



Tunable Falls Community School

Annual Report 2018

Message from the Management Committee

The greatest thing to note about Tuntable Falls Community School is the amount of work and dedication that come from our volunteer parent body. Our committee grew in 2018, with numbers up from previous years. With such diverse experience and knowledge, the year was busy with motivated individuals who worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth running of the school and its growth at their heart.



Parents and family members not on the committee also continued to support the school and their child's learning journey. This included the continuation of our fabulous and much loved bike workshops and lessons, art classes and reading support.

Healthy lunches, with largely organic produce sourced locally or from the school's own kitchen garden, are cooked and prepared each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday by parents. Without a canteen, the school provides lunches for both the Primary School and the Tutable Preschool and promotes healthy, vegetarian meals with very little waste. The Stephanie Alexander garden continues to be maintained by children and parent volunteers, led by our dynamic 2018 SEE teacher Nicola Apps.

2018 saw an increase in enrolments from previous years up from 34 to 36 students. Tutable Falls Preschool is still our key feeder school for kindergarten students providing 9 of the 11 enrolments. We are still one of the few schools who offer a stand alone kindergarten class. Of note, 19 of the 36 students live on the Tutable Community. The enrolments from schools outside of the community are steadily growing. We have, however, been noticing the continued movement of our older students, particularly in Year 5 and 6, leaving our school for larger schools. As such, committee and key family members have been discussing possible variations to our students' final year that would encourage them to stay. Ideas have included a special trip away and transitional classes specifically aimed at high school and what it involves.

To support the needs and requests of our teachers to provide a healthy work life balance, it was agreed, with much consultation, that our 4/5/6 and 1/2/3 teachers would work 4 days and our kindergarten teacher would work 3. To minimise disruption to students learning, Thursday became a day where all of our extracurricular activities were placed. We utilised Nicola Apps for the SEE program, employed Emmy Jett as a specialist STEM teacher and Leif Lyall for music and drama. The very popular Circus classes with Simon Adams were also an activity for the Thursday's timetable. Teachers Aides supported the teachers for a smooth transition for students from lesson to lesson. At the end of the year with major staffing changes, it was decided to discontinue this arrangement.



Major decisions by staff throughout the year saw our long-term Kindergarten teacher, Deborah Rose, and our 4/5/6 teacher, Akash Pett, offer their resignations early in the year. This gave the management committee much time not only to advertise the positions, but also provided the opportunity to change the way in which the teaching staff are managed. Our strategic meeting was one of much discussion, where it was decided that the school required a Teacher Coordinator to work alongside the management committee. Experienced teacher, Joe Landers was employed for this position and we are excited to see how the addition of a Teacher Coordinator will support and increase collegiality amongst our teaching staff and help management committee with the smooth running of the school. Filling Akash Pett's position was Ishta Wilson. She will be teaching the 1/2/3 class and comes with much experience. Jessica McCaul will continue her employment with us and teach the Kindergarten class. Much to the disappointment of both children and families, well loved SEE teacher, Nicola Apps will not be returning in 2019 due to family matters. Very popular and energetic teacher, Ginger O'Brien will be returning from maternity leave to fill her position.



Staffing changes continued through the year with Kirrily Owen our Administration Officer cutting her days to two and the hiring of local woman Janelle Schafer to fulfil the other three days. Kirrily, then also offered her full resignation. Janelle was not able to fulfil the full-time position and so through the process of advertising and interview, we employed qualified teacher, Fiona Campbell. As the year progressed, sadly, after much discussion, due to the communication issues found with a job share, it was decided that the position required one person. Fiona fulfilled this position and, due to budget constraints, the position became four days a week. Long term Teachers' Aides Cath Smith, Heather Jessup and Amanda King

continued employment at Tutable. We are fortunate to have these extremely experienced teacher's aides work alongside our teachers on a daily basis to support the learning of our students. The committee is very passionate about ensuring room in the budget for this specialised classroom support. Although these major changes in staffing meant we had to say goodbye to excellent team members, the management committee has taken on this opportunity to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses within the school. The management committee is very optimistic about the future of the school and look forward to the inclusion of a head teacher to work alongside the team to ensure even stronger connections between staff and committee.

