



# 2021

## ANNUAL REPORT





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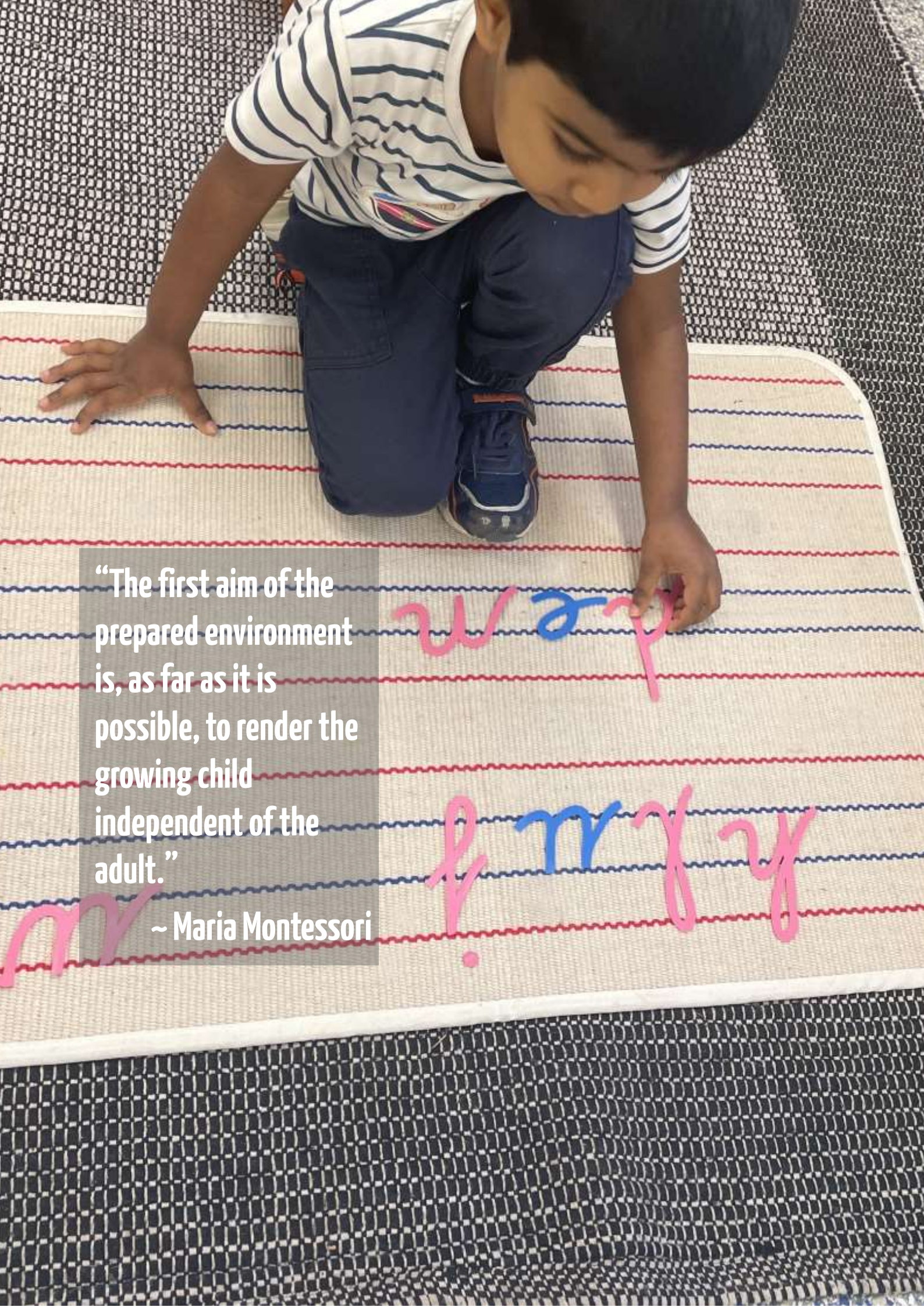
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“The first aim of the prepared environment is, as far as it is possible, to render the growing child independent of the adult.”

