



# The Cottage School

Annual Report 2024

*Nurturing creative, curious and caring people*

---

The Cottage School is a community-based, co-educational primary school located in Bellerive on Hobart's eastern shore. Serving approximately 80 students from Kindergarten through Grade 6, the school offers a holistic education within a nurturing environment. The school's philosophy emphasises a broad range of learning experiences that cater to the intellectual, emotional, and social development of each child. This approach fosters a close-knit community where students, staff, and families collaborate to create a supportive and engaging educational experience.

## President's Report

On behalf of the School Committee, I am pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report for The Cottage School. This year has been one of connection, consolidation, and celebration—a period where we came together on one campus, welcomed families and community members back to shared spaces, and saw our children thrive in learning, leadership, and creativity.

The return to a single campus model in our newly completed buildings marked the beginning of a year full of opportunity. A full calendar of community events — from the school fair and discos to grape-picking and manure digs — reinvigorated the spirit of connection that is so integral to Cottage School life. Our fair, held under perfect skies on the Queen Street campus, raised over \$14,000—a remarkable accomplishment for our small school community.

I extend sincere gratitude to our dedicated 2023 and 2024 Committee and sub-committees for their tireless work and care. Their coordination of working bees, policy implementation, events, and infrastructure has left a lasting legacy.

In 2024, our students excelled in multiple academic, creative and physical pursuits, including participation in the Australian Mathematics Challenge, interschool Chess, Cross Country and Triathlon, as well as the Tournament of the Minds (TOM). One of our TOM teams was awarded the national 'Spirit of TOM' Award, exemplifying the Cottage School's values of teamwork, respect, and perseverance.

This year also saw the introduction of the 2024–2026 Strategic Plan, and the launch of policies and procedures through CompliSpace. Our award-winning educational building, recognised nationally for its architectural excellence, has created a beautiful and functional learning space for current and future learners.

It has been a privilege to serve as President and witness the care, innovation, and commitment of this community. I look forward to another rich and rewarding year in 2025.

**Lou Kirkwood**

**President, The Cottage School Committee 2024**

## School Leader's Report

2024 was a pivotal year for The Cottage School—a year of stability, strategic direction, and community cohesion. With the disruption of COVID and our two-campus years behind us, we were able to focus more deeply on teaching, learning and long-term planning.

Central to this progress are the proposed Vision, Mission and Values:

- *Vision:* To nurture creative, curious and caring people
- *Mission:* Empowering capable, connected individuals through challenge and community
- *Values:* Care, Connection, Creativity, Curiosity, Community, Challenge

These principles shaped our Strategic Plan and underpinned achievements in areas such as Structured Literacy, child safety, governance, and student voice.

The teaching team has embraced Structured Literacy as a professional learning focus, adopting a phonics-based scope and sequence that aligns with best practices and state initiatives. We've made meaningful gains in literacy growth and consistency in assessment, while strengthening peer collaboration and reflection.

Our safeguarding initiatives extended to all areas of school life, with explicit teaching on consent, boundaries and safety, and the introduction of a Student Parliament, which gave children a platform to raise issues that matter to them.

Operationally, we engaged *Compass* and introduced *Edukey* for streamlined communication and planning, and have 95% of school policies up-to-date. These advances have strengthened transparency and compliance across all aspects of governance.

Despite illness-related disruptions in Terms 1, 2 and 4, staff and families demonstrated great resilience, continuing to support our community ethos through challenges. Looking ahead, we are focused on increasing attendance and ensuring the sustainability of our distinctive programs, such as Camps, Choosing, and Environment Days.

I am deeply proud of our staff, students, and families for their care, creativity and curiosity throughout this year. Together, we have laid strong foundations for a vibrant 2025.

