrating a quite considerable level of independence. While this is an oft repeated reflection, it does continue to surprise the teachers how quickly city kids adapt to a no-tech, immersive, natural, experience. Bugs, sticks, leaves, stone and clay provide literally countless hours of engagement. Sticks are whittled, stones sorted, stacked and arranged; and even wetted and rubbed, an process used to create a simple 'paint' that the children use to draw, including on their own faces. Bugs are discovered under bark, stones and logs, while sticks and branches are arranged into cubbies. The simplicity and collective creativity of the experiences of the children in nature is charming, and if *The Anxious Generation's* analysis is solid, plays an important role in supporting their mental health.

Building Projects / Maintenance / Repairs

The school continues to put a constant and considerable effort into repairs and maintenance. Minor renovations and the routine re-painting of classrooms continue throughout the year. Plaster repairs are, and remain, a regular occurrence. Hinges, latches and locks require regular maintenance, while lighting



continues to be upgraded. Trip hazards continue to be checked and addressed when/if they emerge (or before they emerge). Small improvements are made throughout the school year, with more disruptive tasks are predominantly occurring over the school holidays. The fire and sprinkler systems continue to be regularly audited by fire authorities.

The significant task of restoring the plaster (and removing the old wallpaper) in the corridors, landings and stairwells in the old building at Brunswick Street commenced (December 2024 after school finished) and then continue through the January, April, July and September (school holiday periods) culminating with these areas being re-painted and then re-carpeted in early October. Families returning to school in October noted how fresh the school looked.

Curriculum Development: Literacy

The digitisation of our literacy resources accelerated as the year progressed. This literacy project has a number of objectives aims: to assist with literacy training for our school's teachers, to further consolidate and enhance our classroom literacy offerings and to provide a platform upon which parents can assist their children's learning at home.

This year has seen an global examination of our whole literacy program, focusing in re-examining the content and sequencing of all 70 units. Tasks have included re-mapping all 70 units (constituting 700 recorded mini-lessons). This was properly underway as the year came to a close, with lessons scripted for the first 25 units. Some initial filming / digital whiteboard / PowerPoints were trailed and recorded as part of this project. A re-examination of the 200+ mini-lessons recorded during Lockdown was undertaken, which while helpful in mapping, content and sequencing, were considered to be too low quality (production value) to be used moving forward. These Lockdown produced mini-lessons, while quite helpful for overall direction and sequencing, and some guidance and insight into presentation techniques, were not felt to be re-useable due to due to their low production values.

Curriculum Development: Numeracy



The final months of the year saw the Maths Curriculum also being revised, with primary focus being on the Foundation and Year 1 programs. New content was added, sequencing in a couple of units adjusted, repetitive aspects improved and activities aimed at further enhancing student engagement added. The final weeks of the year saw some of these improvements adopted in the classroom.

Sport / Park / Nature Time

Summer term again saw additional time dedicated to our swimming program, with the first six weeks of the year involving two swims a week for most students. Cross-country running and netball were added to the Middlies and Biggies sporting calendar in Autumn, with the early term two District race being the first of many inter-school sporting events in which FCS not only participated, but did well. A quarter of our school participants in the District Cross Country race placed in the top 10, earning themselves a place in the Division level race. Our school in fact won two (of only 6) District races, as well as achieving quite a number of top 3 finishes. Four children competed at Regional Level, with one progressing to State level competition, our best effort for four or five years.

Late Autumn saw our school participate in the CDPSSA netball tournament, where we (again) finished first. Basketball games continued to be organised with local primary schools over terms two, three and four, with Thornbury Primary School a frequent opponent. Carlton North Primary School continued the tradition of hosting our netball teams, with our two schools enjoying a number of very close games.

Spring saw our children out on the oval regularly practicing rounders, with the skills and strategy of this game offering our children a number of different approaches. The end of Spring saw 20+ teams for 10 schools on the Alfred Crescent Oval (back oval) of Edinburgh Gardens, with the grand final again being played between two FCS teams.



Basketball continued to be practiced weekly, with the highlight of the basketball season being the Hoop time Competition. This year again saw all Middlies and Biggies participating (as well as a couple of Juniors), with a large contingent of parents attending these days and cheering the children on.