~ Maria Montessori





## SCHOOL CONTEXT

The Canberra Montessori Society Inc (CMS) was formed in 1980 by a group of parents interested in providing Montessori education in Canberra. In 1981, the society established the Canberra Montessori School, to meet the immediate demands for Montessori education. The Canberra Montessori School now operates five Cycle 1 classrooms, for children aged 3 to 6 years.

In 1995, it was decided that the time was right to begin work on the development of a Montessori Primary School in Canberra. A Primary School Subcommittee consisting of CMS parents, representatives from the Yarralumla Government Montessori Preschool and from the Independent Montessori Association was created. In 1996, a Primary class for children aged 6-9 began at the School's Yarralumla campus.

In 2003 the school built its own premises at Holder and now operates an additional two Cycle 2 (6-9 years) classrooms and one Cycle 3 (9-12 years) classroom.

CMS also runs a Parent Toddler Program, under 3s sessions for children aged 18 months to 3 years. Led by a trained Montessori Director, the under 3s environment was established for parents to attend with their child and learn about the Montessori philosophy first hand. In addition, in 2019, CMS opened a Montessori Long Day Care Centre, which currently has 6 month waiting list.



'To continually extend the opportunity for every child to have a Montessori education that provides for them to develop to their full potential.'



## MESSAGE FROM SCHOOL BOARD

Dear Members,

2021 was another year which saw the school, under the strong leadership of our Principal, Rael Matthews, adapt in real time to the challenges that Covid-19 has levelled at all aspects of our society, including in our schools.

Rael and the leadership team have brought together the teaching and school staff, parents and carers and importantly the students themselves and provided us all with a sense of direction and certainty, in uncertain times. We are at our best when we come together and work towards common goals. The Board is gratified to see the thread of the Montessori tradition being woven through the leadership team, through the directors and the classroom staff, and especially poignantly through the children themselves.

The Board also recognises the role of the P&F in supporting the life and mission of the school.

During 2021 the Board sought to ensure that as much stability could be achieved within the school as possible, notwithstanding the reduction of the government support that was a feature in 2020.

The Board has confidence that the Principal has prepared a plan for 2022 that will see the School grow from strength to strength, anchored by the Montessori tradition.

**Tim Bourke**  
**Board Chair**  
**Canberra Montessori Society**





## MESSAGE FROM PRINCIPAL

For the second year in a row, we find ourselves reflecting on overcoming the challenges of a year affected by a period of lockdown and ongoing restrictions for society and schools. It is not unremarkable that, just as in the previous year, as a community we rose above those challenges presented, with school and families working together more closely than ever in supporting our children and continuity of learning. I believe that through this time, we have strengthened the bonds between us all.

It is worth taking a moment to reflect that in a time of uncertainty, in which schooling has been impacted, there is maybe no better setting in which to be than at a Montessori school, in which children don't get left behind; we meet each child where they are, and guide learning from that point.

I take this opportunity to thank our exceptional and dedicated staff team, for working so professionally in difficult and complicated circumstances and conditions; and also, importantly, our parents for working so diligently to support learning at home when called upon. Thank you too, to our P&F team for their ongoing support of our school and community, and to our Society board for their ongoing support. We have fared well over the past year because we have all continually adapted, supported each other, and demonstrated an ongoing care for our community.

In the background, 2021 has been a busy and exciting year for CMS. Behind everything else through the year, we underwent the ACT Non Government Schools registration process, and have successfully renewed for the period 2021 - 2026. This coming year will see our Montessori Quality Assurance renewal, for which we have undertaken professional learning through the year to understand and support the process.

Throughout the year, we have had continued healthy interest from families in joining our school, and very excitingly, a continuation of the growth we have seen in the past few years in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3. This growth has meant that we have developed our staffing in these areas, ensuring that we can best support our students' learning and development. One underlying principle is an investment in people, and we continue to invest in training and professional learning to ensure staffing sustainability, career support and progression for our team and importantly, to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of all children.