**Hilary Purdie**  
**School Leader**

# Strategic Plan Highlights

## Teaching and Learning

- All classroom teachers participated in Structured Literacy professional development
- Adoption of phonics scope and sequence to complement orthography and morphology programs, aligning with state government's Lifting Literacy initiative
- Increased data-informed teaching practices
- High levels of student growth in Literacy and Numeracy (see Data Snapshot)

## Child Safety and Student Voice

- Safeguarding initiatives embedded in all areas of school life; governance, policy, recruitment, induction, staff training, communications, professional development and performance.
- Student involvement in building language and skills about their rights and responsibilities and personal safety; explicit teaching at Gathering of safe behaviours, boundaries, consent and help seeking, age-appropriate lessons in class groups, Biggies' leadership with younger students, the Growing Up program, and trialing *Social Stencil* in the primary years.
- The introduction of Student Parliament as part of the Biggies Civic and Citizenship curriculum broadened the opportunities for student voice, raising matters of importance to our students. Student Parliament expanding in 2025 to all age-groups.
- Biggies led peer learning and mentoring activities

## Governance and Management

- New Business Manager employed and a fixed term project officer engaged to contextualise all policy, training and assurance practices from software as a service provider, *Ideagen Complispace*.
- *Ideagen CompliSpace* used to bring 95% of policies up to date
- *Compass* and *Edukey* implemented for communication and planning
- Ongoing focus on HR, risk, and compliance processes

## Challenges

### Impacts of staff and student illness and injury

Class outbreaks of Covid 19 and Influenza impacted planned experiences (camp and environment days) and long absences for some children made curriculum continuity challenging. Extended staff absences from illness and injury in Term 1, Term 2 and Term 4 meant continued pressure on operations and staff wellbeing.

### Resourcing to support legislative compliance and Cottage School philosophical outcomes

In 2024 Committee and school leadership recognised the need for additional, ongoing resourcing to ensure the viability of our school's future, to:

- maintain compliance in an increasingly legislative educational environment
- enable our core Cottage School curriculum, such as Camps, Choosing, Environment Days
- recognise and respond to the needs of our current and future cohorts of children and families.

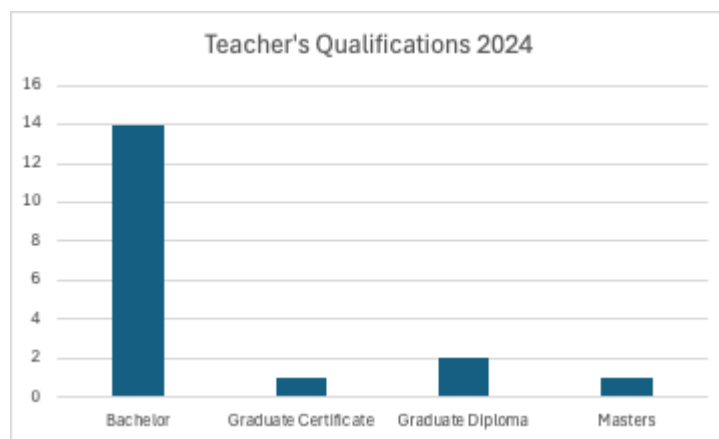
Preliminary action has already been taken through establishment of additional staffing, and investment in business management systems as outlined above. This will continue to be a critical strategic focus for the school.