Further discussion regarding staffing was had and it was decided by committee, to hire a specialist Learning and Support teacher one day a week starting Term 1, 2019. This decision was made due to parents' desire to increase performance levels in literacy. Lisa Boyd had worked with one of our students and, with an outstanding history in this specialty area, it was decided to hire her for the position.

Raising funds at our yearly Springtime Fete was a success both with monies raised, parent support and visitor numbers. It was encouraging to see so many people from the larger community participating beyond the Tutable Community. Successful grants applied for this year included an Eco Schools Grant for \$3,500.00 applied for by SEE teacher Nicola Apps and a Woolworths Junior Landcare for \$1,000.00 applied for by parent, Narelle Draisma. These monies will be utilised in both our kitchen garden and EthnoBotany Trail. The location and completion of suitable grants for the school and its maintenance, is an ongoing demand. Sporting Schools grants were also successful, helping with the purchase of equipment and professional development of staff for activities such as bike riding and volleyball.



Overnight camps and excursions continued to play an important role at Tutable. We believe it is critical for students to have regular, meaningful opportunities beyond the classroom walls

and beyond their comfortable spaces. Teachers upheld the tradition with many valuable learning experiences that included camps to Upper Koinonia, the Robb Rd Community, Mebbin, Brisbane, Karate by the Sea at Belongil Beach, visits to the Lismore Recycling Centre. Home visits continue to be an important annual tradition of the Kindergarten class with students sharing their homes and special places to fellow peers. Minjerribah camping (Stradbroke) also continues to be a tradition at Tuntable with the yearly excursion taking place in Term 4. All of our excursions and overnight camps would not be possible without the support of parents. Not only do they support our teachers, but their inclusion also promotes the community that we aim to encompass.

Being part of such dynamic groups; our educators, community members, families and the wider community, our students are provided with so many opportunities that continue to foster their growth as healthy individuals and the next generation of “environmental superheroes”.

About our School

We are a small parent-run independent school situated amidst the lush rainforest of the Tuntable Valley, 10 kilometers East of Nimbin, in Northern NSW.

The school was opened in 1981 by a group of families living on the Tuntable Cooperative Community. These parents were committed to providing their children with an education consistent with their values, which at the time were considered alternative to the mainstream. Some of those values include: the importance of an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, the need for a closely integrated relationship between family, community and school in a child's education, the value of each child's gifts and their own unique learning styles, the value of independence and the flexibility this offers the school in being able to support a child's journey into adulthood. These values continue to be at the core of the school's value base.

The school's physical environment and the children's freedom to interact with their natural surroundings are fundamental elements of the school.

We offer classes from Kindergarten to Year 6 in three classes. These classes are made up of one Kindergarten class, a Year 1,2,3 class and a 4,5,6 class. We continue to have confidence in the need for a stand-alone Kindergarten class, as this is the year that they start school and need specialized support. It was initially trialed in 2013 and proved to be very successful. Outcomes for the children continue to improve as a result of having a separate class for the ten children in this age group. The Kindergarten children attend 4 days per week for this introductory year.



Our paid staff include: three classroom teachers, one environment and sustainability teacher, four teachers' aides, two part time office administrators and a part-time maintenance person. We also have four specialist external teachers providing music, science, Karate and circus classes.

The parent body forms the majority of a volunteer workforce, who perform the other duties involved in the running of the school. Parents want to be present on their child's learning journey and encourage the idea of a tribe or community, with grandparents, younger siblings and extended family all welcome and encouraged to have daily involvement.

Teaching staff work with the management committee, which consists of parents of students; who run the school as a cooperative. This is one of the ways in which the link between the school and its community of families is unified. The committee meets every week during term time, and additionally for strategic planning, operations and team building sessions throughout the year.