Outside of more sporting classes and PE activities, park/nature/bush time continued to be part of the weekly routine of our students. Edinburgh Gardens, Merri Creek, Darebin Parklands, Pearl Reserve, Curtain Square, Princes Park, Penders Park and Mayors Park continue to be well-utilised by our students. Outings, while not technically sport, often involved long walks and so necessarily help with fitness and endurance.

Sporting Grants continue to be applied for, and the school again received a number of them, which we continue to use to enhance / expand our swimming program. We thank the Commonwealth Government for this additional funding.

Blog

Timothy's Blog (his thoughts on education) continues to prompt conversation and examination of the educational landscape, with a termly reflection on a range of pedagogical and parenting themes the central tenets of exploration. Challenging, incisive, reflective and critical are all comments that have accompanied its publication. Over the years many families have shared that the Blog has initiated 'long, deep and engaging' conversations around dinner tables, which would seem to indicate that the topics covered are of interest to many families. A reoccurring theme are reflections, experiences and observations that hope to contribute to happy, connected, empowered and caring children. To this end, insights into cross-cultural approaches continue to re-occur. Policy issues and are on occasion touched upon, including questions of equity, quality, values, and faith.

Visitors

The ongoing visits to our school by educators from Victoria, Australia and beyond bring ideas, perspectives and experiences upon which to reflect. The scope of topics discussed, and the ideas that emerge during many



of these visits provide a platform upon which ideas may be developed and refined. With few exceptions, these visiting educators, especially those from overseas, share a passion to create and sustain schools in which children are known and valued.

Our overseas visitors are predominantly from Asia, with China providing the majority of our overseas guests. The scope of thought and ideas shared reflect deep thinkers who have thought about and reflected upon pedagogy, curriculum, engagement and the daily life of the school. With few exceptions these visiting educators are amazingly openminded, and genuinely interested in our approach. China continues to provide the majority of these international visitors due to the FCS book being published and distributed there. As an aside, Faye passed on that it looks like the Chinese edition will be reprinted, so it is unlikely that interest in our school from China will lessen anytime soon.

The school's local Member, Tim Reed spent a morning at the school, and demonstrated a keen mind, interest in education and openness to alternative manifestations of school styles. We thank Dr Reed for his making the time to visit us.

Our Australian visitors continue to mention that our status in literacy / literacy education prompted their initial look into our school, but then often to on to share that our website is unmatched for content and reflection on education and pedagogy. It is clear that some of our visitors have spent considerable time reading through our many articles on schooling. Our commitment to the outdoors (parks, nature and camp) was a frequent point of interest and discussion. Our visitors continue to be a mix of educators and prospective parents, with the latter being offered hospitality at our adult afternoon teas.

MySchool Website / Better Education Website / School Ranking Aggregators

Our school has for many years ranked as one of the top performing schools in Victoria. This year was no exception. Our results, as raw scores and in student improvement indicated the quality of our teaching program and teaching staff. Our raw scores again indicate that our students are literate and numerate, and as a collective, significantly ahead of most of their peers. This item of data aligns with our anecdotal experience, in that the students who join us are generally significantly behind our students in terms of their



literacy and numeracy skills. If these students accurately represent the experience of the majority, then our schools could be doing significantly better. In looking to PISA data, it is abundantly clear that, as a country, we have significant work to do in raising our literacy and numeracy standard. It is distressing that so many children are failed by their schools.

Yours,

Mr Craig Dowell (Acting Principal) / Dr Timothy Berryman (Principal Jan-Aug)