---

# Annual Data Snapshot

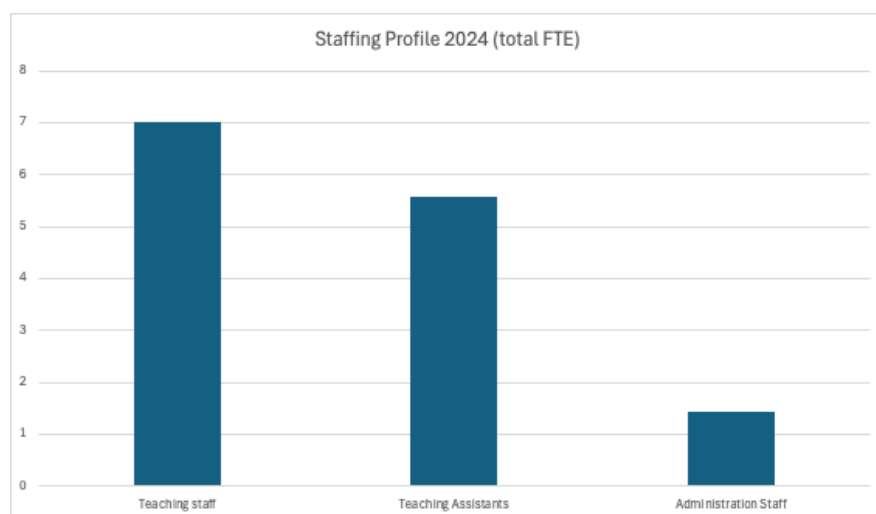
## Teacher Standards and Qualifications

All teaching staff hold appropriate qualifications and are registered with the Tasmanian Teachers Registration Board. The Cottage School ensures that all educators engage in ongoing professional development to maintain and enhance their teaching practices, aligning with the requirements for employment as a teacher in Tasmania. Any provisional teachers are supported and encouraged to attain full registration.



## Workforce

As a small independent school, The Cottage School maintains a dedicated team of educators and support staff. Every class has a teacher assistant to enhance student learning and social development. The school had 4 new staff (including Business Manager and 3 TAs) and 5 staff departures (1 retirement, 4 personal).



## Student Attendance

Parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure that their child attends school every day they are enrolled, unless there is a valid reason for their absence.

Parents/carers are to notify the school by 9.30am if their child is absent. The school then follows up with parents/carers for unexplained absences. All information regarding attendance is recorded and appropriate action (according to the school Attendance Policy) is taken for unsatisfactory attendance.

The school actively manages non-attendance through a number of strategies, including early intervention, communication with families, and the implementation of support programs aimed at addressing underlying issues contributing to absenteeism.

In 2024, The Cottage School maintained strong student attendance rates.



	<b>Number of possible attendance days</b>	<b>Actual attendance days</b>	<b>%</b>
Kinder	1392	1198	86.06%
Prep	2057	1856.67	90.26%
Year 1	2104	1777.67	84.49%
Year 2	2244	2021.67	90.09%
Year 3	2067	1888.67	91.37%
Year 4	1887	1527.67	80.96%
Year 5	2197	2000.34	91.05%
Year 6	2085	1866.67	89.53%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16033</b>	<b>14137.36</b>	<b>88.18%</b>

## Re-enrolment

96% of students re-enrolled for 2025.

## NAPLAN Assessments

The Cottage School participates in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), providing valuable insights into student performance.

Compare to  Students with similar background  All Australian students

	Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar	Numeracy
Year 3	381	398	373	324	400
Year 5	508	479	458	516	483

NAPLAN participation for this school is 100%  
NAPLAN participation for all Australian students is 95%

<sup>NB</sup> A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate for a comparison colour to be available. Grey shading indicates participation did not meet these thresholds.

### Interpreting the table

Selected school's average when compared to students with a similar background

Well above

Above

Close to

Below

Well below

No comparison available

## Student Growth

- 91% Literacy growth (Prep–Grade 2)
- 80% Maths growth (Grades 4–6)
- 83% Grammar & Punctuation growth (Grades 5–6)
- 94% Spelling growth (Grades 5–6)



## Wellbeing

83% of students (Grades 1–6) on track or showing high wellbeing

## Community Engagement

Cottage School families came together in large numbers to foster connection for:

- 3 x Working Bees (strong attendance under new model)
- 1 x School disco and 2 x Movie Nights
- 1 x Manure Dig and 1 x Grape-Picking
- Annual School Fair: Raised \$14,000 with outstanding community participation

These events fostered connection and strengthened the school's collaborative spirit.

