

LEARNING CO-OPERATIVE

alternative primary school

2025 Annual Report to the School Community

School Number:1721



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1. THE BOARD IN 2025

Chair

Maneesha Singh

General Members

Omrita Baskar

Alisha Rotella

Lachlan Gardiner

Tim McIntosh (retired in July), Godelieve Ntoumos (from July)

2. 2025 ACHIEVEMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY

2025 was a dynamic and productive year for the Learning Co-operative, marked by strong community engagement, enriched learning experiences, and significant progress in curriculum, culture, and governance.

Curriculum & Learning

- Continued strengthening of literacy through timetable changes, structured phonics and targeted teaching approaches
- Development of an integrated curriculum aligned with Victorian Curriculum 2.0
- Engaging, student-led term themes: Animals, Mysteries/Crimes, Concert (*The Tempest*), and Geology
- Successful “deep dive” learning intensives including Archaeological Dig, Story Writing, Concert and Quest week
- Rich program of incursions and excursions including science workshops, cultural experiences, and museum visits

Performing Arts & Creative Expression

- Annual concert featuring *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
- Strong participation in music, drama, and visual arts across all age groups
- Continued growth of ensemble music and community performances

Cultural Inclusion & Reconciliation

- Successful launch of the school’s first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Naming of school spaces in Woi-wurrung language in partnership with Wurundjeri community
- Meaningful engagement in Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week
- Cultural incursions, storytelling, and student-led learning on First Nations perspectives

Student Voice & Engagement

- Active Student Council contributing to decision-making, events, and school planning
- High levels of student agency in selecting themes and shaping learning experiences
- Strong participation in camps, excursions, and collaborative projects

Wellbeing & Inclusion

- Delivery of key wellbeing programs including RRR, Elephant Ed, REACH, and equine therapy
- Continued focus on neuro-affirming practices and inclusive support strategies
- Outdoor and experiential learning supporting resilience and confidence

Community & Partnerships

- Highly successful community events including COMAD Festival, Wattle Festival, Concert, and Family Camp
- Strengthened partnerships with local schools, kinders, and community organisations
- Participation in programs such as Boite Schools Chorus and Edendale Farm initiatives

Facilities & Resources

- Completion of major building works and improvements to learning spaces
- Purchase of an additional school bus to support safe transport and emergency preparedness
- Ongoing environmental projects including revegetation and biodiversity initiatives

Governance & Operations

- Significant progress in policy review, compliance systems, and risk management
- Development of a new Strategic Plan through extensive community consultation
- Strengthening of assessment practices and trialling of new approaches
- Preparation for upcoming VRQA and NCCD audit requirements

3. THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

The Learning Co-operative Primary School, “the Co-op”, is an independent primary school set on 6.5 hectares of natural bushland. Established in 1973, the Learning Co-operative operates as a consensus-based co-operative of families. The group is committed to working together to create a stimulating alternative to children’s education. We celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2023.



3.1 Facilities and Surrounds

The land and buildings are owned by the Learning Co-operative. The facilities include a kitchen as an integral part of the learning program, a library, an Arts space, an instrumental music space, a fully equipped theater space (built with assistance of the BER grant), a small group workspace, a kiln room and a multi-purpose room for indoor games and performing arts.

The surroundings include adventure play equipment, cubbies and plenty of space to play. There is an abundance of creative garden spaces, a chook shed, and an organic kitchen garden including wicking beds and a food forest. The facilities accommodate enrolments of 30 – 35 students from ages 5 – 12 and include shared open classroom spaces that encourage and support multi-age learning, interaction, and child-to-child mentoring.

3.2 Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility

The Learning Co-operative supports environmental sustainability through its use of solar energy, tank water only supply, and is working towards becoming a zero waste environment. The children participate in Edendale Farm “Kids teaching Kids” sustainability conferences, where environmental issues are explored as part of the learning program. The Learning Co-operative manages the bushland around the school and holds regular ‘Bushcare’ working bees to conserve the habitat. Children are involved in regular gardening activities in our organic kitchen garden and bush care/weeding projects to maintain our school bushland.

3.3 The Learning Environment, Philosophy & Curriculum Model: Overview

The Learning Co-operative Primary School offers learning opportunities based on our own unique philosophy, while adhering to the Victorian Curriculum, in an environment where children are given a true voice with regards to their learning. Working within a dynamic educational framework, we provide a learning environment which is creative and constantly evolving; children collaborate with their friends, in a peer-based but cross-aged learning environment, guided by parents and teachers to develop their unique passions. We do not use age-based grade levels, preferring broader groupings of ‘Biggies’, ‘Middlies’ and ‘Littlies’. We believe that every member of the community can contribute to the education and raising of its children.

Choice, co-operation, open-mindedness, non-judgmental attitudes, wonder and curiosity are defining features of the learning environment. Free play is a feature of their learning environment, whether it be social skills or physics in the sandpit.

Core units of numeracy, literacy and the other competencies of the Victorian Curriculum are delivered via a range of experiences to cater for all learners. Where possible, the children learn outside and in the bush. The teaching staff and parents offer two focus-time sessions per day, where the children work on core competencies based on their individual needs and interests. The remainder of the day is spent on child-initiated projects and tasks, as well as activities created by the parent-body and teaching staff, with plenty of time to play.

An Indigenous cultural program, through incursions, related activities, stories, and the Boite schools chorus experience has been a feature of the learning program at the Learning Co-operative.

Our multicultural community leads to many informal comparisons of language and culture and celebrations of food and festivals from many countries. We also incorporate learning units on the environment, sustainability and social justice.

The school has a long history of performing arts and LOTE (Italian) and these form a central part of our curriculum. Learning is showcased through drama performances, songs and games. The annual concert features a wide range of plays written and directed by students and each year includes a Shakespeare play and Italian play.

3.4 Parent Involvement and Responsibility

Since inception, parents have been heavily involved in the management and student learning journeys of the Learning Co-operative. Responsibilities include parent involvement in planning and presenting activities and participation in the learning programs at Learning Co-operative, administration, governance, maintenance, cleaning and transport. Decisions regarding all aspects of the Learning Co-operative's activities are made via consensus at fortnightly adult meetings attended by all staff and a parent representative from each family and are informed by regular subgroup and philosophy meetings covering all areas of Co-op.

Typically, meetings include discussion about what occurs in the school, organizational matters and planning. Importantly, they provide a forum for philosophical debate and an opportunity to discuss the challenges and milestones occurring for individual children and their families. The first meeting of each term is a curriculum meeting where ideas, activities, excursions and camps and necessary resources relating to the theme of the term are discussed.

"Learning Cooperative is a place we fell in love with the moment we walked in. It was a space that felt full of choices and opportunities for our son and for our family. Of course, like every relationship of love there have been ups and downs but, in the end, finding a community that is so diverse and passionate and "I can trust our children with" has been a fulfilling experience."

