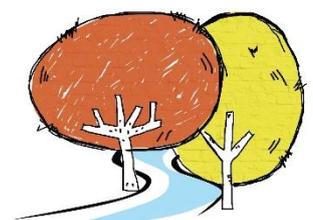


Annual Report 2020



SOUTHSIDE
Montessori School

- Est 1979 -

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Theme 1: Head of Board's Annual Report



Dear Parents, Staff and Friends of Southside Montessori School,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Southside Montessori School, I am pleased to write this report which reflects the resilience of the school during the year 2020. 2020 will go down in the history books as a year like no other, a worldwide pandemic affecting all areas of our lives. However, despite this disruption, the community of Southside Montessori continues to come together to ensure the school provides an environment for children to learn who they were born to be.

Prior to COVID-19 disruption, the school was looking at new ways to continue the education of young children and began the year with plans for implementing the Primary Years Program of the International Baccalaureate (IB). However, following feedback from our community it became clear that this was not the right time to change pedagogy.

Southside Montessori School has, and always will be, a school that believes in something different for the education and development of children – this being the way of Maria Montessori's methods. Like the founding parents who established Southside Montessori School 41 years ago believing strongly that this would provide children the education they needed for life, a group of parents banded together in 2020 to protect this pedagogy by becoming Directors on the School Board.

Since a newly established Board came together towards the end of 2020, the school has achieved an increase in enrolment numbers and a new Strategic Plan has been drafted. The Board also appointed Montessori trained, Debra Avery, as the Principal of Southside. The school has a proud tradition of being an environment that supports the academic and artistic talents of its children supported by equally committed and qualified teachers who are passionate about providing an environment for the children to learn and thrive.

It is an exciting time to be part of Southside Montessori School as we steer the school into the future. Aided by an increase in enrolment numbers we will see a number of positive changes as we look to introduce new programs, establish partnerships with other Montessori schools, and host school events that promote the benefits of our school.

Lastly, may I thank all the volunteers of the Southside Montessori School community who give their time, expertise and energy to the school – this is just one of the many ways commitment to the well-being of children is shown. The efforts of volunteers are a vital part of the community and are appreciated by all.



Mrs Gordana Karachony
Chair, Southside Montessori Society

Theme 1: Principal's Annual Report

2020 was to be a period of change and transition for Southside Montessori School.

Our school year began with excitement as our Preparatory and Kindergarten students moved into their newly refurbished learning environment. Not only were the students in a new classroom but they were now closer to the primary classes to assist in more varied interactions between the students.



It seemed that no sooner had our students settled into their new learning environments that remote learning began. The ability of the staff to work together and prepare quality learning experiences for students to complete from home cannot be commended enough. Throughout this period families developed a new understanding and appreciation of the role of the teacher.

In Term 2 the school's Principal Joh Wilkins Bennett made the unexpected decision to resign. Ms Wilkins Bennett had led the school since 2016 and I was appointed as acting principal from the beginning of Term 3 and appointed as the principal during term 4.

While change can bring uncertainties it also brings opportunities for reflection of future directions. One of the decisions made by the school community was to commit to Montessori philosophy and practices as the educational approach of the school and to no longer pursue the International Baccalaureate Programme.

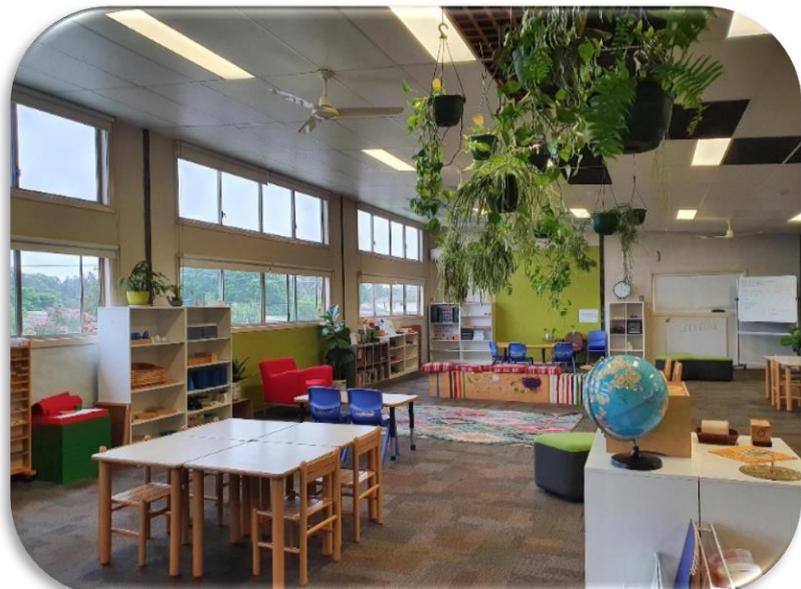
The school embarked on an ambitious marketing plan to promote the school and the benefits of a quality Montessori education.

