

# Merri Creek Primary School

## 3110

2007 Annual Report to the  
School Community

## School Overview

Merri Creek Primary School, established in 1891, is located on the banks of the Merri Creek, in inner urban North Fitzroy, and is on the boundary of three local governments – the Cities of Yarra, Moreland and Darebin. It is easily accessible by our 281 students who walk, ride, use public transport or travel by car.

The school is identified in the community by its beautifully shady elm trees, and an attractive and practical playground. Playground improvements continued in 2007 with the installation of \$34,000 of playground equipment funded under the Commonwealth government's *Investing in Our Schools Project* and the installation of a larger and more permanent vegetable garden. Artist Robert Tickner, in collaboration with students, families and staff completed the *Mapping the Merri* ceramic tile project on Miller Street. The Year 6 students presented the ninth wonderful farewell mural to the school, which was added to the collection in the playground. The biannual school musical, in 2007, *The Journey Home*, performed at Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, as always included every child in the school and was an outstanding success. The external windows and fascias of the double storey brick building were painted and computers upgraded through a leasing arrangement and after three years of work the school was accredited as a sustainable school in our teaching and lifestyle practices.

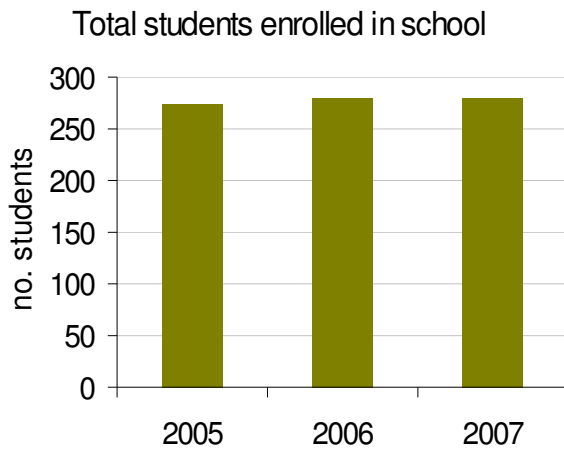
The school has a School Family Occupation (SFO) density of 0.2 and has as its goals in the School Charter to:

- ensure all students are challenged to improve their writing and spelling outcomes.
- enhance student well being, social competence and resilience including the development of students' PE/sport skills and personal fitness.
- ensure that each year an appropriate transition process is in place for year six students moving to secondary school and
- ensure smooth transition for students from one class to the next at the start of each year.

In 2007 our students were placed in twelve classes in three Prep/one classes, a Year 2, 1/2 and 2/3 composites, three 3/4 composites and three 5/6 composites. The school provides a comprehensive curriculum in the three strands of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards – Physical, Personal and Social Learning; Discipline-Based Learning and Interdisciplinary Learning. Teachers plan together in their teaching and learning teams, with a strong emphasis on English and Maths, The Arts and Physical Education. Specialist classes in LOTE Italian, classroom Music, Choir, Library and Visual Art are provided for all students. Student artistic performances are a highlight of the program and include weekly performances at assembly, Out of Hours instrumental music lessons and in 2007 an annual school musical *The Journey Home*. An experienced teacher provides literacy and numeracy support for Year one, 3, 4, 5 and 6 students with special learning needs. Information and Communication Technologies are well resourced to support and enhance student-learning outcomes with computers accessible in all classrooms, the library, Out of School Hours Care program and staffroom. Ninety students have access to a nationally accredited Out of School Hours Care program each afternoon and there is a thirty place Before School Care program.

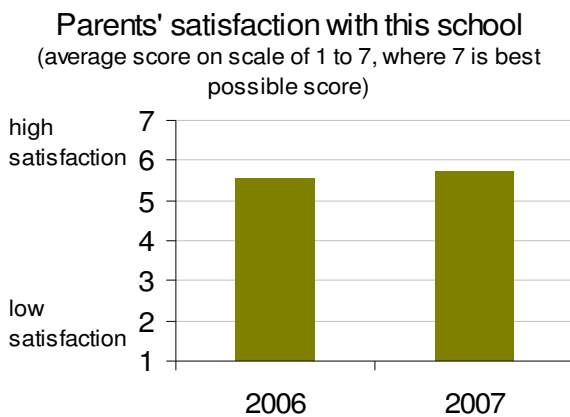
We have a wonderful community of families who work for the benefit of the students, improving school programs, the physical environment and facilities. The high level of parent involvement in the school is greatly valued and encouraged. Our annual school fete in March is both a cultural event and a major fundraiser, the planning for which starts twelve months prior.