-Maneesha (Parent/Volunteer)

4. 2025 OVERVIEW

2025 was a year of growth, consolidation, and reflection for the Learning Co-operative Primary School. Building on the foundations established in 2024, the school focused on strengthening curriculum delivery, deepening cultural inclusion through our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), refining assessment practices, and preparing for upcoming compliance requirements.

Throughout the year, the Co-op remained committed to its core philosophy of child-led, community-based learning, while continuing to align its programs with the Victorian Curriculum. A strong emphasis was placed on literacy, integrated learning, student wellbeing, and maintaining a vibrant, connected school community.

4.1 Student Learning

Literacy and Numeracy

In 2025, literacy remained a key focus area across the school. Structured phonics-based teaching was further embedded into daily practice, supported by online programs and targeted small group sessions. The continuation of twice-daily "Focus Time" sessions provided consistent opportunities for students to build foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

Teaching approaches were strengthened through professional learning in the Science of Reading, and increased collaboration between staff and parents supported more consistent delivery of literacy and numeracy activities. Students engaged in a wide range of literacy experiences including creative writing, storytelling, research projects, and presentations linked to their term themes.

Numeracy learning continued to be delivered through hands-on, collaborative approaches, incorporating games, real-world problem solving, and integration with thematic learning. Participation in Maths Games Days and in-school challenges supported confidence, teamwork, and engagement in mathematics.

4.2 Curriculum and Learning

The 2025 curriculum continued to reflect the Co-op's integrated and child-led approach, with increasing alignment to the Victorian Curriculum 2.0.

Student-selected themes for the year were:

- Term 1: Animals
- Term 2: Mysteries and Crimes
- Term 3: Concert – The Tempest
- Term 4: Geology (rocks, gems, volcanoes, gold panning)

These themes provided a rich context for integrated learning across all curriculum areas.

A highlight of the year was the continued development of “deep dive” intensive learning weeks. These included:

- An Archaeological Dig intensive in Term 1
- A Story Writing intensive in Term 2, led by author Kate Mildenhall
- Concert in Term 3, including a performance of The Tempest
- A “Quest” intensive in Term 4

These experiences supported authentic, cross-curricular learning and allowed students to engage deeply with topics of interest.

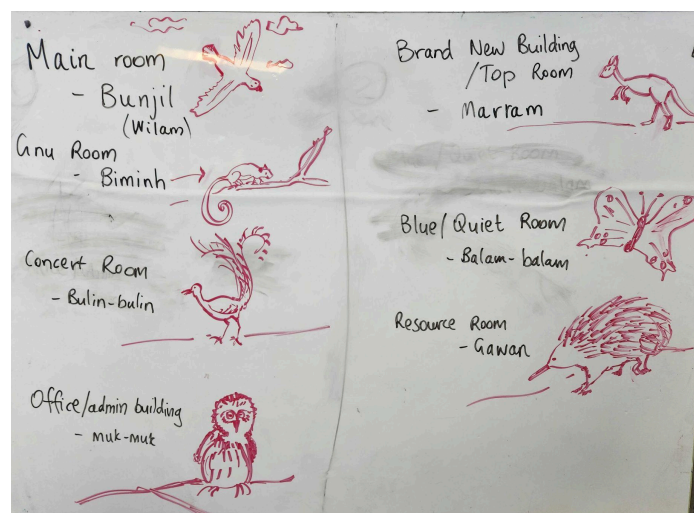
The performing arts program remained central to the curriculum, culminating in the annual concert performance of The Tempest. Students were involved in all aspects of the production, including acting, music, set and costume design.

STEM learning was enhanced through a variety of incursions and projects, including forensic science, chemistry workshops, robotics challenges, and engineering activities.

4.3 Cultural Inclusion and Reconciliation

A significant focus in 2025 was the development and implementation of the school's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

A major milestone was the RAP launch at the end of Term 2, which included student presentations, performances, and collaborative art-making. As part of this work, all school buildings and spaces were given Woi-wurrung names in consultation with the Wurundjeri community.



Students engaged in a range of cultural learning experiences throughout the year, including:

- A Welcome to Country ceremony
- Workshops and visits from Wurundjeri Elders
- Activities during Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week
- Projects exploring contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders

These experiences supported students to develop a deeper understanding of First Nations perspectives and strengthened the school's connection to Country and community.

4.4 Student Engagement and Voice

Student voice and agency continued to be central to the Co-op's approach in 2025.

Students played an active role in shaping their learning through:

- Selection of term themes
- Participation in daily meetings
- Weekly Student Council meetings

The Student Council provided a forum for students to raise ideas, plan events, and contribute to decision-making processes within the school. Students were also involved in organising activities, excursions, and community events.

Engagement was further supported through a wide range of experiential learning opportunities, including camps, excursions, deep dive weeks, and collaborative projects. These experiences fostered curiosity, independence, and a strong sense of ownership over learning.



“Including students' perspectives is not a one off or occasional activity at the Learning Co-operative. We are proud to consider the perspectives, views and decisions of students integrated into our daily practice. This is partly in our respectful relationships expected between adults and students, so that students are able to share their preferences and needs for snacks, more challenge in focus time, support with a challenge or a new idea.

Regular meetings to share ideas, stories, worries are facilitated in which students can share.

Each afternoon students are given the opportunity to propose activities they would like to facilitate or need adult support to facilitate for the afternoon. Each student then decides which of the activities they would like to join throughout the afternoon. Students may propose and then vote on preferred term based themes and; each term students share questions they would like answered or activities they would like included in their learning within the theme. Students write their own classroom agreements and are supported to hold each other and adults

accountable. Formally, students are included in planning of big theme deep dives, camps, social and community event planning, fundraising and projects. As issues or concerns are raised with the fairness of rules, collaborative problem solving is facilitated to address worries. Student council meetings are formally hosted at a minimum of twice a term in planned focus time or by request for students with a topic they would like to explore. Student council allows students to give positive shout outs; new ideas, raise concerns. Together older students and adults “triage concerns” and collaboratively discuss them to agree on proposed solutions. Students also present their discussions and seek parent input on decisions at parent meetings on behalf of the student council. Newly this year we are experimenting with “special council meetings” when a student or adult can call for a student council meeting with relevant students and adults to address an issue that remains unresolved despite exploring other avenues. In the second half of the year we will review how well this is working and if it requires adaptation. Proudly, it is the Learning Co-operative community culture and diverse representation of valued voices in our community from students, parents, teachers and support staff that engage in respectful, connected relationships with young people that provide multiple avenues for children to share their voice and participate in decision making.” - Tara (Parent/Volunteer)

4.5 Student Wellbeing

Student wellbeing remained a high priority throughout 2025, with a continued focus on creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment.