The commitment and focus of the board, administration staff, parents and teachers to put this plan into action was an example of the dedication and support of our school community.

The ability of the community to work through the opportunities and challenges that were presented in 2020 is testament to the strength, energy and resilience of the Southside Montessori community. The school maintains its commitment to providing high quality education based on the traditions of Montessori as it has for over 40 years.



Debra Avery
Principal



Theme 2: Contextual Information about the School and Characteristics of the Student Body

Southside Montessori is a non-denominational co-educational school founded in 1977 and has been on its present site since 1984. Originally a community pre-school it now draws students from the rapidly growing southwestern corridor. The school caters to a diverse community, with students representing different cultural backgrounds. The school educates students from preparatory to year 6. The school is governed by a school board that can be comprised of members elected from the parent body and independent of the school.

Southside Montessori School follows the educational philosophy of Dr Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Its aim is to assist in the total development of the child's social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth. The Montessori approach to education is child centered and is based on mutual respect and cooperation. Multi-age classes are seen to be supportive environments for student learning and are found in all our classes.

We encourage students to use hands on experiential learning through the use of concrete manipulative learning materials across all classes. We support independent research where the child's personal success is the motivation for learning.



As well as implementing the Montessori philosophy through action-based learning the school also ensures that it meets the requirements of the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) in all key learning areas.

Our primary focus will always be the wellbeing and best interest of the students in our care.

Further information relating to the 2020 characteristics of our Student Body and the contextual information pertaining to Southside Montessori School can be found on the *My School* website: <http://www.myschool.edu.au>

Theme 3: Student Outcomes in Standardised Literacy and Numeracy Testing

As NAPLAN assessments were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19, the most recent information relates to 2019 NAPLAN results which are available on My School (<http://www.myschool.edu.au>). Please be advised that due to the small cohort of students sitting NAPLAN our school's results are not posted on the *My School* website.

It is important to remember that NAPLAN is just one of the many ways that we track student progress. Online record keeping, teacher observations, student work samples, parent and student reflections, curriculum planning and documentation are all used to support student learning and monitor progress from the time the child enters our school.

Theme 4: Senior secondary outcome (student achievement)

The reporting of RoSA or HSC results are not applicable for Southside Montessori School.



Theme 5: Teacher Professional Learning

The teaching staff participated in a variety of professional learning activities throughout the year with an emphasis on project-based integrated learning. All staff attended a course offered through the International Baccalaureate and attended staff development days to increase their understanding of the practical implementation of project-based learning in the classroom. The following professional learning activities also took place in 2020.

Learning Activity	Number of Staff Participating
IB Course – Making PYP Happen	5
Renewal of registration/accreditation & TAA approval in 2020	2
First Aid – HLTAID004 Provide an emergency first aid response in an education and care setting	5
CPAT – Child Protection Awareness Training (external version)	5
ASCIA – Anaphylaxis e-training	2
Planning & Programming – staff development days	3
Building Evacuation Training & Training on the use of Portable Fire Fighting Equipment	6
Infection Control training – COVID-19	2

Teacher Accreditation

Level of Accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	1
Provisional	1
Proficient Teacher	1
Highly Accomplished Teacher (Voluntary Accreditation)	0
Lead teacher (Voluntary Accreditation)	0

Qualifications

Category	Number of Teachers
i. Teachers having teacher qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia, or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skill Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines	2
ii. Teachers having a Bachelor degree from a higher educational institution within Australia or one recognised within the (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications	0

Theme 6: Workforce Composition

Southside Montessori School workforce consists of teachers and administration staff.