**Student Enrolments**



The school remains a popular choice within the local community. Our 2007 enrolment of 281 students was slightly more than our enrolment ceiling of 275. This ceiling is based on a Department of Education formula of one classroom for every 25 students, the varied and small sizes of our classrooms and the playground space constraints. In 2007 we continued to limit our Prep intake, accepting 43 students. Our enrolment in the twelve classes must continue to be managed in the future to ensure our excellent class sizes are maintained. The gender balance throughout the school was almost even, with 140 boys and 141 girls and in Prep 19 boys and 24 girls. 2005 enrolments were 275 and 2006 were 280.

**Parent Satisfaction**



In a survey parents are asked to what extent they agree with the statement "Overall, I am satisfied with the education my child receives from their school." The survey changed in 2006 and is not comparable to the pre-2006 survey.

The average score for parent satisfaction with the school is 5.72, an improvement on the 2006 score of 5.56. The Parent Opinion Survey was completed by 69% of the families who received a survey in 2007 as compared with 85.4% completion rate in 2006.

**Teacher Satisfaction** - The average score for teacher satisfaction (morale) at this school was 76.6 on a scale from 0 to 100 where 100 is the best possible score.

**Teacher Absence** - The average number of days absent per teacher for the 2007 school year was 5.91 days.

**Teacher Retention** - Of the 21 teaching staff at Merri Creek Primary School at June 2006 (including those on leave without pay), 19 or 90% were still at the school at June 2007. This figure across all Government schools was 86%.

**Teacher participation in professional learning** – All teaching staff participated in professional development throughout the year aimed to support improved student outcomes and the individual development of the teachers. This included whole school professional development throughout the year with educator Kathy Walker on the Developmental Curriculum, visiting Spensley Street and Princes Hill Primary Schools; teachers working together

to write a school based English curriculum; participating in PD offered by teachers in our network of nine schools; and two graduate teachers participating in an induction and mentoring program.

**Teacher Qualifications** –All teachers in Victorian Government schools are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The requirements for registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching can be found at [http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/content.asp?Document\\_ID=241](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/content.asp?Document_ID=241).

## Principal's Report

2007 was another successful year at Merri Creek Primary, for students, teachers and families. The year began with our wonderfully enjoyable and financially rewarding fete, the three/four camp to Sunnystones near Bacchus Marsh and the five/six camp to Beechworth.

All classroom teachers are commended for their commitment to providing the mandated time for Physical Education through the platoon teaching system. The benefits of this are evident in the students' skill acquisition and inter school sport results. We introduced the Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) in Maths for Year 2-6 students to give us more information about student strengths and weaknesses in Maths and to validate teacher judgements in Maths. Teachers also reviewed the Assessment Schedule. As a result of two years of professional development on child development and the developmental curriculum all teaching teams committed to a more student centred teaching program, with teams providing students with investigations or personal learning opportunities.

The many satisfying achievements of 2007, included the lunchtime activities offered by teachers and parents such as chess club, music making, rock bands, open library, card making, knitting; Grade 6 graduation; the worthwhile buddy program; excellent sports results at inter school sport; the 5/6 leadership program; installation of speedier computers and an improved network system; maintenance of an attractive physical environment and the wonderful professional development opportunity for teachers to further improve student engagement.

Parents, family members and staff continued to work together throughout the year to enhance learning opportunities for students, improve the school environment and assist in the financial and general governance of the school. Students also engaged in activities to maintain and improve the school environment. I thank all members of the school community for their efforts in supporting our students in their education.

Dionne Wright  
Principal

## School Council President's Report

What a wonderful year 2007 was for the Merri creek School Community. We should be very proud of our achievements and successes. The school grounds are looking fabulous (even with water restrictions) and the new play equipment and artificially grassed areas being utilised and enjoyed. The corridors are filled with beautiful and vibrant work that is not only enjoyed by the immediate school community but also members of the public. There were many admiring comments by members of the public when they came to the school to vote in the Federal election. The bike sheds are overflowing. Riding bikes and walking to school is not only providing health and social benefits for the children but also alleviating some of the school's ongoing traffic problems. Most of all we should be proud of the children who have grown not only in height but socially, in their abilities, independence and confidence.