A range of wellbeing programs were delivered, including:

- Elephant Ed workshops on respectful relationships and puberty
- REACH workshops focusing on peer connection
- Greyhorse equine therapy sessions

The school also secured funding for the Mental Health in Primary Schools initiative, enabling the introduction of additional targeted wellbeing support.

Wellbeing was embedded in daily practice through regular check-ins, student meetings, and ongoing support from staff and parents. The school’s neuro-affirming approach continued to support a diverse range of learners, with access to sensory tools and individualised strategies.

Outdoor and experiential programs, including camps and activities such as Survival Day, also contributed to student wellbeing by building resilience, independence, and connection to nature.



4.6 Assessment and Reporting

In 2025, the school continued to refine its approach to assessment and reporting.

Portfolio-based assessment remained central, supported by teacher observations and ongoing feedback from parents. New approaches to assessment were trialled throughout the year, providing valuable insights into student progress and informing future improvements.

The digital Daybook continued to be used to document learning, allowing families and staff to contribute to a shared understanding of each child's development.

Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) remained a key component of the assessment process, developed collaboratively between students, families, and teachers. These plans supported personalised learning pathways and ensured that individual goals were regularly reviewed and updated.

4.7 Staff Development and Wellbeing

2025 was a year of significant professional growth and change for staff.

Professional development included:

- Science of Reading training
- Cultural competency and RAP-related training
- Trauma-informed practice

The Coordinator undertook New Principal training, strengthening leadership capacity within the school.

Staff wellbeing was prioritised through regular check-ins, performance reviews, and the inclusion of wellbeing as a standing agenda item in staff meetings. A psychological safety risk register was developed to identify and address potential stressors.

Staffing changes included maternity leave coverage, adjustments to teaching roles, and planning for upcoming transitions, including the retirement of Rod, our amazing music teacher. Preparations were also made to adjust staffing structures to support increased administrative and compliance demands.

4.8 Governance and Compliance

Significant progress was made in strengthening governance and compliance systems throughout 2025.

Key activities included:

- Completion of required reporting and compliance obligations
- Review and updating of policies and procedures
- Regular review and updates to our child safety risk register
- Review of risk assessments and standard operating procedures
- Strengthening of e-safety practices

The school also commenced preparation for upcoming VRQA and potential NCCD audits, including reviewing systems, documentation, and staff capacity.

A major focus was the development of a new Strategic Plan, with extensive consultation undertaken with staff, parents, and students to define the school's vision, values, and priorities.

4.9 Community Engagement

The community remained at the heart of the Learning Co-operative in 2025.

Key events included:

- COMAD Festival
- Wattle Festival
- Annual Concert
- Family Camp

The school strengthened its connections with the local community through performances, collaborations, and participation in local events. Partnerships with other schools and organisations were further developed, including involvement in the Boite Schools Chorus and activities at Edendale Farm.

Ongoing discussions were held within the community to ensure the Co-op remains accessible and inclusive for a diverse range of families.

4.10 Facilities and Environment

2025 saw the completion of major building works, enhancing the school's learning environment. Improvements included new learning spaces and the refurbishment of existing facilities, including the kitchen.

In 2025, the school purchased an additional bus to support the safe and efficient transport of students. This investment reflects the growth in enrolments and the increasing number of excursions, camps, and off-site learning experiences undertaken throughout the year. The new bus has strengthened our capacity to ensure appropriate supervision ratios and safe travel arrangements for all students. It also plays an important role in our emergency management planning, providing greater flexibility and preparedness for bushfire response and other evacuation scenarios.

Environmental sustainability remained a strong focus, with ongoing work in:

- Re-vegetation and biodiversity projects
- Bushcare and land management
- Partnerships with environmental organisations

The school continued to maintain high standards of safety through regular OHS checks, bushfire preparedness, and maintenance planning.

4.11 Conclusion

2025 was a year of strengthening systems, deepening learning, and building capacity for the future. The school successfully balanced its commitment to child-led, creative education with the increasing demands of compliance and accountability.

The Learning Co-operative continues to be a unique and dynamic learning community, where children are supported to develop confidence, curiosity, and a strong sense of belonging. The work undertaken in 2025 provides a strong foundation for the years ahead, particularly in preparation for upcoming audits and continued growth.

5. STUDENT LEARNING

The Learning Co-operative continued to deliver a broad and integrated curriculum in 2025, aligned with the Victorian Curriculum and embedded within student-led thematic learning. The following overview outlines how each learning area was addressed throughout the year.

5.1 English (Literacy)

Literacy remained a key focus in 2025, with an increased emphasis on structured, explicit teaching of reading and writing skills alongside rich, authentic literacy experiences.

Students engaged in a wide range of literacy activities including:

- Phonics-based reading instruction and small group literacy sessions
- Creative and narrative writing, supported by a whole-school story writing intensive led by author Kate Mildenhall
- Research and report writing linked to themes such as Animals, Mysteries/Crimes, and Geology
- Script writing and performance preparation for the annual concert (*The Tempest* by William Shakespeare)
- Oral presentations, group discussions, and student-led meetings
- Journaling, including nature journaling and camp reflections

These experiences supported the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in meaningful and engaging contexts.

5.2 Mathematics

Mathematics learning continued to focus on hands-on, collaborative, and differentiated approaches.

Students developed numeracy skills through:

- Daily Focus Time sessions targeting individual learning goals
- Maths games, problem-solving tasks, and collaborative challenges
- Participation in Maths Games Days and competitions
- Application of mathematics in real-world contexts, including budgeting, measurement, and design projects
- Integration of numeracy into thematic units and practical activities

These approaches supported both conceptual understanding and confidence in mathematics.



5.3 Science

Science learning in 2025 emphasised inquiry, experimentation, and real-world application.

Students explored scientific concepts through:

- Incursions in forensic science, chemistry, and environmental science
- Hands-on experiments and investigations
- STEM challenges including robotics and engineering projects
- Exploration of natural environments and biodiversity on the school grounds
- Thematic links such as animal studies, geological investigations, and environmental sustainability

These experiences supported the development of scientific inquiry skills and an understanding of the natural and physical world.

5.4 Humanities

Humanities learning was integrated across the year and strongly connected to student interests and thematic studies.

Key learning experiences included:

- Archaeological Dig intensive exploring history and ancient cultures
- Excursions such as Melbourne Gaol and cultural visits to support historical understanding
- Exploration of civics and citizenship through daily democratic processes and Student Council
- Geography and environmental studies linked to sustainability and land management
- Inquiry into social systems, communities, and ethical decision-making

Students developed an understanding of their place in the world through active participation and inquiry-based learning.