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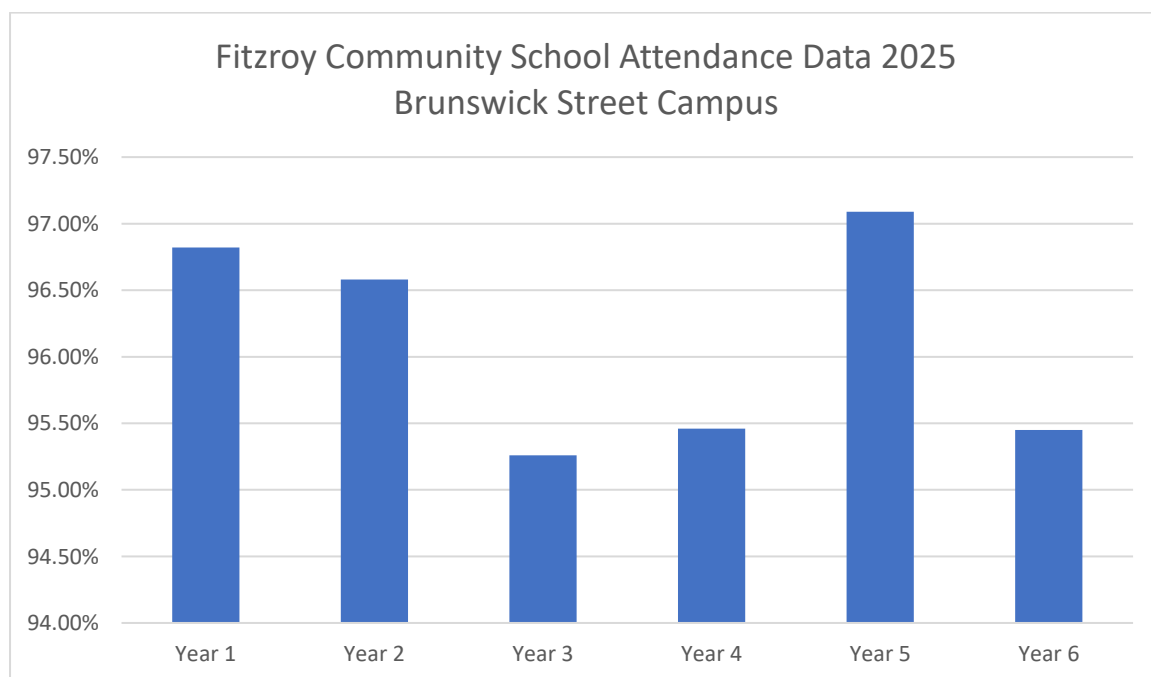
Student Learning

Students at FCS continue to make significant social, emotional and academical gains. Participation in standardised testing (NAPLAN/MySchool) shows that our school is one of the top performing schools not only in the State, but in Australia, finishing, year after year, within the top echelons. Our Asian visitors share that our students' level is on par with the level achieved by their children at home. We would like to add to this that we achieve this with far fewer hours dedicated to literacy and numeracy, and without late afternoon / night cram-school attendance and massive tomes sent home in the holidays.

Our significant achievements in literacy and numeracy to reinforce the value of our approach. We continue to be encouraged by the schools that send their staff to observe our approach to literacy and numeracy education, and more general pedagogical approach. The focus on well-being, health, connection, agency and independence that see our students thrive socially and emotionally are not achieved through any sacrifice to academic outcomes, but are achieved alongside them.