The School Council, its four sub-committees (Finance, Education, Environment and Out of School Hours Care) and the Parents Association provide a means by which the school community, both parents and staff, can have input into on-going development of the school.

The School Council in 2007 as well as fulfilling all the mandatory requirements (especially in regards to the financial operation of the school) has raised ideas, discussed issues, reviewed policies, pondered statistics and ratified motions. Much of the above has been raised from either the sub-committees or from direct discussions with the school population. Participation from all the school community is encouraged and welcomed.

In my view the School Council Code of Practice in the Merri Creek Primary School Charter for 2005-2007 has been met.

I have much gratitude and admiration for the hard work, skill and dedication that Dionne and all the teachers and staff direct towards the school. We are very fortunate.

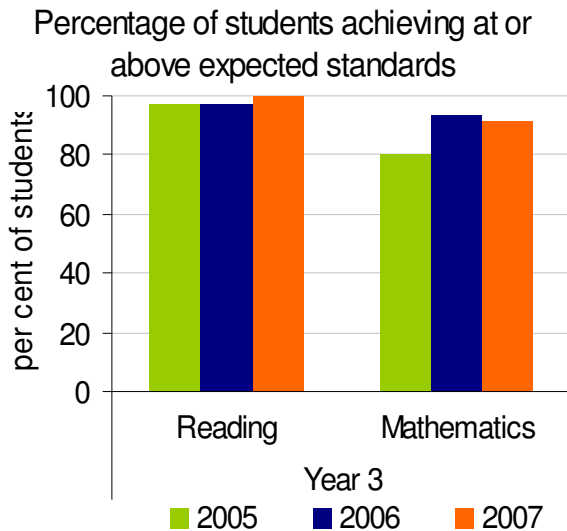
Similarly a big thank you to all the parents who volunteer their time and abilities to activities that enhance the learning of our children whether that is through raising funds (especially the fete), helping in the classroom and on excursions, maintaining and enhancing the school grounds, helping in the library, showing the benefits of music and singing, organising the Out of Hours Music Program or highlighting the diversity of bugs that live in the Merri Creek.

Finally, I would like to thank the other School Council members for their professional manner which ensured that all work was completed in a timely fashion.

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick  
School Council President

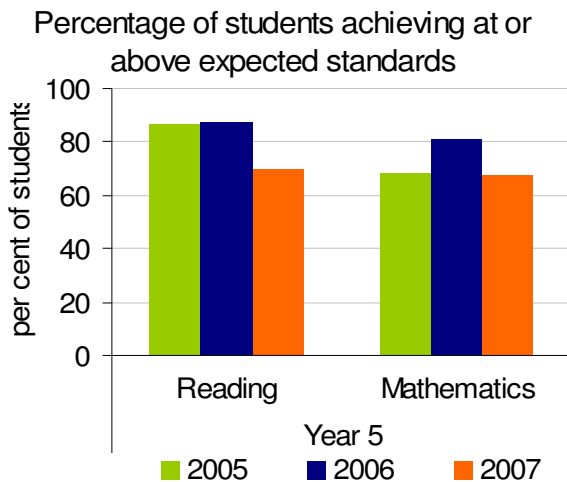
## Student Progress & Achievements

### Student Learning



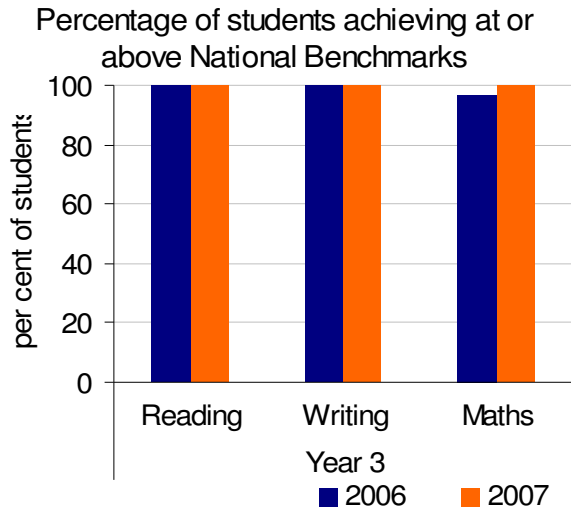
In 2007 Year 3 AIM Reading results were excellent with 57% of students achieving above the expected standard and the other 43% achieving within the expected range. 80% of the Year 3 cohort undertook the AIM Reading test and our school mean score of 3.00 was well above the state mean 2.3. These results also compare very favourable with the 20% of schools with the same SFO density as our school.