Archaeological Dig

We dug in a pit, and we found pieces of a map. We found coins and old rabbit traps and pick axes and an old tin of tobacco. After we had dug up all the old things we made a museum of all the things we had found.

I loved the digging and finding the old coins.

- Wolfe (Student)

5.5 The Arts

The Arts remained a central and vibrant part of the Co-op curriculum. The Arts program supported creativity, collaboration, and self-expression across all age groups.

Performing Arts

- Whole-school concert featuring *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
- Student involvement in acting, music, dance, costume, and set design
- Participation in music ensembles, singing, and community performances



Concert

I really loved being part of the pizza party play. I was very excited but nervous at the same time

-Kiora (Student)

The Tempest was really fun because we were practising for months and finally got to perform it. I was nervous at the start, but it was exciting, amazing and so wonderful to be on stage

- Anaina (Student)

“As a parent volunteer and the parent of a Grade 5 “biggie,” one of my favourite contributions this year was helping choreograph and support the students in creating a Bollywood dance performance for the school concert. Inspired by Shakespeare’s The Tempest, the performance explored a monsoon theme, drawing on the rich tradition of Bollywood rain songs. It was wonderful to see students from almost every cohort participate, with the children also designing and decorating many of the props themselves. The performance became a joyful celebration of creativity, collaboration, and community spirit. “

- Omi (Parent/Volunteer)

Visual Arts

- Exploration of a wide range of materials and techniques
- Student-led creative projects and collaborative artworks
- Integration of art into thematic learning and cultural projects



“In the final week of 2025, our students were provided with the opportunity to participate in a whole school multi-media art show, showcasing their favourite work from across the year.

Pieces on show included paintings and drawings, graphic design/layout, photographs, pottery, textiles, fashion design, film and performances.

Our proud kids showed their community through the exhibition, chatted about their own and others’ artworks, produced a fashion show, multiple musical performances and enjoyed a premier screening of their films. It was a fantastic culmination of all the Arts teaching and learning across the year. “

- Jen (teacher)

5.6 Languages

Language learning continued through both formal and informal experiences.

Students engaged in:

- Italian language learning through songs, games, and performance
- Exposure to Aboriginal language through Woi-wurrung words and cultural learning
- Integration of language into music, storytelling, and cultural activities

The annual concert and cultural programs provided authentic contexts for language use.

5.7 Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education focused on developing physical skills, resilience, wellbeing, and personal and social capabilities.

Key activities included:

- Swimming and gymnastics programs
- Sports activities including soccer, basketball, and athletics
- Outdoor and adventure experiences such as camps and survival activities
- Wellbeing programs including Elephant Ed, REACH, and equine therapy
- Daily opportunities for movement, play, and teamwork



5.8 Technologies

Technology learning provided opportunities for students to design, create, and problem-solve.

Students engaged in:

- Robotics and coding activities
- Design and construction projects
- Use of digital tools for research and presentation
- Creative technologies such as filmmaking and design
- Practical projects involving tools, materials, and sustainability concepts

These activities supported both digital and design thinking skills.

5.9 Personal and Social Capability

This capability was embedded across all aspects of school life.

Students developed skills in:

- Communication, collaboration, and teamwork
- Emotional regulation and conflict resolution
- Leadership through Student Council and group activities
- Responsibility and independence through camps and daily routines

The school's strong focus on community and relationships provided a foundation for social and emotional development.

5.10 Ethical and Intercultural Capability

Students explored ethical and intercultural understanding through:

- Engagement with First Nations perspectives and RAP initiatives
- Participation in cultural celebrations and community events
- Discussions around fairness, inclusion, and social responsibility
- Exploration of diverse perspectives through curriculum themes

These experiences supported the development of respectful, informed, and socially aware learners.



5.11 Camps

Camping in tents and school sleepovers continue to be a much-loved and integral part of Co-op life. The journey begins with sleepovers at school and gradually builds towards increasing independence, culminating in the Biggies' Touring Camp. By this stage, students are confidently planning menus, shopping, cooking, setting up camp, and supporting one another away from home.

Camps provide rich opportunities for experiential learning, with a strong focus on independence, teamwork, and connection to the natural environment. Across the year, students engaged in bushwalking, flora and fauna observation, journal writing, drawing, music-making, and reflective discussions, alongside plenty of time for play, exploration, and social connection.

Family Camp – Cape Paterson

Family Camp remains one of the most anticipated events of the year and a cornerstone of the Co-op community. Held at the start of the year in Cape Paterson, the camp brings together new and existing families, staff, and the extended community for a weekend of connection and shared experience.

The 2025 camp was filled with swimming, beach exploration, group games, and creative activities. The communal chai tent once again became a central gathering space, where families came together each afternoon ahead of shared meals. Children enjoyed the freedom of the open campsite, engaging in imaginative play, group challenges, and endless games that fostered strong peer connections. Family Camp continues to play an important role in building relationships, welcoming new families, and strengthening the sense of belonging within the Co-op community.

Middlies and Biggies Camp - Wilsons Prom

The combined Middlies and Biggies camp provided an opportunity for students to further develop their camping skills, resilience, and independence. A key feature of this camp is peer mentoring, with older students supporting younger students in practical tasks such as setting up tents, cooking, and organising shared spaces.

Students participated in a range of outdoor activities, including bushwalking, group games, and environmental exploration. These shared experiences support the development of leadership, teamwork, and deeper social connections across age groups.



Writing Camp - Mornington Peninsula

Writing Camp continued to be a highlight of the year, providing biggies with an immersive environment to explore different forms of writing. Surrounded by natural landscapes, students engaged in descriptive writing, poetry, journaling, and storytelling.

The camp built on the in-school writing intensive led by author Kate Mildenhall, allowing students to extend their ideas and develop their writing in a focused and inspiring setting. The combination of outdoor experiences and creative expression supported both literacy development and student wellbeing.

Middlies Camp - Bear Gully



Middlies Camp provided a dedicated opportunity for this group to bond, build confidence, and practise their developing camp skills. Preparation prior to camp, including practising tent setup and organisation, supported students to feel capable and independent.

During the camp, students explored the local environment, engaged in group activities, and participated in reflective and creative tasks such as journaling and storytelling. The experience strengthened friendships and supported the transition towards greater independence in later camps.

Biggies Touring Camp

The Biggies' Touring Camp is the culmination of the Co-op camping program. In 2025, students participated in an adventure-based camp, further extending their independence and resilience.

Students were actively involved in all aspects of camp organisation and daily living, including planning, cooking, and group decision-making. The program included a range of outdoor and adventure activities such as bushwalking and challenge-based experiences, designed to build confidence, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.



Touring Camp continues to be a significant milestone for students, supporting key outcomes across Health and Physical Education, Personal and Social Capability, and Geography, while providing lasting memories and a strong sense of achievement.