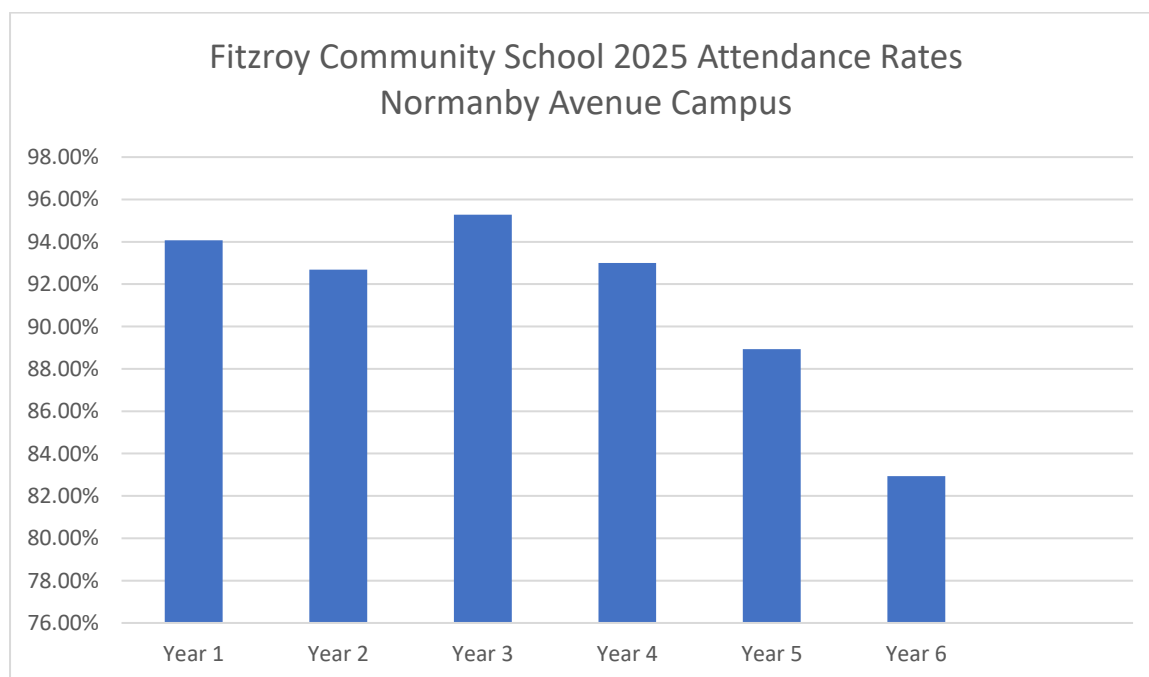
Attendance

We officially report our attendance data to the Commonwealth, and in this, demonstrate our the high-level of attendance. It is really pleasing that attendance has to date not emerged as an issue of concern, reflecting (we believe) our student's' desire to come to school.



While significant absences and truancy are not major issues, attendance monitoring is not without some frustrations. We continue to remind families to notify us of student absences as early in the day as possible, but as noted in previous reports, we continue to spend time chasing undocumented absences; which without exception reflect a failure of the families to inform the school. While we do understand that a sick child can lead to logistical/organisational problems, a short, early email / call does not seem overly onerous.

Fitzroy Community School Attendance Rates 2025 Brunswick Street Campus	
Year 1	96.82%
Year 2	96.58%
Year 3	95.26%
Year 4	95.46%
Year 5	97.09%
Year 6	95.45%



Fitzroy Community School Attendance Rates 2025 Normanby Avenue Campus	
Year 1	94.07%
Year 2	92.69%
Year 3	95.28%
Year 4	93.0%
Year 5	88.93%
Year 6	82.93%

School Finances

Fitzroy Community School receives approximately 53% percent of its income from school fees, 35% from Commonwealth Grants, and a 6% from the State Government as recurrent grants. In acknowledgement of the fact that the majority of the school's income is derived from school fees, an awareness of keeping fee collection a priority is a necessary endeavour. Fees (issuing and collection) are one of the principal tasks of