The size of the school and its independence allows the teachers to respond to events quickly, integrating them into the children's learning program. There is an incredible diversity amongst

the school members and within the surrounding community, often with a creative bent and a refreshing degree of free thinking. Parents and committee members are encouraged to share their skills.

Sustainability is our specialty. It is demonstrated through every aspect of our daily school life in the use of classroom supplies and on excursions. With regards to all classroom and school purchases, we always choose paper, cardboard or wood alternatives over plastic regardless of price. We avoid one-use products and avoid laminating unless necessary. For any school purchases, we ask and find the answers to these questions before purchasing....

Is it organic?

Is it local?

Is it fair trade?

How much power does it use?

What is its environmental impact?

Respect & Responsibility

We have a positive approach to guiding behaviour. This builds children's confidence and self-esteem and is based on the development of caring, equitable and responsive relationships between parents, educators and children.



In our holistic educational program, we value emotional intelligence just as much as literacy and numeracy. As adult role models and caregivers, we foster this through a sensitive, aware, well informed and nurturing environment. We ensure that there are a range of books available for families and staff to borrow in relation to education on this topic, providing information on the latest research.

Tunable Falls Community school promotes child-centred, sustainable values, unique experiences and integrated learning in a peaceful rainforest environment. Our children learn and play in a safe, creative and natural environment.



The relatively recent move back to environmental education, particularly in regards to sustainability, has been driven by research about how important children's connections with nature are. Beyond the physical play afforded by natural spaces, children benefit so much from manipulating natural materials in natural playspaces. Nature is a critical element in children's health, well-being and development.

Students with a link to place and community have a strong sense of agency. They are capable, confident learners. They believe in their ability to shape and commandeer their learning and experiences. Tuntable Falls Community School children construct their knowledge in social ways, benefiting from the strong community values tangible in every aspect of the school. Students have the amazing gift of having many adults and friends who each contribute skills, knowledge, and care to our school environment. In this caring, supportive environment, students enjoy a sense of belonging and this dependability and security allows them the space to explore, learn, and make mistakes.

It is the way students are regarded as respectful, responsible and competent learners that is so important at Tuntable. When students know they are supported by others who believe in them, they are capable of anything.

Core Values

Maintain our Parent Run School

Communication Skills: Fostering clear and open communication with a focus on self-expression, knowledge sharing and interpersonal skills.

Environment & sustainability: Embodying deep respect for the natural environment and acting for future generations.

Relationships: Nurturing empathy, positive relationships and socio-cultural awareness.

Empowerment: Giving voice to individuality to encourage freedom with responsibility

Respect: Valuing respect for self, others, community, and the built and natural environments.

Physical & Emotional Wellbeing: Developing emotional intelligence, mindfulness, resilience and healthy living practices.

We regularly address and review the children's wellbeing using the *KidsMatter* Framework. Our goals within this are to:

- create and foster an environment in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships.
- help children to understand how their behaviours and actions affect themselves and others.
- support children to communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
- role model positive ways to relate to others.

Our three guiding principles are:

1. The right to be safe.
2. The right to learn
3. Treat others in a way that you would like to be treated.

All boundaries and agreements stem from these principles and are related to students on these issues.

Parent, Student and Teacher Satisfaction

The school uses a variety of methods to gauge parental, student and teacher satisfaction with school operations. The school understands the importance of regularly reviewing approval and satisfaction levels. Last year, the following formal and informal opportunities allowed the school to test reaction to decisions, policy and school procedures.