School Staff 2020	Number of Teachers
Teaching Staff	3
Full-time equivalent staff	3.0
Non-teaching staff	2
Full-time equivalent non-teaching staff	1.4

Southside Montessori School did not retain staff in 2020 recognised as Indigenous Australian or Torres Strait Islander.

A description of the school's workforce composition can also be found in *My School*

(<http://www.myschool.edu.au>)

Theme 7: Student Attendance, and Retention Rates and Post-school Destinations in Secondary Schools

Student Attendance Rate – 2020 whole year

Year Level	Attendance Rate %
Kindergarten	89%
Year 1	90%
Year 2	90%
Year 3	89%
Year 4	93.33%
Year 5	84.25%
Year 6	78%
Whole School	87.65%

The school's attendance for 2020 was impacted data as a result of the schooling arrangements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Management of Non-attendance

Classroom attendance rolls are electronically submitted to the administration office by 9.00am each day where any planned or unplanned absences are recorded through the school management system *Sentral*. An automatic email message from the school is sent to parents for any unexplained or unplanned absences.

Students who arrive late, who depart early or are absent for part of the day are recorded at reception. Parents are required to attend the office to sign their child in and/or out for these partial absences.

Attendance is closely monitored and any students who are flagged with non-attendance are reported to the Principal who arranges a meeting with the student and their parent or guardian. During this meeting the student's non-attendance is discussed and an Attendance Improvement Plan is developed between the student, their parent/s and the principal.

If there is no improvement in the student's attendance a second meeting is held between the student, their parent/s and the school principal.

As the school does not have a high school, Student Retention Rates and post-school destinations are not relevant data collection for this school.

Theme 8: School Enrolments Policy

Purpose of the Policy

Southside Montessori school is implementing this policy to establish a protocol for the enrolment of students at the school.

Scope

This policy applies to all students seeking enrolment at the school.

Policy

Southside Montessori School is a co-educational and non-denominational independent school which offers an education based in the traditions of Montessori philosophy.

1. Applications for enrolment may be made at any time by the parents or guardians of students to commence at a time that is agreed upon between the school and the parents or guardians.
2. Southside Montessori School will base any decision about offering a place to a student on:

Family relationship with the school:

- sibling of a current or ex-student
- either of the parents attended the school
- understanding of the Montessori approach
- they hold attitudes, values and priorities that are compatible with the school's Montessori ethos

The student:

- The student has previously attended a Montessori pre-school, long day care or school
- The student's reports from previous schools or prior to school service e.g., the NSW Department of Education's Transition to School Statement

The school:

- Any decisions about admission, enrolment or participation will be made on the basis that the school has adequate facilities, resources and means to be able to make reasonable adjustments where necessary to meet the special needs or abilities of a student
- Southside Montessori School acknowledges and supports the rights of parents or guardians to be fully informed and actively participate in key decisions relating to their child's education

Other considerations:

- Order of receipt- when the enrolment application form with the application fee is received by the school
3. Southside Montessori School has absolute discretion in determining the weight of each of the above factors, it takes into account in determining whether to offer a place for the student.
 4. Prior to making an application for enrolment parents will be asked to do a tour of the school. After the tour all parents will receive an Enrolment Pack containing enrolment instructions, the current fee schedule, enrolment application form, enrolment policy, the school prospectus and the terms and conditions of enrolment.
 5. Once the family have completed a tour, they will be invited to arrange a time to observe in the classroom that is the equivalent age group of the child/ren who they wish to enrol in the school (this may not be the classroom that the child will be placed in if the enrolment application is successful). The observation visits will be approximately 30 minutes and is an additional opportunity for parents to become familiar with Montessori practices before continuing with the enrolment of their child into the school.
 6. Once a family has attended a school tour, they are now eligible to complete the Enrolment Application Form.
 7. Prospective students will be asked to do a 3-day trial in the classroom. Following this trial, the classroom teacher together with the Principal will meet with parent/carer(s) of the student before offering a place.
The final decision regarding enrolments of all students lies with the Principal.
 8. Continued enrolment at Southside Montessori School is dependent upon the student attending consistently, and the student and the parent/carer(s) observing all behavioural codes of conduct, payment of all school fees and any other requirements of the school which are applicable from time to time.
 9. Parents or Guardians enrolling a student at Southside Montessori School are expected to agree to all the terms outlined in The Terms and Conditions of Enrolment.