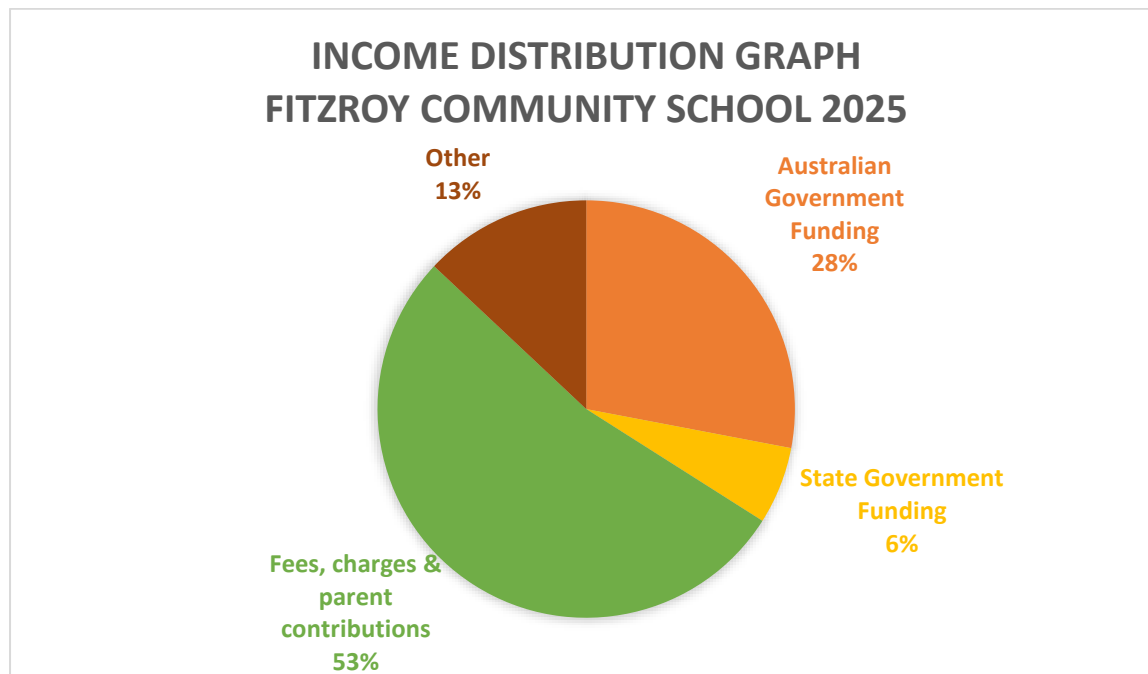
the bookkeeper, with the principal assisting when/if necessary. This year (again) saw a relatively small number of fee deferrals / late payers / part-payers. In the case of most families, fees were paid on-time (within 30 days of them being due).

The effort of the school's bookkeeper is acknowledged in performing an important role in overseeing the collection of fees, and so minimising late, slow and generally avoiding non-payers. The school continues to have an enviable position with regard to bad debts, reflecting not just the professionalism of the bookkeeper, but the quality of the teachers and teaching program. It is an easier task to collect fees from families who see the school as not just supporting their children but also providing a quality education. Or put another way, engaged, happy children contribute to happy parents and easier fee collection. Bad and doubtful debts remain at a low level, and so at this juncture do not appear to likely to become a major issue in the near future.

The school engages an external accountant to prepare budgets (adding expertise and independence) and to provide an outsider's perspective on the school's finances and financial position. The last few years have seen an increase in Commonwealth Government funding, which has allowed the school to increase fees at Education CPI. The advent of payroll tax on Victorian Independent School will at some point make a small impact on finances moving forward, depending on if/how the threshold is indexed.

The general low rate of fee increases reflects the school's commitment to providing as accessible education as possible. All additional funding for families on Health Care Cards (linked to the FAM funding model) continues to be passed to families as a reduced fee. The largest increase of costs (in percentage terms) over recent years has been the ongoing expansion of bureaucratic requirements. The school is spending more than ever on meeting these requirements, many of which don't have educational gains that are readily apparent.

Income Distribution Graph



The school did not receive any Commonwealth Capital Grants in 2025.

Teacher Standards/Qualifications/Satisfaction

The school employs a group of talented, engaged and dedicated teachers who are regularly praised by our parent body. The school in recent years is encouraged by the number of talented student teachers undertaking their placements with us, which is reflective of the statewide student teacher cohort, bodes well for the profession as a whole. Sadly, the number of placement requests does occasionally exceed the school's capacity to accept all student teacher applicants (mostly as many universities ask for the placements at the same period).

A reflection on the quality of our teachers often comes from our recent graduates and their parents. We enjoy the fact that our graduates feel welcome to visit us when they have days off their secondary schools, that they feel both well-disposed toward, and strongly connected to their old primary school. Over these visits they often share that they did not fully appreciate how good their FCS teachers were, nor how well-behaved the classes were. Former school parents, visiting for adult afternoon teas or adult dinners, share similar observations regarding the quality of our teachers and the orderliness and effectiveness of our classrooms.



Fitzroy Community School is committed to providing a happy, fun, engaging and challenging learning environment. The actualization of this mission is enhanced by the adults of the school community feeling both connected and welcome, with the part-time teachers often arriving early, staying late or occasionally even dropping in on their day off; reflecting their connection to their place of work as much more than a means of earning a salary. Sadly, if the stories in the media are to be even partially believed, many schools are now difficult, stressful places to work and study. Disruption appears increasingly common, something that our school has to date avoided.

