



Tunable Falls Community School

Annual Report 2016

From the Committee

2016 has been a very productive and busy year for our school, with development projects completed and our many exciting events.

This action packed year started with school numbers on full, we now have four professional teachers consisting of our three classroom teachers, and our garden teacher (incorporating the SEE program within all classes), working with them we have four casual teachers aides and steady regular relief staff when needed.

We also have dedicated a circus teacher and music teacher.

At the beginning of term three the exciting wait for the new classroom was over and the upper class (years 4, 5 and 6) moved into their airy new space. The classroom was officially opened by the local Member of Parliament and our Mayor, followed by a gathering to thank all those who had worked so hard from the beginning to the end of this project.

Our old classroom has now become the schools multi-purpose space, and is mainly used for art and craft. The children have spent much of the year creating and completing beautiful mosaics to decorate our school with the guidance of one of our devoted and artistic parents.

The work previously carried out to redefine the new parking area near the new classroom was established and plants are flourishing in the new garden outside the classroom.

The committee has been fluid this year with new members joining and an existing member taking maternity leave. Throughout the committee has worked with enthusiasm and commitment to the vision, functionality and management of the school. We had one team building day with our staff to sustain and cultivate our strong, happy and respectful working relationship. We also conducted our annual strategic planning and operations meetings both whole day meetings defining our vision and management plans respectively.

The teachers again organised a year full of excursions and activities in addition to the ongoing curriculum. With our sports program the children enjoyed our annual cross country on the wonderful Tuntable Falls community, bike riding with a focus on safety and maintenance skills, swimming, and ball skills, we were also able to purchase some new sporting equipment and an outdoor all weather table tennis with funds from our sports grant. All of our extra curricular activities are conducted with strong support of our dedicated parents and families.

Our kindy teacher took long service leave in term three and the relief teacher was a wonderful fit into our school community and has continued to do relief teaching when needed.

The Indigenous cultural exchange was fantastic. We had Mitch and Tom who visited the school over two terms and engaged the children with music, hip hop, film and video making and storytelling, we were also fortunate enough to have a visit from Uncle Gilbert.

The garden and SEE program is growing and our garden teacher has been delightful and the children have been relishing in their garden time. This is being incorporated into cooking and class programs, we have had great support from families in maintaining the garden.

The kitchen and our ongoing healthy lunches made three days a week by our devoted roster parents has been continuing with the intention of incorporating this more and more with our garden produce.

Our ongoing circus and music classes have been a source of great creative expression inspiration for our children, honing their physical skills, co-ordination and musical/drama abilities. The children showcased these at school our performances- we had an outstanding play night with each class performing a play, we also have musical/ theatre performances at our annual winter solstice

Our upper class teacher decided to have a break from teaching and gave notice and we conducted interviews and found a fantastic teacher for 2017 and we look forward to the new energy this will bring into our school.

Our commitment to fundraising continued throughout the year with our Mardigrass festival stall shared with Tuntable Falls preschool, our very enjoyable community event the Sea Shepherd dinner information evening and our annual school fete again in partnership with Tuntable preschool.

Once again the year was full of amazing camps, our children enjoyed a couple days at Blackrock and a Forest camp on the Tuntable Falls community, the upper class attended the much anticipated Koinonia camp for some action packed activities and the whole school annual camp to Stradbroke island with staff, students and families was once again a great success and example of strong and united school community with much fun had by all.

It has been a busy and awesome productive year with a lot of growth and positive outcomes. We all look forward to the future with great enthusiasm.

Nat Dease

Management committee secretary

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 included 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.

We offer classes from Kindergarten to year 6 (aged 5-12) in three classes. Our paid staff include: three class teachers, one environment and sustainability teacher, four teachers' aides, an administrator and part-time maintenance person. We also have two specialist external teachers providing music and circus classes. The parent body forms the majority of a volunteer work force, who perform the other duties involved in running the school.

Teaching staff report directly to 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 two weeks during term time, and additionally for strategic planning and team building sessions throughout the year.

The school's physical environment and the children's freedom to interact with their natural surroundings are fundamental elements of the school. The children swim in the beautiful Tuntable Creek at lunchtime and after school, building dam walls, skimming stones and managing the cat fish. They climb trees and play games running through the bushland grounds, build cubbies, and create villages in the large sandpit.

The size of the school and its independence allows the teachers to respond to events quickly, integrating them into the children's learning program. Parents and committee members are encouraged to share their skills. 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. There is a strong sense of positive 'can-do' encouraging the children to reach for the sky and follow their dreams.