## MESSAGE FROM PRINCIPAL cont/...

2021 was another year which presented unexpected financial challenges; but with care and oversight, prioritising the investment in our children and our staff - in classroom materials, in training new Montessori educators, and in ongoing, targeted, professional learning and development for all staff - I believe, will stand the school in good stead into the future.

Finally, through the past year, we also undertook to begin the review and update of our School Vision, Values, Mission Statement and Strategic Plan for the next 5 years. This will soon be shared with parent focus groups for feedback and then with the wider community. I'm excited to share it with you all.

2021 was a year in which much was achieved, and we're looking forward to another exciting year on our journey.

Rael Matthews  
Principal, CMS

“We must help the child to act for himself, will for himself, think for himself; this is the art of those who aspire to serve the spirit.”

~ Maria Montessori



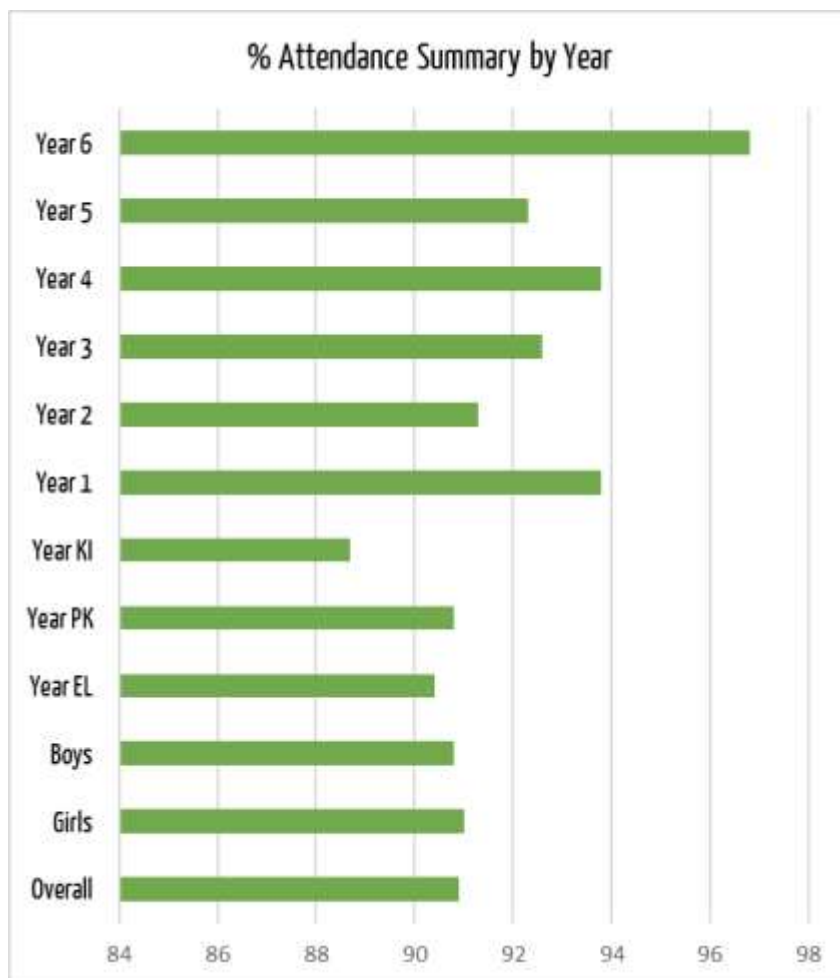


## STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Type (PK-6)	Number of Students
Male	53
Female	55
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	3
LBOTE*	22

Data collected at the point of annual Census

\* Language Background Other Than English







## STUDENT INFORMATION cont/...



“Free the child’s  
potential, and you  
will transform him  
into the world.”  
~ Maria Montessori



## STAFF INFORMATION

### Teacher qualifications

As well as their Montessori Qualifications, all Classroom Directors at CMS meet the professional requirements for teaching in an ACT school. The ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) specifies two main types of provision for teachers at different stages of their career, these are detailed below:

**Full registration** - teachers with experience working in a registered school in Australia or New Zealand who have been assessed as meeting the Proficient level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.  
**Provisional registration** - newly qualified teachers or teachers who do not have recent experience teaching in a school in Australia and New Zealand.