Record Keeping of Enrolment Data

Records of enrolment are maintained either electronically or in hard copy for a minimum of 5 years.

Review The policy was reviewed in 2020

Theme 9: Other School Policies

Summary of Policy	Changes in 2020	Access to full text
<p><i>Student Welfare</i></p> <p>Southside Montessori is concerned about the social, emotional, and physical well-being of all students in our care. We take our responsibilities in this area very seriously and ensure that we have policies and procedures to support child welfare.</p> <p>All teaching and administration staff do annual training to ensure that they fully understand their obligations and responsibilities in relation to the protection, safety, and welfare of students.</p> <p>Our Child Protection Policy sets out staff responsibilities for child protection and the processes that staff must follow in relation to child protection matters. Our policy applies to all staff members, employees, contractors and volunteers.</p> <p>All employees of the school and all those who volunteer to work at the school are required to have a current Working with Children Check.</p>	<p>In 2020 the policy was revised to include the provision that anyone volunteering on site during school hours must have a verified Working with Children Check.</p>	<p>The full text of the school's Child Protection Policy can be accessed from the school's website and by request from the principal.</p>
<p><i>Anti – bullying</i></p> <p>Southside Montessori School endeavours to provide a safe and caring environment for all members of the school community that promotes student wellbeing and values diversity.</p> <p>Our school policy outlines a whole school approach whereby teachers, peers and parents are actively involved in working together to address and prevent inappropriate behaviours.</p> <p>The school policy provides processes for responding to and managing allegations of bullying.</p> <p>The school believes that it is important to educate our students about the nature, causes and consequences of inappropriate behaviour and the processes to be used to address inappropriate behaviour at school.</p>	<p>In 2020 the policy was revised to explain in more detail behaviours that were and were not considered bullying.</p>	<p>The full text of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy can be accessed by request from the principal.</p>

<p><i>Discipline</i></p> <p>The positive model of behaviour management and discipline within a Montessori learning environment is based on self-discipline where concentration, focus and independent learning are valued. Children are respected and behaviours are handled with the focus on the consequences of the behaviour.</p> <p>We encourage parents and caregivers to use a positive model of behaviour management in the home and to support its implementation in the school.</p> <p>The school expressly prohibits corporal punishment and does not explicitly or implicitly sanction the administration of corporal punishment by non-school persons, including parents, to enforce discipline at the school.</p> <p>All behaviour management actions are based on procedural fairness. Parents are involved in the processes of procedural fairness when sanctions result in the suspension and expulsion of a student.</p>	<p>No changes were made to this policy in 2020.</p>	<p>The full text of the school’s Student Behaviour Management and Procedure Policy can be accessed by request from the principal</p>
<p><i>Complaints and Grievances Resolution</i></p> <p>Our Complaints and Grievances Resolution processes aim to deal with all complaints in an open and fair manner, ensure that the rights of students, staff and parents are respected and upheld, support sensitivity and confidentiality and help reach an agreed solution.</p> <p>The school will seek to resolve concerns informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to formally raise a concern. All formal concerns can be made to the principal or the Chair of the Board.</p> <p>The policy ensures that there will be appropriate, procedural fairness in dealing with complaints and grievances. The processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by parents and/or students are also outlined in the policy.</p>	<p>No changes were made to this policy in 2020.</p>	<p>The full text of the school’s Complaint Handling Policy can be accessed by request from the principal</p>

Theme 10: School Determined Priorities for Improvement

During the 2020 school year the school's strategic plan looked to improvement across the three focus areas of Teaching and Learning, Leadership and Structure and Securing the Future.

Area	Priorities	Achievements
<i>Teaching and Learning</i>	Develop a curriculum that is based on action learning that supports excellence in student learning and interests across the school	Staff looked at ways to engage students in more project-based curriculum planning and delivery that met the requirements of the NESA curriculum and Montessori practices. As a result, staff began to plan and implement integrated units of learning.
<i>Teaching and Learning</i>	Design processes and practices to support staff, students and parents in pedagogical approaches adopted by the school	All staff attended professional development training through the International Baccalaureate to examine student agency through project-based learning. Through the participation in this course staff were given planning frameworks that were adopted across the school.
<i>Leadership and Structure</i>	To generate wider community support and engagement through reconnecting with Southside Alumni and re-establish a Parents and Friends Association	All Alumni were contacted through a newsletter to update them on the school with Alumni contacting the school to say they were pleased that contact had been made. There will now be a newsletter distributed twice a year. Request for parents to join a Parents and Friends was also distributed to all parents with interest being shown.
<i>Leadership and Structure</i>	Strengthen student transition between learning environments	Refurbishment of and relocation pre-primary classroom so that it is in closer physical proximity to the rest of the primary school