Overall Impact

The camping program remains a defining feature of the Learning Co-operative experience. Across all age groups, camps support:

- Independence and self-reliance
- Social connection and community building
- Environmental awareness and connection to place
- Resilience, confidence, and problem-solving

These experiences are highly valued by students, families, and staff, and play a central role in the holistic development of each child

6. STAFF PROFILE

In 2025, the Learning Co-operative Primary School maintained a small, highly collaborative staffing structure that supports its personalised, multi-age learning model.

The teaching team comprised approximately **4.1 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) teaching staff**, including a full-time coordinator/teacher, classroom teachers supporting the Littlies, Middlies and Biggies learning groups, and specialist teachers in music/Italian and visual arts. This was supported by approximately **1.2 FTE Education Support staff** and **0.9 FTE administration and maintenance staff**, ensuring a high level of supervision, care, and targeted educational support for all students.

With enrolments of approximately 30–35 students, this staffing structure supports a low student-to-teacher ratio and enables a highly individualised approach to learning.

All teaching staff are appropriately qualified and registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The collective expertise of the team spans a broad range of disciplines, including literacy, science, the arts, and alternative education, enabling the delivery of a rich and responsive curriculum tailored to individual student needs.

Professional learning remained a key focus in 2025. Staff engaged in targeted development aligned with school priorities, including:

- evidence-based literacy instruction (Science of Reading approaches)
- cultural competency and learning linked to the school's Reconciliation Action Plan
- trauma-informed and neuro-affirming practices

The school also supported leadership development, with the coordinator undertaking principal training to strengthen governance and instructional leadership capacity.

Staffing structures were reviewed throughout the year to ensure sustainability and responsiveness to increasing enrolments and operational requirements. This included adjustments to roles and forward planning for staffing changes, including specialist teaching areas and increased administrative demands.

The Learning Co-operative's model is further strengthened by the active involvement of parents, who contribute regularly to the learning program. This unique approach enhances the adult-to-student ratio and provides students with access to a diverse range of skills, experiences, and perspectives.

Overall, the 2025 staffing profile reflects a stable, skilled, and committed team, supported by a strong community, working collaboratively to deliver a high-quality, child-centred education.

7. STUDENT ENROLMENT DATA

The Learning Co-operative is a small school of around 25-35 students on average, the enrolments were **31** in the 2025 school year. The school aims for enrolments between 30 - 35 students to ensure that we can maintain the special character of our community.

7.1 Enrolment Profile

In 2025, the school had a total of 31 students full-time enrolled (see Table below) - 2 students were in India for 3 terms so did not count in the census. The gender mix consisted of 13 boys (42%) and 18 girls (58%). 25% of the students had a language background other than English. We have had sustained enrolments in the younger half of the school over the last few years.

Table: 2025 Enrolment Profile

	Prep	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Female students	1	5	3	1	3	5	0	18
Male students	2	1	2	2	5	1	0	14
Indigenous students	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	6	5	3	8	6	0	31

Enrolment levels are currently within our target zone; we had 4 new enrolments at the Prep level in 2025. We expect the numbers to remain steady over the next few years due to solid enrolments across the younger levels of the school and we have a strong waiting list of 6 preps in 2026.

We anticipate that enrolments will remain steady into the future, due to strategies put in place to increase awareness of the Learning Co-operative's programs and approaches and to better explain the nature of the school to potential families.

7.2 Socio-economic background

In 2025 the three-year average DMI score for the school was 88. The school had a CTC score of 88.

8. STUDENT ATTENDANCE DATA

The report below was generated using attendance data from the start of term 1 to the end of term 4 2025.

Absences are all communicated to the Coordinator / Teachers directly via Slack. The school is able to address any long-term absence of a child through the community network. In 2025 we had some families exposing their children to other worthy educational experiences such as travel and outings. Attendance in 2025 saw improvements in all year groups except prep.

	Semester 1 &2 2024	Semester 1 &2 2025
Prep average attendance	89.84%	80.67%
Year 1 average attendance	82.52%	90.33%
Year 2 average attendance	88.75%	89%
Year 3 average attendance	87.11%	90.33%
Year 4 average attendance	90.66%	91.71%
Year 5 average attendance	N/A	90.5%
Year 6 average attendance	90.97%	N/A
Average student attendance rate (inc. preps)	88%	88.76%
Average student attendance rate (not inc preps)	88%	90.38%
Proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time	50%	60.6%

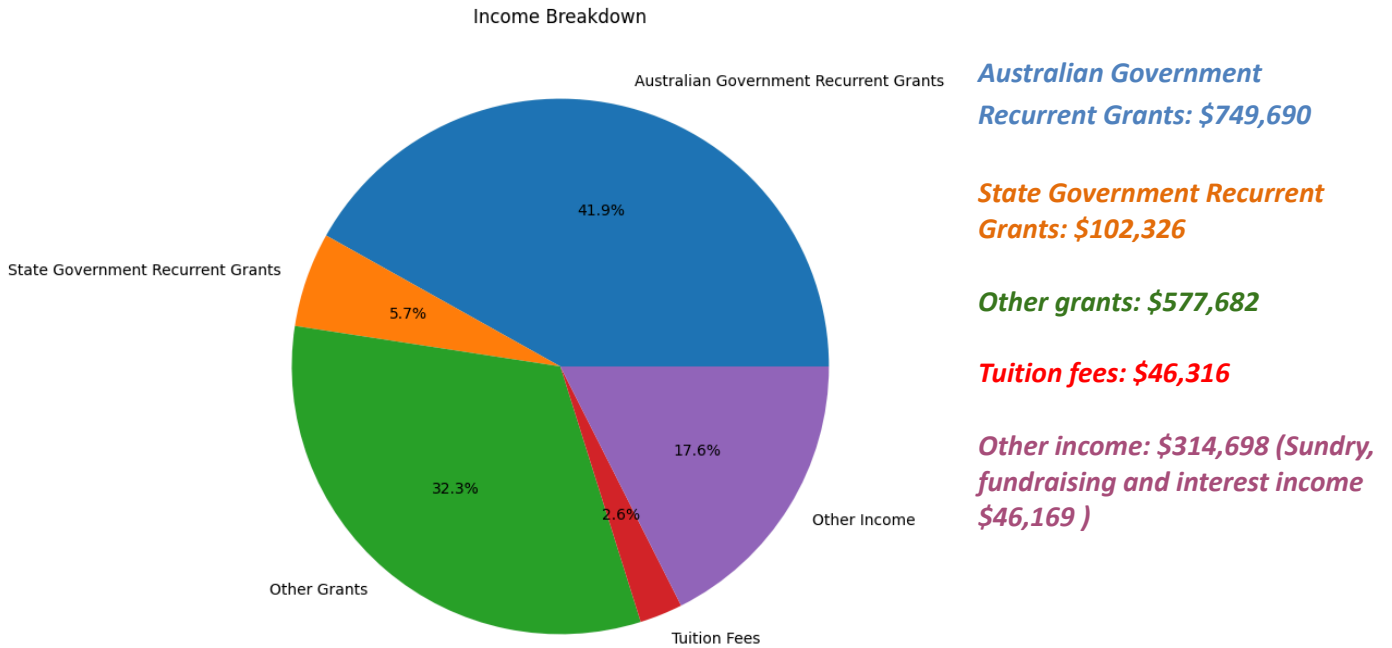
9. PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT SATISFACTION

The Co-op is committed to working together to the benefit and satisfaction of the students, parents and teachers.