While Number achievements aren't as strong as Reading, 49% of Year 3 students achieved above the expected level, 40% within and 12% below the expected level. These results see the school mean at the 88<sup>th</sup> percentile in the SFO percentile range and 2.7 compared with the state mean of 2.4.

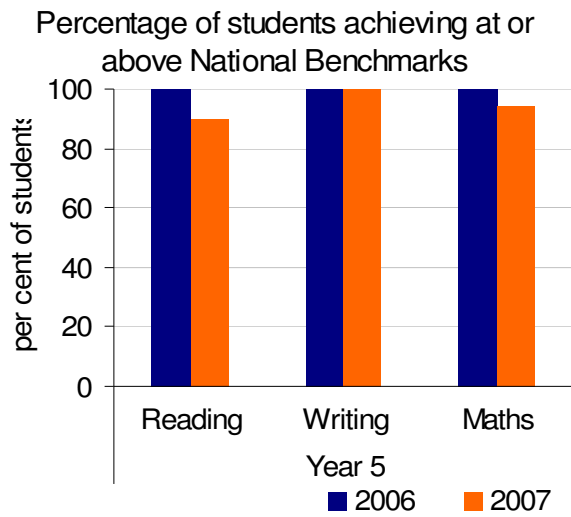


In 2007, 33% of Year 5 students were achieving above the expected level, at a Year 7 standard, 27% at the expected level and 40% below the expected level on the AIM Reading test. The school mean of 3.5 was above the state mean 3.2 and was at the 83<sup>rd</sup> percentile, at the beginning of the SFO range. Teachers then targeted reading comprehension as a teaching focus in Years 3-6 for the future and stressed the importance of daily reading and discussion with an elder at home.

Year 5 Number AIM results were better than for Reading with 86% of the Year 5 cohort doing the Number test compared with 83% for Reading. 29% of students achieved significantly above the expected level, 42% at and 30% below the expected level. The school mean at 3.4 was above the state mean of 3.2, but not in the SFO range at the 77<sup>th</sup> percentile. However, 2007 Year 5 Number results were considerably better than the results for the previous three years, with a trend of significant improvement over this time.



100% of Year 3 students who sat the AIM tests in 2007 achieved above the National Benchmarks in Reading, Writing and Mathematics.



In 2007, 90% of students in Year 5 who sat the AIM tests achieved above the National Benchmark for Reading; 100% for Writing and 95% for Mathematics.

## Student Pathways and Transitions

### Student destination data

In 2007 the 38 Year 6 students were accepted into ten state secondary schools and a number of private schools.

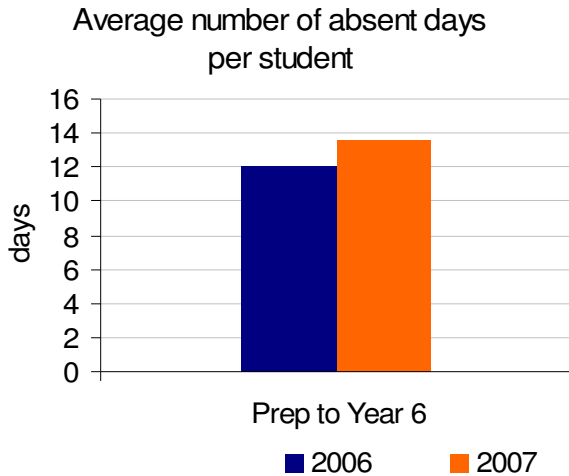
NAME OF SECONDARY COLLEGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS		
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Brunswick Secondary College	2	0	2
Eltham High School		1	1
Fawkner Secondary College	1	0	1
Melbourne Girls' College		4	4
Northcote High School	11	3	14
Preston Girls' Secondary College		1	1
Princes Hill Secondary College	2	1	3
Thornbury High School	1	0	1
Fitzroy High School	0	0	0
University High	1	1	2
Non-Government Schools	1	8	9

This was the largest number of varied destinations for a Year 6 cohort at Merri Creek Primary ever. It reflects the enrolment ceiling policies of our local secondary schools, community perceptions about school programs and student learning and the media debate about state versus private education.