All staff working directly with children at CMS possess the required legal qualifications and either possess or are working towards recognised Montessori qualifications, or have participated in Montessori professional development. All CMS educators receive ongoing professional development within school, and from external providers.

### Workforce composition

Workforce composition for the reporting period is provided in the table below. The data is taken from the school's verified staffing report for the August Census. For reporting purposes, it incorporates all school staff including, staff absent for a period of less than four consecutive weeks and staff replacing staff absent for more than four consecutive weeks. It does not include any casual staff or staff absent for a period of four consecutive weeks or longer.

Type	Gender	ALL STAFF		Indigenous	
		Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE
Principal	Male	1	1	-	-
Directors	Female	8	7.3	-	-
	Male	2	2	-	-
Snow Gum	Female	6	-	-	-
OSHC	Female	2	-	-	-
	Male	1	-	-	-
Building Operations	Female	1	0.3	-	-
Assistants & Administrative	Female	13	9.4	-	-
TOTAL		34	20.0	-	-







## STAFF INFORMATION cont/...

### Professional Development completed by staff in 2021

Mindfulness and Montessori  
Teaching Neuro-diverse students  
Trauma Informed Schools  
Online Assessment and Reporting  
Data Driven Decisions  
Mental Health First Aid Training  
Montessori Inclusion Conference  
Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice.  
Mindfulness in the classroom  
Musica Viva - Adventures in Antarctica  
Music Viva – Music for Early Years  
Musica Viva – Music for Wellbeing in the Primary Classroom  
Positive Discipline: Mistaken Goals  
Be You: Mentally Healthy Communities  
Musically Montessori: First Twelve Weeks  
AMI 6-12 : Language Workshop – Spelling In Context.  
Trillium Montessori Course – Phonetic Reading.  
Child Protection Training – Legal and Practical Response to Child Abuse.  
Beginning of the Montessori Assistants Toolkit Course  
Indigenous Cultural Awareness Work Ready Course  
The Montessori Retreat  
Creating Learning Support Plans  
In Safe Hands  
Australian Megafauna  
Neuroscience and Compassion.  
Montessori Inclusion Conference  
Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice  
AMI Montessori Administrators Certificate  
Collaborative and Proactive Solutions  
Teaching Indigenous and Aboriginal histories  
Associate course in phonology with the Institute of Multisensory Structured Language Education  
AMI Orientation to Adolescence Certificate

“With man, the life  
of the body depends  
on the life of the  
spirit.”

~ Maria Montessori



## SCHOOL SATISFACTION

Schools use a range of evidence to gain an understanding of the satisfaction levels of their community. Annually in August/September, we undertake a survey to gain an understanding of school satisfaction at that time. This information is collected from parents through an online survey.

### Overall Satisfaction

In this reporting period, 97% of parents and carers indicated their overall satisfaction with Canberra Montessori School. The following table shows the percentage of parents and carers who agreed with each of these opinion items at this school. A total of 31 parents and carers responded to the survey. Please note that not all responders answered every question.

	2020	2021
<b>Satisfaction Survey Opinion Item</b>	<b>%*</b>	<b>%*</b>
Overall Satisfaction with school	92	97
My child/ren enjoy(s) going to school	97	90
My child/ren feel(s) safe at school	97	94
I am happy with my child's progress at this school	91	94
The school meets the educational needs of the students	89	97
The school meets the social needs of the students	94	90
The school helps my child/ren deal with anxious emotions	89	90
Student behaviour is well managed at this school	75	80
Staff know and appreciate my child/ren's qualities	97	97
Staff show courtesy and respect for the students	100	100
The school has high expectations of the students	72	77
I feel informed about my child's learning and development	89	87
I can talk to my child's teachers about many concerns I may have	94	100
I trust the staff at this school to make the right decisions for my child	94	94
The school works with me to support my child's learning	94	90
The school is an excellent learning environment	97	97
The school has a positive public image	67	90
The school looks for ways to improve	89	94