Teaching Staff & Their Qualifications

Acting Principal

Craig Dowell Bachelor of Education (Primary), NVQ Level 3 in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair, BTEC National Diploma Vehicle Repair and Technology, NVQ Level 2 in Aircraft Engineering Maintenance

Principal (Jan-Aug)

Dr Timothy Berryman Bachelor of Arts (Melbourne), Graduate Diploma in Education (Melbourne), Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Studies (Melbourne), Bachelor of Letters (Melbourne), Master of Letters (University of New England), Master of Arts (Universidad Jaume I – Spain), Doctorate of Education (Victoria University).

Vice Principal

Jeannette Howden Bachelor of Education (comprised of Diploma of Kindergarten Teaching Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers' College and Graduate Diploma in Curriculum Melbourne College of Advanced Education)

Teachers

Faye Berryman Bachelor of Arts, Diploma of Education, Diploma of Social Work, Master of Arts

Joelle Wearn-Jarvis Bachelor of Education (Flinders University)



Warren Howden Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Music, Master of Teaching

Miranda Frankel Bachelor of Arts (Melbourne University), Diploma of Education (University of Western Australia)

Wayne Wearn-Jarvis Bachelor of Education (Flinders University)

Nicholas Berryman Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Law, Master of Applied Positive Psychology (Melbourne University), Graduate Diploma in Education (with Honours) (Charles Sturt University)

Kerrie Bolton Bachelor of Education (Music Major, Deakin University), Bachelor of Music (Voice, Performance stream - Melbourne University Conservatorium), Master of Music Performance (Victorian College of the Arts)

Susanna Campbell Bachelor of Speech Therapy, Bachelor of Arts, Certificate of English Language Teaching, Master of Education, Master of Teaching (Primary)

Elinor Hasenfratz Bachelor of Education (Junior Primary/Primary)

Adam Hyman Bachelor of Film & Television, Graduate Diploma of Education (Middle Years)

Workforce Composition

The school believes that one of its strengths is the diversity and composition of its teachers and classroom assistants. The school has a broad mix of genders, ages and experience (with teachers of forty plus years' experience working side by side with early career teachers). This has allowed a sharing of experience, constant mentoring and the enthusiasm of youth to be combined. The school similarly has a good mix of male and female staff, as well as staff from a range of varying cultural and religious traditions. The school does not currently employ a staff member who identify as Aboriginal, but has two teachers with extensive 'on the lands' experience, having lived and taught in both remote communities and then in school's with significant Aboriginal populations.

The single greatest impediment to our school (and many other workplaces) employing a more diverse workforce comes via government impost, experienced in the form of licensing, qualifications and certification requirements. This results in, for instance, a foreign-born teacher, a graduate of a prestigious foreign university, being typically denied registration to teach in Victoria, apparently irrespective of their language skills, qualifications, teaching experience, teaching ability or competencies (in absolute terms, or



relative to their local counterparts). These bureaucratic imposts also perpetuate a situation in which Australia school children rarely experience Indigenous teachers, even in areas where they have considerable experience and expertise. If governments were serious about workforce composition rather than virtue signaling, schools would not be required to comment on composition of their workforce but would rather be allowed to employ suitable, qualified and able teachers. This change would quickly result in a diversified teaching profession. Teaching ballet or French should be measured on one's ability to dance and one's language skills, and an ability to impart these skills, not whether a Victorian recognized qualification has been completed. In a country of migrants, where we supposedly celebrated multiculturalism and embrace inclusion, and where 30% of the population were born overseas, this restriction is especially irreconcilable. The current framing preferences the geographic location of the awarding institution, and in doing so, hinders the ability of schools to employ teachers of the highest caliber. If the Victorian Government was actually focused on the ability and composition of the teaching workforce, then skills and teaching ability would be the sole qualification required of teachers. It seems ironic that schools are required to write on workforce composition while at the same time being denied the right to expand it.

Schooling for Life

We work to maintain a school lifestyle in which camps are enjoyed, hi-fives are acts of spontaneous camaraderie, chasey is played, skipping is fun, applying Band-Aids is an act of a caring adult, and showing affection is regarded a normal aspect of human connection.