The transition process began in Year 5 with students visiting secondary schools to determine their preference so they could easily complete the application form in May in Year 6, knowing of any curriculum ground requirements they needed to consider. The school supported Year 6 families in a variety of ways, informing the community through the newsletter about the secondary schools' tours and information sessions; having conversations with families about the options; running a leadership program for the Year 5 and 6 students and offering a specific transition program, START. Year 6 students participated in a series of events aimed to farewell the school and increase their confidence in becoming secondary students, including painting a mural for the oval fence, enjoying a day of activity together, an Orientation Day and their Graduation ceremony.

## Student Engagement and Wellbeing

### Average number of absent days per student



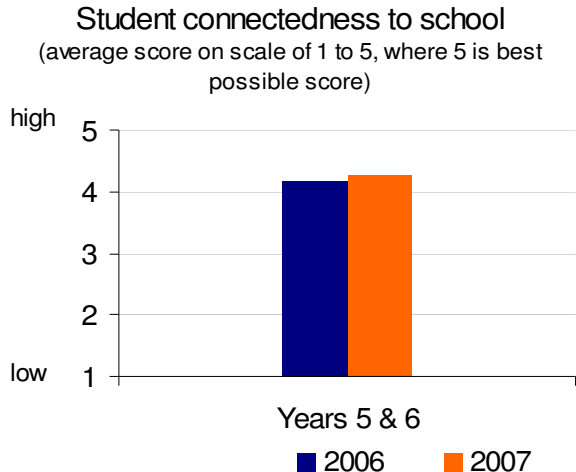
In 2006 average absent days per Full Time Equivalent student across the school was 12.1, below the state mean of 13.2. In 2007 it had increased to 13.6 absent days per FTE student in Prep-Year 6, above the previous year's state mean of 13.2.

While there was a decrease in absences in Year 6 there was an increase in absences in Prep, Year 1, 2 and 5. In Prep and Year 1 girls had more absences than boys while in Year 2 and 4 boys had more absences than girls and in Years 5 and 6 boys and girls absences were similar. While some of these may be attributed to issues with coding and roll marking it is still a worrying trend.

Extended family holidays throughout the year amounted to 629 absence days, which averaged over 273 FTE students equates to 2.3 days per student from Prep to Year 6. However, this data doesn't account for the increase in absences from 2006, as while the total of days students were absent for extended family holidays increased, it was a small increase of 20 days in total across the school.

### Students' school connectedness

Year 5 and 6 students were asked to what extent they agreed with each of the five statements (*I feel good about being a student at this school, I like school this year, I am happy to be at this school, I feel I belong at this school, I look forward to going to school*) on a scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.



The seventy five students surveyed show an increase in school connectedness from 2006 to 2007 with Year 5 students feeling a little more connected to the school (above the state mean) than the Year 6 students and boys more connected than girls. The 2007 Year 6 students (at the state mean) felt considerably more connected to the school than the 2006 Year 6 students.

## Future Directions

### Student Learning

Student learning goals in the 2008 Annual Implementation Plan aim to:

- improve all students reading comprehension outcomes.
- improve all students writing skills through consistent and explicit teaching of grammar and an integrated approach to the teaching of reading, writing, spelling, speaking and listening and handwriting.

By the end of 2008:

Year 3 AIM reading mean will be maintained above the state mean and within the SFO range.

Year 5 AIM reading mean will be maintained above the state mean and approximate the SFO range. 25% of students at the end of Years Prep (33%,31%), 2(71%, 28%), 4(51%, 41%) and 6(16%, 13%) will achieve better than the expected level on teacher assessments against the VELs in reading and writing.

Year 3 students will maintain the 2007 AIM writing mean above the state mean and within the SFO range.

Year 5 students will improve their 2007 AIM writing mean so that it is above the state mean and closer to the SFO range.

School based assessments will show improvements in comprehension skills eg. PAT Reading, TORCH etc.