The school operates as a consensus-based Co-operative involving parents, teachers and students. Decisions regarding all aspects of the Learning Co-operative's activities are made at fortnightly adult meetings attended by all staff and parents. Students also have the opportunity to express their views and opinions at meetings held daily; these meetings are attended by all students and staff as well as those parents who are at the school on the day. These discussions provide a forum for philosophical debate and an opportunity to discuss the challenges and milestones occurring for individual children, families and staff.

10. FINANCIAL COMMENTARY

10.1 Income



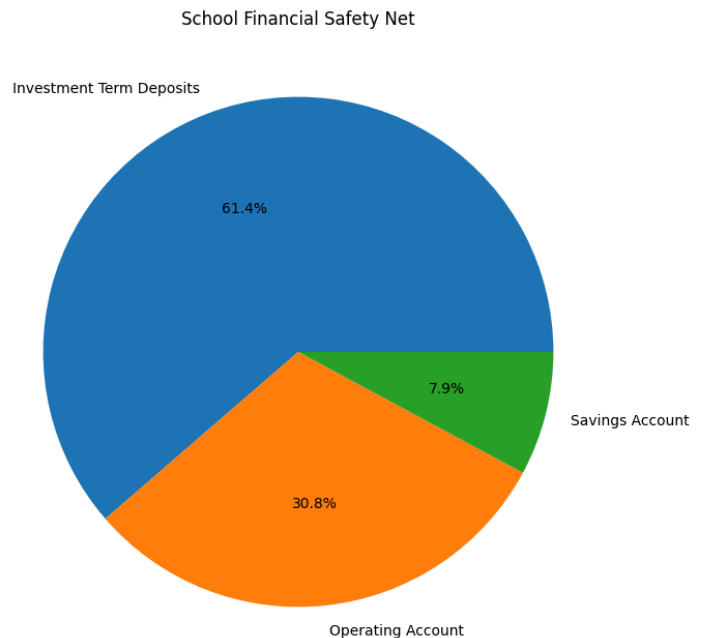
10.2 Savings and term deposits

The school has a solid financial safety net. The Investment Term deposits at 31.12.24 were \$287,027.

The year-end balance of the school's operating account at 31.12.2025 was \$144,013 .

The year-end balance of the school's savings account which consists of revenue from the school fees and fundraising was \$36,777.

The school maintains two debit card accounts which are used for small purchases and are kept at an approximate \$1500 balance.

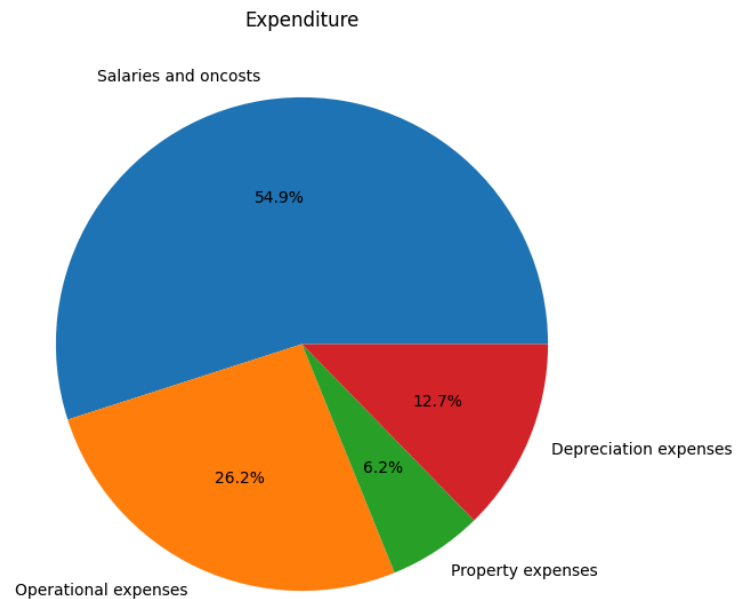


10.3 Expenditure

The expenditure consisted of:

- **Salaries and oncosts: \$544,474**
- **Operational expenses: \$259,564**
- **Property expenses: \$61,312**
- **Depreciation expenses: \$125,522**

The school continues to maintain a low-fee structure, to enable maximum access. There are social justice procedures around fee payments to support families on Health Care Cards, when multiple children are enrolled and during times of Financial Hardship. In 2025 the school continued to provide free child-minding for all families to assist with the demands of evening meetings.



10.4 School Improvements

- 2025 marks the completion of a number of major projects to improve facilities across the school: The school continued capital works funded by a grant from the Victorian Block Grant Authority. The project included refurbishment and upgrade of the existing facilities (the office, amenities, kitchen and kiln area), and the construction of a new multi-purpose building to increase storage and a dedicated space for quiet work and meetings.
- Upgrade of water storage facilities.
- Landscaping work including the construction of a thriving kitchen garden consisting of six large wicking beds, a new pollinator garden bed and the construction of a new chicken run.
- Construction of a fenced revegetation zone funded by a grant from the Land Management Incentive Program, Nillumbik Shire Council.
- Purchase of a third bus to accommodate the growing student numbers.

11. FUTURE FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

11.1 Professional Development

Budget for ongoing professional Development for staff and parents responsible for:

- *Occupational Health and Safety*
- *Human Resources*
- *Financial management/ Governance*
- *Education*
- *Student welfare*

11.2 Solar Energy

We will review grant opportunities to extend the current system.

11.3 Welfare fund

We have introduced a Financial Hardship Discount, a family experiencing financial hardship is entitled to a discount of up to 75% of the full fee rate for each child.

11.4 Facilities Upgrade

Strategies/ideas for the future include:

- *The car park area to be planted with trees for future shading.*
- *Landscaping of the grounds following building work*
- *Upgrading sport facilities*

12. GOALS, TARGETS AND KEY IMPROVEMENT AREAS

Please refer to Appendix 1 for information regarding forward planning, goals, and targets.

Our comprehensive professional development program is supported by 1% of our annual school budget and has strong links to the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework.