<i>Securing the Future</i>	Create stronger links to the wider community to increase enrolments	<p>All local Montessori pre-schools and Montessori long day care centres have been formally approached to consider Southside Montessori School as the primary school of choice.</p> <p>There has already been immediate enrolments and future enrolments from our surrounding Montessori educational communities.</p>
<i>Securing the Future</i>	Create and implement a marketing plan that promotes SMS as a thriving community for children to learn and grow whilst supporting enrolments and student retention	A school board marketing committee was formed in 2020. This committee was influential in developing a professionally filmed video promoting the school from the perspective of the whole school community (teachers, parents and students) that was placed on the school's website.



Theme 11: Initiatives Promoting Respect and Responsibility

Respect and responsibility are cornerstones of the Montessori approach to learning. One of the aims of the school is to develop individuals who are seen as contributing members of society.

From the time the student enters our learning environment they are encouraged to be respectful towards others. All students are encouraged to be respectful towards each other's belongings, personal space, and point of view. We aim to have a school where all members feel safe and happy, and everyone is valued.

Students are encouraged to develop responsibility for their own learning and actions. All students can make independent choices in the work they do as long as the choices are appropriately challenging, have purpose and meet the learning needs of the student.

All members of our community are valued regardless of age and respectful interaction between classes is always encouraged. Planned opportunities for students from different classes to work on common projects was encouraged throughout 2020. Students from different classes worked in (Covid -19 safe rotations) to produce artworks and stories that were displayed around the school.



The school continued to have service days where students are encouraged to engage in an activity that contributes to their school environment even if there is not a direct benefit to themselves but there is a service to others in the community.

The school recognised key cultural events throughout the year such as Chinese New Year, Harmony Day, Eid al-Fitr and Remembrance Day in a Covid safe manner. The focus on these events is recognition, respect, and tolerance towards the celebrations of all members of our community.



Theme 12: Parent, Student and Staff Satisfaction

Southside Montessori School takes pride in the close relationships it fosters between all families and students at our school.

In June 2020 the school sent out a parent questionnaire to all our parents. In this survey parents were asked what they saw as the most valued aspects of the school for themselves and their children. Parent's responses included that they valued:

- the connection and relationships with the teachers
- students being given the opportunity to learn at their own pace,
- students were treated as individuals
- there were opportunities for parents to come together.

Most parents who responded also expressed their willingness to be involved in the school, through helper or volunteer work that may be required.

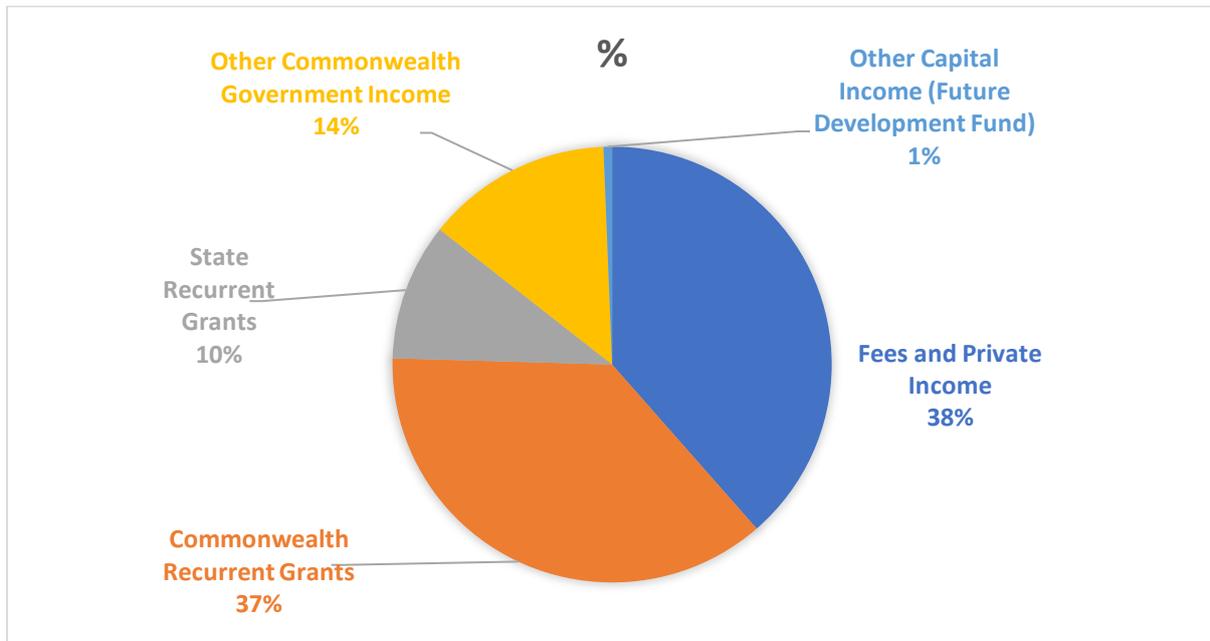
The overwhelming majority of our students had returned to school prior to the mandated NESA return date in term 2. The students expressed their delight at being able to return to school and to be back with their friends and the school community. Students openly said that the school was a place where they felt safe, and this feeling of safety and support continued throughout the year.



