

## **Qualitative Data 2022 Parent Survey**

The Board is extremely grateful to all those who responded to the Parent Survey this year. We had 55 responses representing approximately 130 children. The school community can be assured that the findings influence discussions, decisions and practice and will continue to be analysed and acted upon throughout the year.

A Parent Survey has been sent out annually since 2015. They provide important benchmarks through which the Board can assess many aspects of parent involvement, school culture and governance.

The Governance, Leadership and Management group (GLaM - the Board's governance group) recommends to the College of Teachers (CoT) and the Board areas of focus and change as a result of responses received. Each year GLaM delegates to the Education Manager the responsibility of circulating the survey and analysing the results.

All quantitative results are presented in graphs/tables and are reviewed by the mandated groups of the Board, CoT, the Education and Business Managers.

Respondents also add qualitative comments in answer to some questions. These are presented in summary form as in some instances comments identify the respondent or an individual member of staff. It is not appropriate to publish any material that identifies individuals. However, any issues raised, and the very many compliments, are forwarded to the College of Teachers, to appropriate management positions and to Mandated Groups, for them to note or to take action.

GLaM also recommends to Board a schedule for monitoring actions arising.

### **Qualitative Data**

The Bulletin continues to be the primary source of information for families and the secondary source is emails from the Front Office (which includes SkoolBag). The Bulletin is very positively received.

*...the school has excellent communication skills. Always giving plenty of notice, clear and concise with plenty of reminders.*

However, one respondent noted:

*Since the bulletin has been in its latest electronic form, I have noticed that the writers have been less concise, and it is much longer. I used to read everything except the class notes that don't apply to me. But now it seems a bit too long.*

Something for us to monitor. However, as it is our primary source of communication and information to families, it is unlikely to get shorter, nevertheless, stronger editing may go some way to addressing this feedback.

Overall, 94.23% of respondents are happy with the way the school communicates with them. Leaving only 2 respondents who were ambivalent and only 1 that was dissatisfied. The streamlined nature of electronic communication has made information sharing far easier from the school's perspective and this is obviously also reflected in the parent body responses.

As in all previous years, the Front Office staff are commended for their friendliness and care.

Encouragingly, 70% of respondents know how to access school policies and procedures. This has been a steady increase since 2015 when only 40% knew this. Sharing this information through SkoolBag and regular Bulletin notes over the past few years has obviously been successful.

The profile of the P&F is up from previous years, with 75% of parents knowing how to get involved with the P&F versus 65% in 2015.

### **Parent Engagement**

60% of parents feel they are volunteering at capacity. Work commitments, time and living a distance from the school affects some parents' participation.

*I help when I am able to. Would love to help out more but I'm tight on time and free hours in the schooling day.*

*limited by our location & work, love helping when we can.*

Only one respondent contributed their recent lack of volunteering as a direct result of the pandemic:

*My disappointment in the school over the last 2-3 years is the main reason for me not to get involved anymore beyond what's absolutely needed for my child's class.*

Another was encouraging on this note:

*Keep offering opportunities to get involved, it will take a while to recover from COVID & the insularity that caused.*

We will certainly keep offering opportunities to participate, the school was deeply saddened to have to reduce parent involvement during the pandemic.

Respondent suggestions for how the school could make it easier for parents to participate included continuing to use the online rostering system, giving parents more advanced notice (e.g a term ahead) including giving more details of what is involved, providing more regular 'call outs' via the bulletin, asking parents personally to be involved and organizing social events, include weekend events. One respondent suggested:

*...the sense of community that this school has is quite unique and this is because parents are invited in - it is important parents sustain this input and try and commit to at least once a term per family.*

The school continues to be open to trying new ways to make it easier for parents to be involved, one recent example is the electronic rostering. In 2023 we will endeavour to provide more advanced notice in the recognition of feedback received in the survey and with the knowledge that families are busy.

### **School Culture and Communication**

In 2022 we had a whole school focus on rebuilding community, so it was encouraging to see that 92.31% of respondents feel welcome at our school.

Two respondents expressed concerns about one of their children experiencing bullying issues that they believed the school did not properly address. This was brought to relevant parties' attention and the Board's attention at the time, and we hope positive changes have resulted.

Related, this year we added two additional questions regarding child welfare and safety.

1. I feel informed about my child's wellbeing at school.

86.79% of respondents feel informed about their child's wellbeing at school. 9.43% (5 respondents) neither agreed or disagreed) and 1 respondent strongly disagreed. This was the respondent who also spoke of their child being bullied.

2. My child feels safe at school.

94.34% of respondents believe their child to be safe at school. 1 respondent answered neither agreed nor disagreed.