APPENDIX 1 - Learning Co-operative Business Plan 2025-2029

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Learning Co-operative Business Plan 2025-2029

The purpose of this document is to set out the assumptions regarding the resourcing strategies of Learning Cooperative over a five-year period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2030. The document is a key component in ensuring the school remains well-managed, sustainable, and financially viable. The Business Plan is derived from principles and organisational values of the cooperative, it is holistic and takes a high-level perspective of the key drivers underpinning the entire operation of school. To achieve this, key elements of the business plan include:

- A statement of Learning Cooperative's philosophy, mission and values as they relate to the funding and resourcing of the school.
- Key drivers and variables underpinning the business for the duration of the plan, namely an estimate of student numbers, estimate of Direct measure of Income (DMI) and Capacity to Contribute (CTC) for calculating base recurrent funding, and the assumptions underlying these forecasts.
- A statement of the school's goals and priorities for the duration of the plan, and the implementation and monitoring of these goals.
- Five-year financial forecast prepared and validated by an independent accountant.

Information from the business plan and the financial forecast inform the Strategic Plan and School Improvement plan for the same period.

Vision and Mission Statement

Mission Statement: The Learning Co-operative is committed to providing a nurturing and inclusive learning environment that fosters creativity, individuality, and a love of learning. We empower our students to take an active role in their personal development and education, while promoting principles of consensus, respect, and equality.

Vision Statement: Our vision at the Learning Co-operative is to create a community where children can explore their natural curiosity, wonder, and individuality in a safe, supportive environment. We aspire to be a place where diversity is celebrated, and values of tolerance, respect, and compassion are upheld. By fostering a love of learning, we aim to equip our students with the skills and values they need to create a better world.

Key drivers underpinning the business and assumptions underlying the forecast

Student numbers

To maintain the special character of our community, enrolments are capped at 35 full-time students. The school does not accept part-time enrolments. There has been a steady increase in enrolment in the last five years. In 2021 the school launched several successful campaigns to increase awareness of the school. This included a calendar of regular Open Days and community events, a weekly playgroup, marketing through social media and lowering student-teacher ratio to deliver an individualised curriculum.

Table 1: Enrolments: 2019 - 2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Prep	3	4	10	3	4	5
Year 1	7	2	4	9	4	4
Year 2	2	7	4	4	9	4
Year 3	3	1	5	1	7	8
Year 4	1	3	1	4	0	6
Year 5	2	2	2	0	4	0
Year 6	5	2	3	2	0	5
Total	23	21	29	23	28	32

We anticipate the student number to remain steady at a maximum of 35 over the next five years. This is based on the following assumptions:

1. Regional competition for enrolments
2. Wait list
3. Wide catchment area
4. Low Teacher-student ratio
5. Marketing and advertising strategies

Table 2: Projected Enrolments: 2025 - 2029

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Prep	3	2	2	4	4
Year 1	6	3	6	4	4
Year 2	5	6	3	6	4
Year 3	4	5	6	3	6
Year 4	9	4	5	6	3
Year 5	6	9	4	5	6
Year 6	0	6	9	4	5
Total	33	35	35	32	32

Regional competition for enrolments

There are numerous government and independent primary schools in the Shire of Nillumbik, however, Learning Cooperative is the only registered democratic primary school in the shire of Nillumbik, and offers the only option in the region for families who seek a democratic education for their children and who wish to have a hands-on involvement in the day-to-day education of their child/children.

Table 3: Schools in the shire of Nillumbik

Primary schools in the Shire of Nillumbik	
Government	25 (27 campuses)
Independent	3
Catholic	4

Wait list

The waitlist includes new families and younger siblings of current students who are guaranteed a place at the school.

Table 4: Number of students on the waitlist

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Waitlist	3	7	2	N/A	N/A

Wide catchment area

Learning Cooperative offers a unique opportunity to families who wish to have a hands-on involvement in the day-to-day education of their child/children. Because of its unique approach to education, the school attracts families from a wide area being its immediate catchment. The school is also situated close to the growth corridor in the City of Whittlesea and has had a steady increase in the number of enrolments from this area. Given the home addresses of the historical enrolment and the projected population growth in the City of Whittlesea, we predict that future enrolments will come from Whittlesea, Nillumbik and Banyule.

Table 5: Localities of historical enrolments

Municipality	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Whittlesea	3	4	7	10	8	10
Nillumbik	9	7	13	10	7	14
Banyule	4	4	7	12	11	10
Murrindindi	2	1	1	1	0	0
Hume	0	1	2	2	2	0
Brimbank	0	1	1	0	0	0
Darebin	1	0	0	0	0	0

Low Teacher-student ratio

The school tailors learning to the needs of individual students using Individual learning Plans (ILPs). To implement this approach to teaching, and also in response to the growing number of students in the past five years, the number of paid staff has increased from 2 full time teachers in 2019 teachers to 3.2 in 2024.

Table 6: Teacher-Student ratio

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Teacher	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.4	3.2
Student/teacher ratio: Learning Cooperative	10.00	10.50	11.47	10.45	11.6	10
Student/teacher ratio: other schools CtC 75 to 89	11.67	11.59	12.52	10.76	N/A	N/A

In 2024 Learning Cooperative employed 1.4 education support staff. The school also offered one/one weekly tutoring to all grade 6 students.

Table 7: Education support-Student ratio

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Education Support	0	0	0	0.8	0.8	1.4

The school plans to maintain a teacher/student ratio of less than 7 for the period of this plan. The ratio is illustrated in Table 8, although the exact figures will vary depending on the student year level.

Table 8: Education Support/Teacher-Student ratio

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Teacher+ES	4.98	6	5.5	4.8	4.8
Student/teacher ratio: Learning Cooperative	6.6	6.5	6.72	6.6	6.6

Learning Cooperative uses parent volunteers. These volunteers are not being included in staff/student ratio calculations in this document. They are in addition to the numbers in tables 6-8.

Marketing and advertising

We actively promote the school within the local community and beyond. The school has a regular calendar of Open Days, hosts a weekly play group and holds festivals which are open to the broader school community and extended families. The school has a strong performing arts curriculum, and the students perform at community events and celebrations. These events are advertised through the school's website and Facebook.

Recurrent funding

Learning Cooperative receives funding from the state Department of Education and Training and Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills, and Employment.