Respect and 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.

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 principals 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

We have a formal evaluation process to measure parent, student and staff satisfaction, conducted in term 3 each year. Student surveys were carried out in class and written surveys were distributed to staff and families.

While the results were overwhelmingly positive, the suggestions for improvement still provided useful ideas for discussion. These were taken to the strategic planning meetings to be evaluated and incorporated into the long-term vision for the school.

Other indicators backed up the results of the surveys in showing overall satisfaction is high.

Student enrolments stayed stable throughout the year. Regular school functions were well attended and had a positive atmosphere of commitment and support.

Parent meetings, which provide parents with a formal opportunity to communicate with the management committee, were held each term. Issues raised were addressed to the satisfaction of all.

Parent/teacher meetings were also held through out the year, with the focus being on each student's academic progress. Any issues raised in these meetings related to individual situations and did not express overall negativity about the school.

Enrolment policy

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

To enroll, families are asked to complete an enrolment application and then to 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.

Student body

In 2015, we had 38 students enrolled throughout the year. The gender balance was 40% girls and 60% boys, with three students self-identified as Indigenous. The majority were Anglo-Australians with English as a first language.

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 2015, students attended from Lismore, Jiggi, Stony Chute, Nimbin, Mountain Top and the Tuntable valley.

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

Attendance

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 was distributed to families and discussed at teacher-parent meetings.

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 the families on the many benefits to regularly attending school.

Standardized testing

For student NAPLAN 2014 outcomes, please refer to the Australian Government's *My School* website at: <http://www.myschool.edu.au>

Professional learning and teacher standards

In 2015, we had three permanently employed teachers and three teachers aides. All permanent and relief teachers were fully qualified with Bachelor of Education (Primary) degrees, or equivalent, from approved higher education institutions. All of our teaching staff in 2015 were female and identified as non-Indigenous.

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

Policies and procedures

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

In particular, we have specific policies on attendance, complaints, bullying, behaviour and discipline, which are distributed to families, as well as being available in the school office for review.

The comprehensive review of our policies was completed early in the year in preparation for registration, however we have implemented an ongoing schedule of reviewing our policies and procedures to ensure they remain relevant and reflect practice.

Priority areas for improvement

We identified the following areas as priorities for 2016:

Kindergarten specific class

We maintained our kindergarten specific class, which had been trialed in 2013 and proved to be a successful learning program for the youngest children in the primary school system. Not only did the outcomes for the children improve as a result of having a separate class for this age group, the overall number of student enrolments also steadily increased since its inception.

Professional development for new curriculum

Teaching staff continued to complete professional development to prepare for the implementation of the new curriculum. Scope & Sequences and programming for the new syllabuses were developed.

Continuing improvement in student achievement

Priority areas for student learning

1. Quality Teaching and Learning Programs reflecting new syllabus requirements
2. Student well being
3. Student Attendance
4. Parent, Teacher and Community participation in collaborative planning

SEE plan – a specialised learning program to integrate with local environment and garden

The Sustainable and Environmental Education (SEE) plan is a specialized learning program to be integrated with the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden and local environment.

The integration of this into classroom planning and programming continued to be a priority area throughout the year.

Financial report

The Annual audit for the year ending 31 December 2016 was conducted by Rochdale Accounting and Business Advisory.

For the year ended 31 December 2016 audited financial statement shows that the school again finished the year in a healthy financial position.

The main income for the school in 2016 was Government grants, school fees and fundraising.

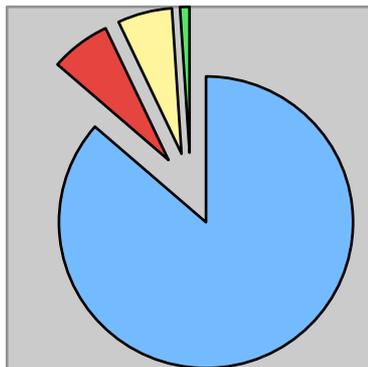
Wages and teaching costs accounted for 64% of operating expenses. These increased due to a senior teacher taking long service leave. Other than wages, the overall operating expenses were almost the same as last year, which is positive.

The enrollment numbers have decreased to 35 but overall the Tutable Falls Community School remains in a viable financial position.

Treasurer
Ashleigh Mathieson

Income

- Grants
- Fees
- Other
- Fundraising



Expenses

- Wages
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Material and Expendibles
- Other
- Superannuation