## Parent Satisfaction

The Cottage School values feedback from its community and regularly assesses satisfaction levels among parents, students, and staff. The school has a history of positive engagement with its community, fostering an environment where all members feel heard and valued. This is achieved through regular communication, involvement in school activities, and opportunities for input into school decision-making processes (such as the Committee and sub-committees for parents/carers).

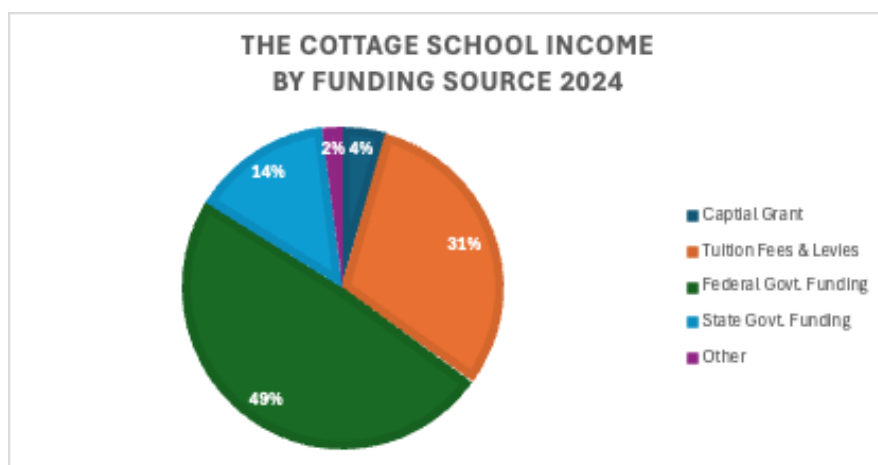
Annual satisfaction surveys are sent to parents/carers, staff and departing each year. In 2024, 97% of parent survey questions showed improved satisfaction since 2020.

## Financial Overview

The Cottage School continued to maintain a strong financial position throughout 2024, concluding the year with a surplus and an increase in net assets.

### Income

Total income for the year was \$2.28 million, a 3.5% decrease from 2023, due entirely to the decrease in ISBGAT Building Grants received. All other income sources showed a 6.1% increase, underscoring the school's stable financial base.



### Net Assets

As of Dec 2024, the school's net asset position stood at \$5.67 million, an increase of \$759,000 over the previous year. This growth is primarily due to asset revaluation following the completion of major capital works.

### Operating Expenditure

Total operating expenditure for 2024 was \$2.03 million, representing an increase of \$158,000 compared to 2023. The primary drivers for this increase included:

- an increase in camp expenses, reflecting an expanded program and rising costs.
- Loan interest repayments following capital works.
- Increase in OH&S costs, due to investment in safety and compliance systems.
- Increase in salaries, largely in line with standard increments and role adjustments.

## Looking Ahead

### Financial Considerations for 2025

In September 2024, the Committee approved the reinvestment of funds from the 2024 surplus into strategic, one-off projects to support governance, communication, and inclusive learning environments in 2025. These include:

- CompliSpace policy upgrades and implementation
- Compass student information system rollout
- Telephone system upgrades
- Fit-out of a new Inclusion and Learning Support Teacher space

The school anticipates stable government funding levels and an upward trend in enrolments.

### 2025 and Beyond

- Celebrating 50 Years of The Cottage School
- Continued focus on Structured Literacy and Safeguarding
- Expansion of Student Parliament across all year levels
- Improved tracking of student growth and wellbeing. Formalisation of dual curriculum: The Cottage School Curriculum and the Australian Curriculum
- Ongoing improvements to HR and compliance systems through Compass and CompliSpace

---

## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and thank the many people who contributed to the life of The Cottage School in 2024:

- Our Committee and Subcommittees for leadership and vision
- Our teachers, TAs, support staff, and leadership for daily care and educational excellence
- Our families and carers for ongoing support and partnership
- Our students, for embodying curiosity, care, creativity, and community each day

---

*The Cottage School respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we learn and play, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.*