

CHATSWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS'  
AND CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

# 2014 P&C Survey Report

**December 2014**



# SUMMARY

## Introduction

Most schools in NSW have a Parents' and Citizens' Association (P&C). Chatswood Public School also has a P&C, made up of parents who volunteer to be involved. Each P&C is responsible for supporting its school through a range of activities and services including fundraising.

In 2014, the Chatswood P&C wanted to find out what were the best ways to communicate with parents about its activities and services, and to find out if there were opportunities to get more parents involved in the P&C. So it decided to run a short anonymous online survey.

## Results

A total of 309 parents completed the survey over a 10-day period. It is estimated this represents approximately 30% of all school parents. Some of the main results from the survey are as follows:

Issues in the survey	Key findings
Parents' knowledge of P&C activities	Parents' knowledge of P&C activities varied: it was highest for fundraising events and making decisions about how fundraising money is spent.
Parents' preferences for P&C information	80% of parents want to receive P&C information by email; the current P&C website is not used regularly by most parents.
The P&C Master Plan	Less than 20% of parents were familiar with the Master Plan.
The P&C Canteen	64% of parents did not use the Canteen ordering system. Among those who did, approximately half were very satisfied with the system.
The P&C Uniform Shop	70% of parents supported a new online ordering system.
Parents' interest in participating in P&C activities	65% of parents said they would be interested in participating or already did; 35% did not answer this question.

## Next Steps

The survey responses from parents have provided incredibly valuable information about areas for improvement, and stronger engagement with the wider parent community. Priority actions in 2015 will include:

- Increased communication with parents about the P&C, its activities and services, and the range of opportunities available to parents to participate and contribute
- Greater use of email communication
- Increased communication about the P&C Master Plan
- Translation of key information into other languages
- Introduction of an online Uniform Shop ordering system and pricing review
- Provide communication about pricing approach and menu including healthy food guidelines

## Thanks

The P&C would like to gratefully acknowledge and thank: i) the many parents who completed the P&C survey; ii) the students in 5G, Mr Galbraith, Mr Skelly, Ms Hill and Mr Dodds; and iii) parents Andrea Austin, Melinda Holmes and Angela Todd for managing the survey project.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## What is the P&C?

Most schools in NSW have a Parents' and Citizens' Association (P&C). Each P&C is responsible for supporting its school by providing leadership and advice, and by delivering a range of activities and services including fundraising. Many non-Western countries do not have parent bodies like the P&C working with their schools.

At Chatswood Public School, our P&C is open to all parents who have one or more children attending the school. The P&C is also open for the public to attend. Our P&C relies on parents volunteering their time, their talents and their resources.

## Why did we do a P&C Survey?

Our P&C wanted to find out what were the best ways to communicate with parents about its activities and services, and to find out if there were opportunities to get more parents involved in the P&C. So the decision was made to conduct a short anonymous survey with parents.

## How was the survey done?

An online survey was created that included questions about:

- parents' knowledge of P&C activities
- how do parents prefer to receive information about the P&C, and do they use the school website
- the P&C Master Plan
- the P&C Canteen
- the P&C Uniform Shop
- parents' interest in participating in P&C activities.

Following approval from the P&C Executive, the online survey was launched on 12 November 2014. It remained open for 10 days. The survey took about 4-5 minutes to complete.

Several strategies were used to increase the number of parents who participated: members of the P&C Executive and other P&C members invited fellow parents who were in their personal networks to complete the survey; messages about the survey were included in two weekly school newsletter emails; two dedicated emails were sent to parents by the school; and a class of students (5G) volunteered to invite parents to do the survey with them in the school playground before school using iPads.

## 2. SURVEY RESPONSES

### Who responded to the survey?

A total of 309 parents completed the survey. It is estimated this represents approximately 30% of all school parents. Figure 1 shows the pattern of responses over the period that the survey was open. The reminder email to parents from the school on two occasions appeared to be very effective.