Table 9: Recurrent income

Source: ISV Financial Benchmarking Report (2022, 2023) and ISV Funding Calculator

Recurrent income		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Australian Government Recurrent Grants	% of total revenue	72.9%	78.0%	73.9%	77.7%	Data not available	Data not available
	\$per student	\$13,089	\$16,371	\$15,241	\$20,223	\$18,827	
	Total	257,477	\$343,785	\$426,745	\$465,137	\$527,151.58	\$722,947.38
Victorian Government Recurrent Grants	% of total revenue	18.2%	16.6%	18.9%	16.5%	Data not available	Data not available
	\$per student	\$3,935	\$3,473	\$3,891	\$4,297	\$3,423	
	Total	86,565	\$72,934	\$108,954	\$98,824	\$93,272.82	\$112,248.15

Recurrent government funding forecast

Table10: Recurrent income forecast
Source: 2025 ISV Funding Calculator

Recurrent income	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Australian Government Recurrent Grants	\$744,947.38	\$768,052.40	\$793,397.14	\$819,590.45	\$844,186.48
Victorian Government Recurrent Grants	\$115,892.36	\$118,651.12	\$121,478.85	\$124,377.28	\$127,348.16
Targeted Funding	\$2,770.00	\$790	\$810	\$830	\$850
Total	\$863,609.74	\$887,493.52	\$915,685.99	\$944,797.72	\$972,384.64

Direct Measure of Income (DMI) and Capacity to Contribute (CTC) scores

The amount of base recurrent funding is determined by the school's Capacity to Contribute (CTC) score. CTC is a measure of the capacity of the parents and carers of students at the school to contribute financially to the operating costs of the school, relative to the capacity at other non-government schools. CTC scores are determined using the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) methodology. The DMI refers to the median family income of a school's students for a given year, determined by linking parent / carer names and addresses with income tax data. The median family income is subsequently converted into an annual DMI score. A school's CTC score is the average of the DMI scores for the previous three years.

Historically, the Learning Cooperative has had a low CTC score, and we anticipate the continuation of this trend into the future. We expect that the school's CtC score will remain below 93 for the foreseeable future, meaning that the school will continue to receive the maximum level of Commonwealth base recurrent funding. Learning Cooperative is committed to the principle of equitable access to education. We firmly believe that a family's socio-economic status should not pose a barrier to enrolment at the school. The school has a low fee structure, families can access payment plans and discounted fees are offered to families with a Health Care Card. These provisions have made the school accessible to many low-income families.

Table 11: Individual-year DMI scores

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
88	88	81	89	87	91	87

Table 12: CTC scores

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
CTC score	88	86	86	86	88	88
individual-year DMI scores	2018-2019	2018-2020	2019-2021	2020-2022	2021-2023	2022-2024

Loadings

The loadings are funding provided in addition to the base funding to help meet extra costs associated with educating students with disadvantage and to consider individual school circumstances. The combination of base funding and loadings makes up the total recurrent funding entitlement for the school. Loadings are fully funded and are not reduced by a school’s Capacity to Contribute score. There are six categories of loadings, schools can attract more than one loading:

1. Student with disability
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
3. Socio-educational disadvantage
4. Low-English proficiency
5. School size
6. School location

Table 12 offers a snapshot of NCCD funding for 2020-2024. Based on the profile of the students on the wait list we anticipate that 2022 NCCD entitlements may be applied to 2025-2029.

NCCD funding

Table 13: NCCD funding

	2019 Data not available	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
QDTP		2	2	3	3	1
Supplementary		2	8	2	3	2
Substantial		0	2	2	5	5
Extensive		0	0	2	0	3
Total		9,867.48	75,981.72	125,220	111,690	237,247.50

Fees

Table14:Fees

Source: ISV Financial Benchmarking Report (2022,2023) and audited financial reports

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
School fees as a % of total recurrent income	6.2%	2.6%	5.9%	5.5%	5.9%	Data not available
Total	\$25,494	\$11,369	\$34,302	\$32,884	\$37,316	

School fees are increased by 2% at the beginning of each term. Fees in 2025 are \$367 per child/per term. Sibling fee discount of 10% applies to the second child and 50% discount to third and subsequent children that are attending co-currently. There is also an additional Camps and Excursion fee of \$150 per child/per year for full fee-paying families. Low Income/Health Care card holder concession fee is \$270 per child/per term. Health care card holders do not need to pay the additional Camps and Excursion fee. In 2025 Low Income/Health Care card holders receive a \$400 credit School Saving Bonus for eligible activities.

Parent-volunteer input

In addition to the paid staff, on any given day there are two parent-volunteers present on site who enrich and complement the curriculum. All adults attending the school (at any capacity) are required to provide a current Working with Children Check. As a parent run cooperative, parents make a significant contribution across a range of areas such as structured activities with the students, administration, cleaning and maintenance. This has enabled the school to keep the operational cost to a minimum and to be in a position to maintain low fees and to maintain a high student-teacher ratio. Parents' voluntary input calculated at \$40 per hour equals approximately \$ 46,800 over four terms. This figure does not consider time spent on excursions, cleaning, meetings, working bees, fund raising events.

Other Private income (OPI)

Table15: Other private income 15

Source: ISV Financial Benchmarking Report (2022,2023)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
OPI as a % of total recurrent income	2.7%	2.9%	1.3%	0.2%	1.4%	Data not available

A statement of goals, implementation monitoring strategies

Goals	Implementation
Continue to provide a small, extended family experience to the students and their families, where parents can take a direct and relevant role in all aspects of their child's education and the operation of the school.	Capping enrolments at 35 except for the siblings of current students,
To offer Small, multi-age groups to enable learning experiences that are individually tailored.	Maintaining a high teacher-student ratio.
To offer an extensive bush camping, music, and the creative arts program.	Integrate into different areas of the curriculum, budget allocation and external funding.
Construction of a combined woodwork workshop and bus shelter.	Apply for VISBGA funding
Improving biodiversity and revegetation.	Apply for partnership grants
A third school bus.	School savings
Landscaping of the area around the main buildings.	School's savings
Improve shading around the main buildings, over the basketball court.	Apply for grants

Implementation will be monitored through:

- Annual cycles of careful budgeting and midyear budget review.
- Monthly review of financial reports.
- Monitoring the net operating margin.
- Maintaining a minimum balance of \$100,000 in term deposit for contingencies and maintenance.
- A regular calendar of fundraising events.

Table 16: net operating margin forecast

Net Operating Margin	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	8.8%	Data not available	7.8%	3.8%	8.3%	

Risk and financial sensitivities

The main risk factor is our over-reliance on recurrent funding. We have limited private income due our low fee structure and deliberate small school size, both are unlikely to change.

The above risks are mitigated by:

- The school has no debts/liabilities.
- Value of parents' involvement in the operation of the school as a significant factor in maintaining the school's financial viability. Parents' voluntary input calculated at \$40 per hour equals approximately \$ 46,800 over four terms. This figure does not consider time spent on excursions, cleaning, meetings, working bees, fund raising events.

Review of the business Plan

The business is developed by the Finance Officer and endorsed by the Finance Sub-committee and the parent body. It will be reviewed once every five years.