Regardless of this strong positive response, as a child safe school culture both figures should be 100%. This is something we will continue to work on achieving as a whole school community.

Additional Comments from respondents about School Culture and Communication indicate that there is a feeling that although the school promotes belonging and community, sadly, the parent culture does not always reflect this inclusiveness.

*I feel the school communicates information quite well. I feel as though there is an elephant in the room in regards to school culture. Parent/s group/s are quite cliquey even though the school is focussed on belonging & community. This was actually one of the things I was really excited for when researching where to send my children which I've found disheartening & believe there is room for improvement.*

*School culture has been changing slowly for many years and our particular experience has made us feel like children with extra needs are more important than those without. It also feels like there are less parents who are actually attending the school for the Steiner education.*

Arguably, the 'school' has little control over parent cliques, but we will continue to look for positive opportunities to bring parents together such as parent education and community events such as school movie nights. To address the second respondent's comment, our school is proud to enrol children with disabilities (and additional needs) and places their wellbeing and learning **equally** alongside those of all children enrolled. This is not because we are legally bound by the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) but because we value every child and every family equally – this is proudly embedded in our culture, and we hope always will be.

Two other comments reiterated parent concerns about bullying (the same two respondents as referred to above). The school has reviewed its Bullying Action Plan since both these incidents and continues to be determined to work with students and families to ensure all children experience Mumbulla School as safe and welcoming.

One respondent thinks, "the school needs to apologise for discriminating against certain families for not being jabbed and excluding them." The school acknowledges the difficulties of the past few years and believes we operated lawfully, safely and with integrity in what were very difficult times for everyone.

Changing a block of toilets to be gender neutral earlier this year was noted by one respondent to be inadequately communicated to the parent body. The Education Manager apologised for this in the Bulletin at the time and class teachers informed their children in a developmentally appropriate way at the time.

90% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their child's teacher communicated with them in an open and timely manner. However, when it comes to feeling informed about the content and curriculum in the classroom 84.61% strongly agreed or agreed that they were informed, while the

remaining were ambivalent or disagreed. The following comment may reflect the remaining 15.39% of those that were not feeling adequately informed:

*I know if I asked, I would get the information about curriculum and there is a snippet written in the bulletin, but I don't feel well informed, no.*

It is worth noting that all respondents love class meetings. In 2023 the idea of increasing Class meetings to more than one per year for each class will be placed on the College Agenda.

### **Leadership and Management**

Many respondents (66.66%) feel well informed about the organizational structures of the school, which is on par with last year's results. Nevertheless, 5 individuals do not feel informed and 13 are unsure, which indicates the school could be educating the parent body more in this area. This includes what College and Board are doing and the decisions that are being made that affect the school. One person did however note, "No, I don't feel informed but know I could get the information." This is reassuring on one level, but more transparent and proactive information sharing is something the school will continue to target.

Disappointingly, although the school had a Strategic Planning weekend this year and invited members of the school community, we still have 39.62% of respondents feeling ambivalent towards them being informed about the school's vision and future direction. Yes, 50.95% felt they are informed but these statistics indicate that our Strategic Plan needs broader circulation and readership.

Below is a cross section of the 34 responses received to the question, **What do you appreciate most about the school?** These answers are representative of the main themes expressed by all.

*The care and wellbeing of the children being a priority, and the joy and sense of 'magic' that is given to the children*

*The warm fuzzy feeling...and that my child loves going most days*

*The sense of community*

*The uniquely beautiful journey as well as the commitment and love from the teachers.*

*The music and arts curriculum for the students*

*The teaching methodology. The relationship between teacher and student. The community. The value placed on student wellbeing and engagement. Student programs.*

*Reverence towards childhood - how childhood and each child is valued and genuinely cared about, the warmth from staff and aesthetically pleasing natural/build environments, the emphasis on relationships, sense of belonging, respect and the encouragement of creativity in learning and education.*

*Warm and friendly, inclusive and safe.*

*The Steiner Education system and comfortable and friendly school community.*

*The thoughtful concern for the students and the work and creative thinking going in to supporting them through all their challenges*

*The school grounds, the crafts our children create, the songs our children sings*

*The welcoming feel. The community involvement, the open-door policy, the friendly vibe. How warm and happy my children feel at school.*

*Community. Dedication to beauty & the arts, as well as wellbeing of students ~ heart centred. Steiner education.*

*The connections and sense of community, coupled with holistic child-centred education*

*The friendly, kind and knowledgeable interaction. Supportive and caring community and teachers. Strong social encouragement for families.*