- We have a formal evaluation process to measure parent, student and staff satisfaction, conducted in Term 3 of each year, with written surveys being distributed to families. While the results were overwhelmingly positive, the suggestions for improvement still provide useful ideas for discussion and action. They are taken to strategic planning to be evaluated and incorporated into the long-term vision for the school.
- Parent meetings at the beginning of each term, provide parents with a formal opportunity to communicate with the management committee.
- Weekly committee meetings provide all parents and staff with an opportunity to attend or provide agenda items to be discussed.
- Parent/teacher meetings are held throughout the year. There is also an open door policy where parents can speak with teachers on a more informal basis.
- Staff appraisals are performed in Term 3. This process involved teachers, office administration staff and teachers' aides completing a self-assessment that requires questions to be answered regarding satisfaction levels, main achievements for the year, aims for the following year, training and suggestions to improve the school and school operations. Committee members request feedback and observations from other members of staff, committee members, parents and students. A meeting is held, and the appraisal discussed. Information is then taken on board at committee meetings so that important items can be addressed and followed up.

Student enrolments remained stable throughout the year. School functions were well attended and had a positive atmosphere of commitment and support, and parents continued to support the school through the use of roster days.



Attendance

For students to reach their full potential it is important that they attend school regularly. Whilst it is the parents' legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly, our staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor attendance each day. The Class Roll is marked every day with absences being followed up immediately by office staff via a phone call, where parents can provide an explanation for the absence. The committee is made aware of sustained student absences. When children develop poor patterns of attendance, we work with the family to identify the issues behind this. We initiate a series of letters and meetings to address these and to educate families on the many benefits to regularly attending school.

Prolonged periods of absence occur from time-to-time for various reasons. In these cases, students and their parents apply for exemption from attendance, stating the reasons and period.

For student attendance rates, please refer to the Australian Government's *My School* website at: <http://www.myschool.edu.au>

We continued to target student attendance levels with a thorough review of our attendance policy and procedures. This information is regularly distributed to families via our newsletter and discussed at teacher-parent meetings.

Year Group	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attendance %	95%	72%	88%	90%	88%	64%	93%

Whole School Average Attendance Rate: 85%

Student body

In 2018, we had 36 students enrolled. The gender balance was 17 girls and 19 boys, with two students self-identified as Indigenous. The majority were Anglo-Australians with English as a first language.

The following table indicates the student enrollment characteristics:

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Totals
Male	6	2	3	2	1	1	4	19
Female	5	0	4	2	2	3	1	17
Indigenous	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
EALD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

In the past, the majority of students lived on the Tuntable Cooperative Community, however, as our reputation has spread, our students have been drawn from a wider area. In 2018, students attended from Lismore, Rose Rd, Nimbin, Mt Nardi and the Tuntable valley.

Typically, students come from families with an average to low income, approximately one third from single parent families.

Transition

We take the transition from Preschool or home to Kindergarten very seriously at Tutable Falls. A program is set up with the kindergarten teacher and Tutable Falls Preschool director to ensure that any student participating, whether they are from Tutable, from another feeder school or from home, feel safe and included. Information is sent to feeder schools and advertising is placed in local newspapers in Term 3. The children transitioning to kindergarten participate in scheduled orientation activities in November/early December to help prepare them for their first year at school.

Due to its close proximity, Tutable Preschool and Kindergarten staff regularly work together to ensure shared activities are organised throughout the year to allow children to stay connected with the homely and familiar Preschool space while building a feeling of familiarity with the primary school. Larger events like the our Fete and Winter Solstice celebrations are two such activities that the schools share to foster such relationships. If children and families feel connected to both pre-school and primary school staff starting school can be a gentle process.

Transition to primary school doesn't stop on enrolment. A buddy system is set up where each kindergarten student is paired up with a Year 3 to 6 student to continue the settling-in process, where activities such as reading and sport are shared.



Standardized Testing

Our School offers the National Literacy and Numeracy testing to Years 3 and 5 each year, as required by the Commonwealth Government. A number of parents chose to withdraw their children from the NAPLAN testing filling in the consent for exemption and withdrawal for philosophical reasons or because the test will cause undue stress on their child.

Due to the small number of children participating in the NAPLAN, results have not been published on the Australian Government's *My School* website since 2015.