Data derived from annual CMS School Satisfaction Surveys

\*percentage of parent respondents





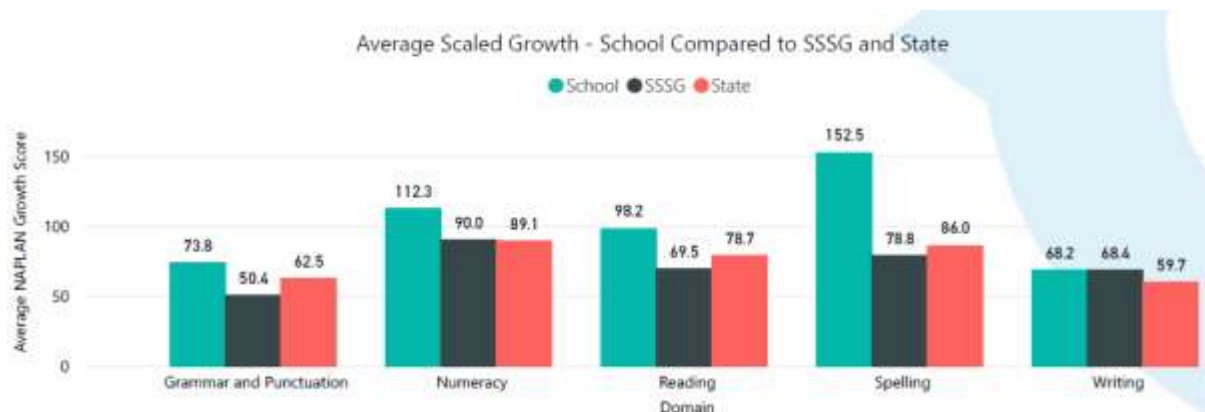
# LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

## NAPLAN 2021

### (National Assessment for Literacy & Numeracy)

As a Montessori School, we find ourselves in a relatively unique situation with NAPLAN. As we utilise continual formative assessments in our classrooms, the testing situation is quite alien to our children. In addition to this, aside from the Year 3 written exam, the entire NAPLAN test is now undertaken online. During the NAPLAN testing time, we stress that NAPLAN is simply an assessment of how well the children do on NAPLAN.

Our sample size each year is small, and the data can be statistically unreliable in terms of analysing trends. However, taking that into account, our 'in-school match' data (Year 5 children who were with us in Year 3) demonstrates greater than average growth across all domains compared to similar schools as well as compared to all schools in the ACT. This highlights the importance of completing the Cycle 2 and 3 journey after Cycle 1, as well as a demonstration of an improvement in outcomes as a result of our focus on whole school literacy development.





## LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT cont/...

### Progressive Achievement Testing

At CMS, our children engage in Progressive Achievement Testing from the Australian Council of Educational Research from Kindergarten through to Year 6. The data collected from these tests gives teachers a comprehensive picture of children's strengths, areas for development and captures each child's growth each year. We use this data to inform planning for future teaching and learning across all curriculum disciplines to ensure that we focus attention on the areas where the children require it most.

### Learning Support

As our school has grown, our staffing has grown accordingly; we now have Teaching Assistants across all Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 classrooms, and we are very glad to have created the position of Learning Support Assistant during 2021. The position of Learning Support Assistant is critical for assisting those children who have additional needs as well as any children who just need more support in accessing the curriculum. Supported with ongoing Professional Learning, our LSA works with guidance from the School Leadership Team, as well as Classroom Directors to best support every student with whom they work.

### Teaching and Learning During COVID

During the lockdown period, key points of focus were well-being, collaboration with staff and parents, open communication and community building. School teaching staff provided Montessori-aligned resources for parents through Google Classroom. Many continued to present lessons and conference with individual children through the digital platform, enabling each child to continue learning at their own pace, as they normally do in the Montessori classroom environment.