*The feeling of community and belonging is special, the comfort and happiness of the students in all years is so refreshing to see in a school environment.*

In response to the hopes, dreams or aspirations respondents have for the school for the next 5 years, comments ranged from building a high school, having weekly yoga and meditation as part of the curriculum, remote learning options for distant communities, offering a different language useful to our region, new songs and plays of more relevance to our context, a middle school, increased awareness around racial diversity including teacher training to reduce unconscious bias around race, but also for disability and gender and reducing waste in the school. Many of these suggestions have been discussed at College, most recently during the 2022 school year and will continue to be on the agenda in 2023. For example, the school actively tried to employ a First Nations language teacher and/or an Auslan teacher for 2023. We are also regularly discussing and making changes to our practices to reduce unconscious bias based on race, disability and gender. Providing gender neutral toilets is an example of our learning and growth. It is reassuring to see the parent body also prioritizes this awareness. Profession Learning for all staff at the beginning of 2023 focused on Introducing Aboriginal Language programs in primary school and Auslan.

The interest in enrolling/continuing to Years 7 & 8 for respondents is around 62%. Accompanying comments showed some uncertainty but with more information and warning it may be an option for more.

Request for additional comments about Leadership and Direction elicited 5 comments:

*Doing great!*

*I think the reason I feel uninformed about what the board and college of teachers is doing is because I haven't been reading that section of the Bulletin lately...*

*Makes me sad to have experienced such bad leadership in times of crisis. Total lack of integrity.*

*You can't have an all-white teaching and admin staff and think that your values reflect inclusivity, not in this day and age. I think actively seeking to be a school of the future environmentally and socially is the way forward. I think having a vision beyond what is*

*currently being taught by embracing and implementing already tried and tested strategies in other schools that are leading the way by teaching compassion and kindness, which in turn would be reflected by children not leaving the school due to being bullied.*

*Better communication between different parts of the school would be useful.*

In the interests of transparency, the polarised views of leadership “doing great” and “lacking integrity” are shared here. As verbal feedback to staff and leadership during the “times of crisis” were of appreciation and trust, action by the school to address the negative comment is not seen as necessary. Overwhelmingly, the parent body trust the leadership of school, inclusive of College, Board and Management.

In relation to the “all-white” staffing comment, the school has developed a [Strategic Plan](#) and a proactive Recruitment Policy that underpin our striving to have a culturally diverse and inclusive staff. Our current staff demographic is reflective of that of the Bega Valley demographic, which is slowly becoming more culturally diverse.

Student wellbeing is a priority at Mumbulla School. For many years, our school has been implementing the [BounceBack! Program](#) – a Wellbeing and Resilience Program to develop and foster student social and emotional skills and resilience in the classroom and playground. From 2023 we will be implementing [The Smiling Minds Primary School Education Program](#), which is an evidence-based approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing of children in the classroom, school, and home environment. We were accepted into the program under funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Education. We will be starting the program and associated training in March 2023.

30.77% of respondents strongly agree they understand the basic principles of Steiner Education, 61.54% agree and 7.69% are ambivalent. Around 65% would like to have more about Steiner Education offered and 84% would like ‘other’ parent education offered.

Parent participation in Parent Education offered in 2022 (Lisa Devine) and planned (Steiner Q&A – postponed due to lack of interest) does not reflect this keen interest in more education. However, the school is committed to continuing to regularly offer education opportunities to the school community.

**Additional closing comments from respondents:**

*I'm grateful for the school and ALL the people that make up the staff and teach and look after our children so well. Thank you!*

*Thank you Mumbulla. Parents have high expectations and are harder work than the kids I'm sure...*

*Sending my child to Mumbulla is the single best decision I have made for him. I am sometimes overwhelmed by the generosity of spirit and love that is given by the staff, particularly the teachers and front office. It is a magical place to be, and its truly inspirational. Thank you.*

*Kindergarten grounds and buildings have been such a great addition.*

*Such a magic and enriching experience, growing our children in a conscious and caring environment. Thank you all.*

*It would be great to have an after-school care program held within the school grounds.*

In 2023 we are committed to continuing to listen to our parent body to improve our practices and our processes where we need to. We are also committed to continuing to work together to rebuild trust where it has been lost and to rebuild community where it has been eroded.

*...In the presence of each other  
May we each be fully present.  
May we learn to listen to each other  
Until light is shed on every question.  
May we be open with each other  
And create a place of trust  
So we can share our hopes and our concerns.  
With clear thoughts and warm hearts  
Bring strength to our purpose  
As it finds its way into our hands.*

*Anon*