Professional Learning and Teacher Standards

In 2018, we had four permanently employed teachers and three teacher's aides. All permanent and relief teachers were fully qualified with BA Degrees in Education (Primary), or equivalent, from approved higher education institutions. We had a balance of 3 female: 1 male teachers in 2018 and all identified as non-Indigenous.

Teachers Name	Accreditation Status
Deborah Rose	Proficient
Akash Pett	Proficient
Jessica McCaul	Proficient
Nicola Apps	Proficient

All teaching staff maintained current WWCC and all our volunteers acquired a WWCC and verification. All teachers have been involved in professional learning activities throughout the year. These activities are designed to develop the professional skills and understandings of staff so as to improve student outcomes. Professional development can take many forms including whole-staff development days, subject specific in-services, meetings and conferences.

Our teachers attended additional professional development training delivered by the Australian Independent Schools (AIS) covering the new curriculum in all Key Learning Areas (KLA).

Additionally, staff attended either individually or in groups a range of professional development opportunities including:

Activity	Date	Staff Numbers or names	Presenter
Planning and Programming of NSW Syllabus to Australian Curriculum.	31/01/18	Nicola Apps	AIS
Planning and Programming of NSW Syllabus to Australian Curriculum.	28/02/18	Jessica McCaul	AIS
Literacy Curriculum	13/03/18	DeborahRose, Jessica McCaul, Akash Pett, Nicola Apps	AIS
Numeracy Workshop	13/06/18	Deborah Rose, Akash, Jessica	AIS
First Aid Training	19/06/19	Emily Jett	St John Ambulance
Live Life Well at School	31/07/18	Jessica McCaul, Akash Pett	AIS
Byron Writers Festival Workshops	3-5/8/2018	Jessica McCaul	B.W.F
Child Safe Workshop	08/08/18	Jessica McCaul, Fiona Campbell, Janelle Schafer	Office Of The Childrens Guardian
Reading Strategies	24/08/18	Akash Pett, Jessica McCaul	AIS

Making Sustainability Happen	11/09/18	Nicola Apps	ACSA
Schools Leading Learning	13/09/18	Deborah Rose, Akash Pett	AIS
Mandatory Child Protection Training	17/09/18	Cath Smith	AIS
Mandatory Child Protection Training	15/10/18	Heather Jessup	AIS
Building a Culture- Effective School Improvement	31/10/18	Jessica McCaul, Deborah Rose	AIS
Mandatory Child Protection Training	01/11/18	Emmy Jett, Leif Lyall, Amanda King	AIS
First Aid Training	14/11/18	Akash Pett	St John Ambulance
Health and Wellbeing- PDHPE	21/11/18	Jessica McCaul	AIS

Policies

Our policies are compiled into two manuals: (1) Safe and Supportive Environment and (2) Management and Employment, which are available from our office upon request.

Upon student enrollment, families are provided with relevant School Policies. These are made available to families on our School website and at the School Office upon request. Enrolment Packs are provided to families which include relevant information from our School Policies such as:

1. Student Enrolment Policy
2. Child Protection Policy
3. Attendance Policy
4. Behaviour Policy
5. Anti bullying Policy
6. Complaints and grievances Policy

Enrolment Policy

We have an upper limit on enrolments of 50 students. Within that, there are constraints within particular age groups due to classroom space and size.

To enroll, families are asked to complete an enrolment application and then meet with members of the committee. As a parent-run school, it is vital that new families understand, and are committed to, the level of involvement that will be expected of them.

A full copy of the enrolment policy is located in the school office or can be accessed on the school's website. The School Enrolment Policy explains enrolment procedures.