The writing mean for Years Prep, 2, 4 and 6 will approximate SFO percentile range.

Teachers have made commitments to teaching grammar, spelling and reading comprehension using a range of new teaching resources in an effort to improve student outcomes as planned above. Professional Development and team planning and discussion will enhance teacher knowledge and skills.

### Student Attendance

Target students who are missing 5-10% per annum – ie up to 20 days per year which amounts to one day per fortnight. This is most of our student absences. Push ***Its not okay to be away*** slogan.

### Student Wellbeing

An improvement in the Attitudes to Schools survey of at least 5% in Classroom Behaviour and Stimulating Learning.

An improvement of 5% in the areas of Reporting, School Connectedness and Stimulating Learning on the Parent Opinion Survey. Write more articles in the newsletter about student learning.

### Transition

By end 2008 70% of Year 6 students feeling confident about moving to secondary school. Collect this data from the START survey.

Parent responses to the Prep Transition program show the program meet theirs and their child's needs. Continue to use the Prep transition survey. Improve the explanation of the program in the invitation letter so that prospective parents know they will be separated from their children for the three sessions in the transition program.

### Sustainable schools

Monitor our energy and water use for reductions over previous years. Allocate funds for the purpose of making the buildings more energy efficient and begin work. Continue our sustainable practices in and teaching about water, rubbish, energy and biodiversity.

## Financial Performance

Financial Performance for the year ending 31st December, 2007		Financial Position as at 31st December, 2007	
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>2007 Actual</b>	<b>Funds Available</b>	<b>2007 Actual</b>
DE&T Grants	\$171,719	High Yield Investment Account	\$205,203.48
Commonwealth Government Grants	\$103,976	Official Account	\$ 37,146.12
State Government Grants	0	Other Bank Accounts( listed individually)	0
Other	\$ 47,987	<i>Building Fund</i>	\$ 6,334.27
Locally Raised Funds	\$305,085	<i>Library Fund</i>	\$ 439.34
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$628,767</b>	<i>Less unpresented cheques</i>	\$ -5057
		<b>Total Funds Available</b>	<b>\$244,066</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		<b>Financial Commitments</b>	<b>2007 Actual</b>
Salaries and Allowances	\$ 88,735	Accounts Payable Control	\$ 18,280
Bank Charges	\$ 2,051	Camps/Excursions	\$ 9,442
Consumables	\$ 76,578	Building/Grounds including SMS	\$ 96,334
Books and Publications	\$ 10,985	Special Programs inc DEEM and Computer Grant	\$ 2,919
Communication Costs	\$ 6,676	Region /Clusters Funds	\$ 1,626
Furniture and Equipment	\$ 78,157	Professional Development	\$ 4,590
Utilities	\$ 13,560	School Assets/Leased Equipment	\$ 25,563
Property Services	\$107,075	School Operating Reserve	\$ 38,244
Travel and Subsistence	\$ 8,126	OSHC –Active ASC Communities	\$ 3,629
Motor Vehicle Expenses	\$ 132	OSHC Salary & Library Trust	\$ 43,439
Administration	\$ 6,155	<b>Total Financial Commitments</b>	<b>\$244,066</b>
Health and Personal Development	\$ 745		
Professional Development	\$ 27,350		
Trading and Fundraising	\$ 29,362		
Support/Service	\$113,720		
Miscellaneous	\$ 46,891		
<b>Total Operating Expenditure</b>	<b>\$616,298</b>		
<b>Net Operating Surplus/- Deficit</b>	<b>+12,469</b>		
<b>Capital Expenditure ( Cases 21 Finance Only)</b>	<b>44,022</b>		
Please note that the above amounts do not include any credit revenue or expenditure allocated or spent by the school through its Student Resource Package			

Funds were sufficient to support the School Charter priorities and the Annual Implementation Plan targets through the program budget process. They also allowed for some unplanned expenditure, on the archiving system in the security room; extending the bike shed; tree planting and possum proofing the elm trees; purchase of and marking of PAT Maths tests. Locally raised funds, for which targets were set by school council in 2006, were allocated to the program budgets and we received a second grant under the Investing In Our Schools Federal Government Program for playground equipment and classroom furniture.

## School Contact Information

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This report contains summary data extracted from the School Level Report. If you would like to access the School Level Report, please contact Dionne Wright, Principal.