Upon returning to school after the lockdown period, initially our attention was directed toward the way in which children adapted to being back in the classroom and among their peers, after a prolonged period of isolation. While many of us had heard reports of high anxiety levels among children returning to primary schools in general, we found that once children at CMS were back in the classroom again, most quickly adapted and returned to being the happily work-focused children we are familiar with. This experience speaks to one of the key strengths of the learning environment at CMS, where the classroom environment caters to the development of the whole child, as well as their academic needs.



“One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child.”

~ Maria Montessori





## LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT cont/...

### Ongoing Teacher Development

As well as externally sourced and provided professional learning, teaching staff at CMS participate in regular pedagogy meetings in which a variety of philosophical topics are explored, reflected on, and discussed to develop depth of understanding and further inform our practices. Throughout 2021, we developed our targeted observation cycle, involving analysis of learning, planning, implementation, and reflection. This cycle aligns with the Early Years Learning Framework and enables directors to refine practice so that planning can be more directly targeted to desired outcomes.

### Transparent Classroom

CMS has been utilising Transparent Classroom for over 3 years as a tool for planning, record keeping, reporting and communicating with parents. Parents are able to receive updates about their children's work in almost real time, including photos annotated with lessons presented, and observations and comments regarding work undertaken. This provides a helpful window into the activity of the children while they are at school and assists in building assurance for parents regarding the progress their children are making.

These updates are used by teaching staff to create digital portfolios for the children. The portfolio is a selection of examples of a child's work. Parents, directors and children can easily see progress made throughout the child's time at CMS using the portfolio. Portfolios are reviewed by the children's new directors when they move on to the next cycle, and it is also an important resource for the transition process. Of course, even with all of this reporting, parents always have the opportunity to meet at any point with the child's teacher should they wish. Through 2021, we continued to refine the contents of Transparent Classroom, adding significant amounts of detail to the contents, including explanatory details of individual presentations, and ways that parents can support the work of their children at home.

### Observation

A critical tool in improving the quality of teaching and learning in all schools is observation, and CMS is no exception. The directors keep anecdotal records of observations for each child, focusing on their interests, learning style, and areas that need improvement. This understanding is used to reflect on teaching practice and the current needs of the children. It is also

“The greatest gifts  
we can give our  
children are the  
roots of  
responsibility and  
the wings of  
independence.”

~ Maria Montessori



## LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT cont/...

used to plan presentations, inform discussions with individual children, as well as interventions relating to the children's work and social behaviours. Through 2021, we supported teaching staff to undertake peer observations each semester. Staff are covered from class so that they could observe another room. They provided the teacher; they are observing with constructive feedback and used their observations to reflect on their own practice. As well as helping staff improve their overall practice, peer observation has been a key part of building an open and supportive staff culture at CMS. As another method of classroom observation, the leadership team have undertaken professional learning in utilising a Montessori specific observational tool, DERS (Developmental Environmental Rating Scale). DERS is a classroom assessment platform which provides a simple, objective, and comprehensive approach to linking adult and childhood behaviours in the classroom with developmental outcomes. Our teaching staff use DERS to guide observation and support continuous improvements in teaching practice, toward outcomes that matter.

“Imagination does not become great until human beings, given the courage and strength, use it to create.”

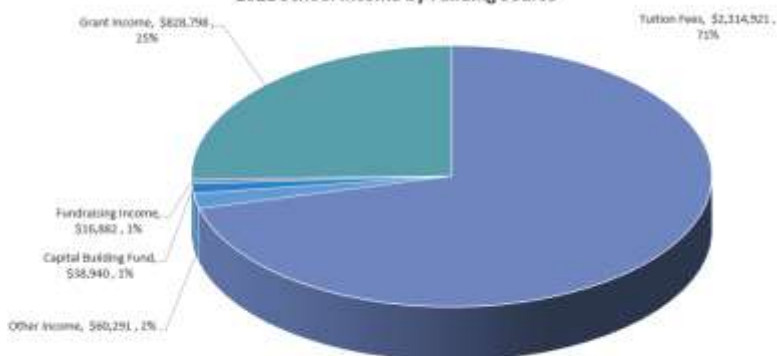
~ Maria Montessori





## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

2021 School Income by Funding Source



2021 Recurrent/Capital Expenditure