The Welfare of Students, Staff and Volunteers

Tunable Falls Community School has several policies that fall under Student Welfare. Some of these include;

a) Child Protection Policy: This policy sets out the responsibilities of all employees to follow child protection and processes documented within the Policy and Child Protection and Legislation in NSW.

b) Safe and Supportive Environment Policy: This describes the necessary steps in providing a safe learning environment including sufficient supervision, the use of grounds and facilities, as well as travel during school-related activities.

c) Pastoral Care Policy – Students, Staff and Volunteers are made aware of and have access to appropriate pastoral care arrangements (*in conjunction with parental consent when involving a student*). Fostering positive interactions is a primary focus at Tuntable Falls Community

School. We strive to meet the needs of everyone through our existing programs, classroom teachers and where necessary exterior services can also be suggested.

d) Work Health and Safety Policies – These policies apply to all staff, volunteers and students with varying processes and procedures to be followed. Tumble Falls Community School meets legislated Work Health and Safety requirements.

Anti-Bullying

The School's Anti-Discrimination, Harassment & Bullying Policy outlines the behaviours that are expected of students, and any kind of bullying behaviour that would not be supported under this policy. All children and staff are aware of the expectations of behaviour and that failure to meet the expectations will be followed up. The Policy is based on principles of procedural fairness and involves parents. Full details of the procedures to address inappropriate behaviour and the steps taken to seek a resolution are outlined in the Policy, which can be accessed in the School office or on the school's website.

Complaints or Grievances

A fair and swift resolution process for complaints or concerns is enforced to sustain harmony within our school community. The aim of this Policy is to maintain the quality of care and services by adopting a positive attitude towards constructive feedback. The Committee provide ample opportunities for open and formal discussions about issues that may be brought up on the Committee Agenda, which is accessible to staff, volunteers and families. Guidelines and assistance is provided by staff at the School Office.

Priority Areas for Improvement

We identified the following areas as priorities for 2018:

- The employment of a head teacher was the priority for this year's strategic planning meeting. As it was a major structural change to the every day running of the school, it required a revisit of the schools motto, mission statement and vision (core values). This ensured the ability for committee and staff to develop a full description, including expectations and responsibilities, of the required role and a clear picture of what our school's ethos was prior to advertising.

Once a clear role description was developed, staff and committee distributed tasks to be fulfilled. A timeline was also established.

- Professional development particularly in Maths.
- Introducing and developing a STEM program which involved hiring a specialist teacher to work in collaboration with teachers. This program engaged the students curiosity, engagement and scientific understanding.
- Further embed the SEE program within the curriculum.

Financial report

This report consists of the following items:

The 2019 Budget and the audited Financial Statements of the School for the year ended 31st. December 2018, and the Auditor's Report dated 4th March 2018. The Audit was conducted by Rochdale Accounting and Business Advisory.

Included in the Financial Statements are the income and expenses of the school during the last financial year (shown on the profit & loss report) assets and liabilities of the school at the end of the last financial year (shown on the Balance Sheet)

The 2018 audited financial statements P&L report shows that the school had a turnover of \$571,552 and made a loss of \$12,665. As of the end of 2018 we had 2 term deposits with a total savings of \$112,374 for the year 2018.

The school's main sources of income are Government grants \$503,867 (88.1%), tuition fees and other incomes \$ 48,987 (8.5%) with other income including and interest making up the remaining \$18,698 (3.4%)

As we continue to depend on Government funding, the amount is tied to the number of children enrolled at our school. The number of enrolled students for 2018 was 34.

The school's main expense areas were wages and related expenses at 72.8% plus 5.3% on contract teachers. Materials and expendables were 3.5% and 3.7% for insurance. All other expenses making up the remaining.

At the close of 2018 the school had cash and cash equivalent assets of \$199,223 and outstanding tuition fees of \$16,919.

The school has non-current assets of \$834,369 and liabilities of \$29,412 includes Provision for sick leave, PAYG and super. The school's net assets where \$804,957

Our enrolment numbers remain around the low 30s and we have had very little fluctuation. Tuntable Falls Community School remains in a viable financial position, able to meet all debts.

INCOME



- Wages and related
- Equipment Materials and Excursions
- Contact Teachers
- Insurance
- Other

EXPENSES



- Grants
- Tuition Fees & Other
- Donations