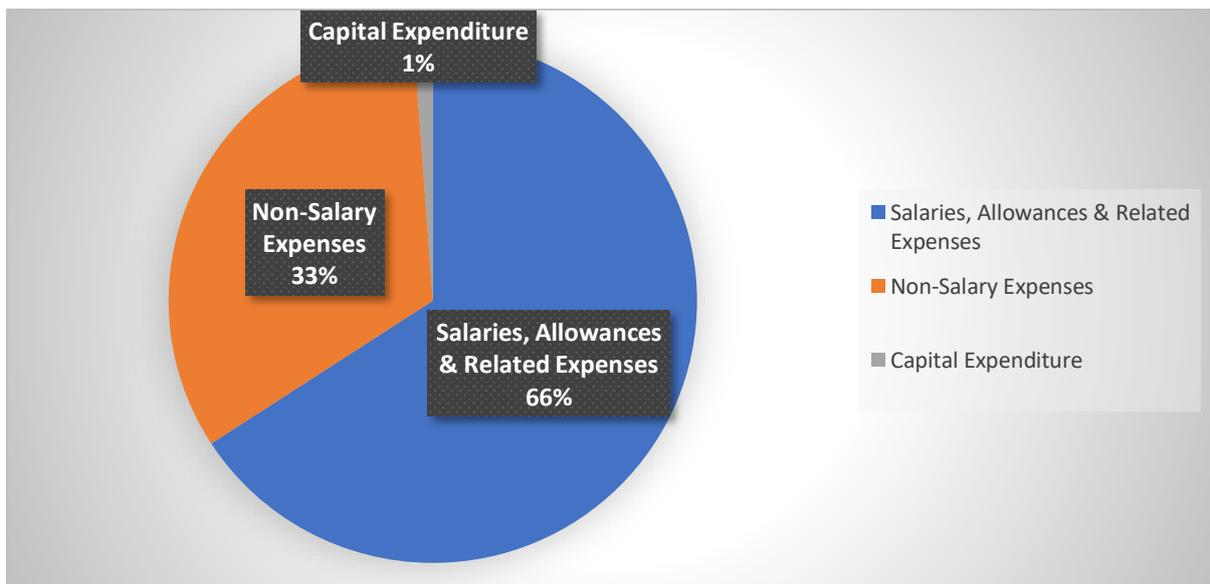
The sudden need to move to remote learning was an unexpected challenge that the teachers handled with a high level of professionalism. The teachers supported each other in coming to terms with use of digital tools and virtual modes of communication. Staff used this as an opportunity to trial new teaching methods. Parents expressed newfound respect for the role of the teacher and the work that teachers had had to do on such short notice to migrate to on-line learning. This open expression of respect and support that parents have for the teachers at the school supported teachers in feeling satisfied with their role as educators.

Theme 13: Summary Financial Information

Southside Montessori Recurrent and Capital Income for 2020



Southside Montessori School - Recurrent and Capital Expenditure for 2020



End of Report