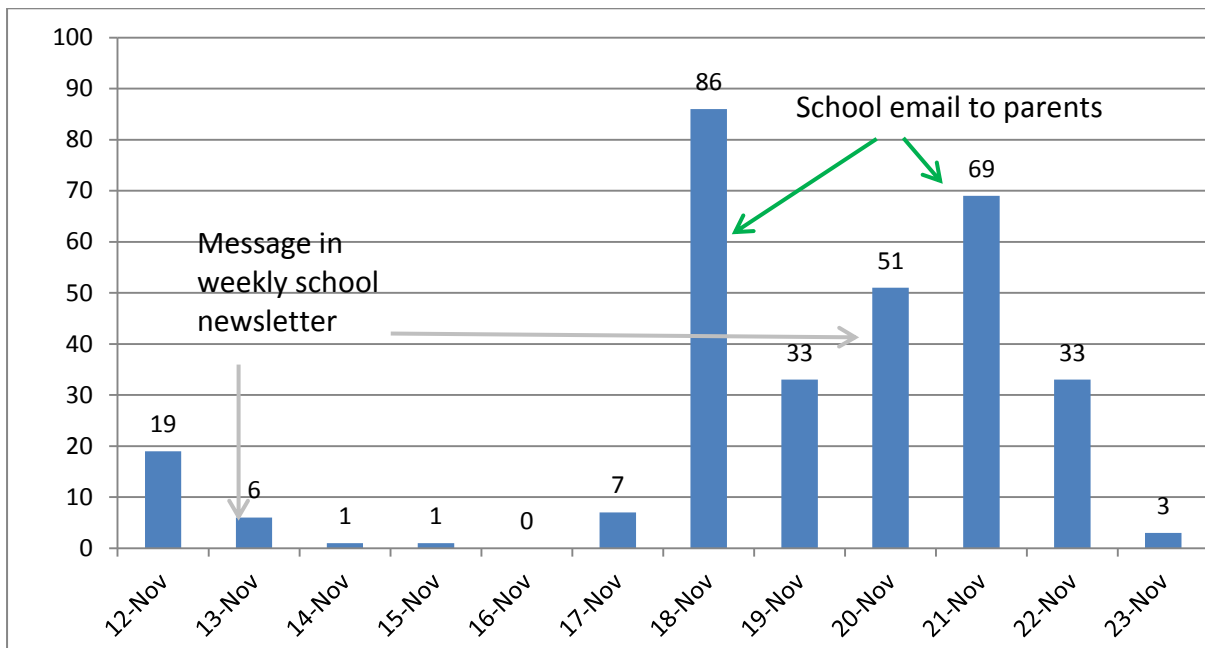


Figure 1: Number of completed surveys per day

5G students recorded 103 parents who declined to do the survey when asked in the playground. The most common reasons were lack of time, not interested, or limited English (the survey was only available in English).

Our school has a rich diversity of families with many different cultural backgrounds, particularly from south-east Asia. Information collected in the survey showed that just over 50% of the parents who completed the survey speak English at home, and nearly 50% speak a main language other than English (see Figure 2 next page).

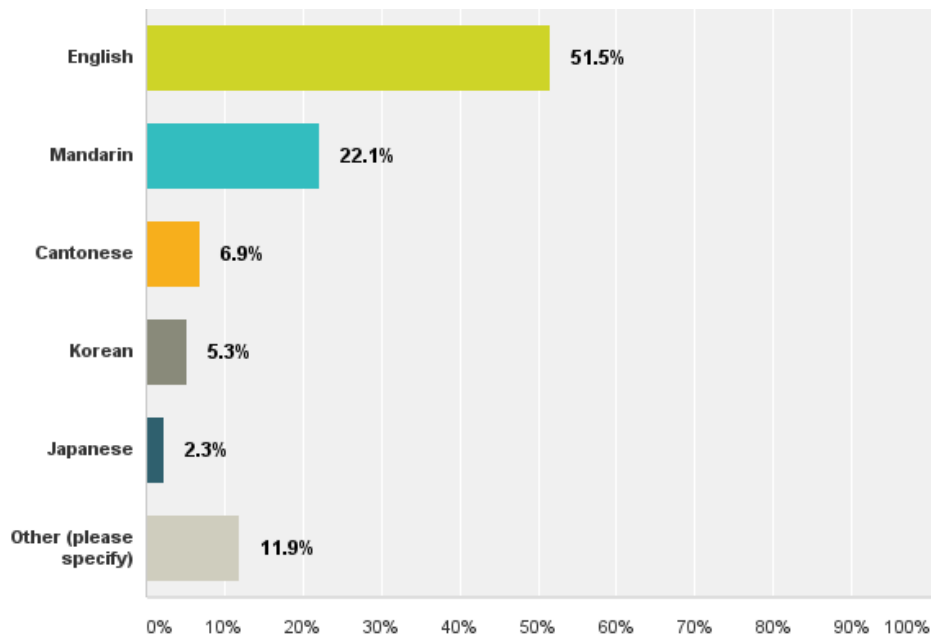


Figure 2: Main language spoken at home

***What does this information tell us?***

Communicating with Chatswood parents may be improved if we translate some information into other languages, for example, into Mandarin.

The survey also asked parents how long they had had children attending the school (see Figure 3). Parents with children attending our school for 3 years or less were more likely to complete the survey. 5G students noted that they were also more likely to be in the school playground dropping off younger children.

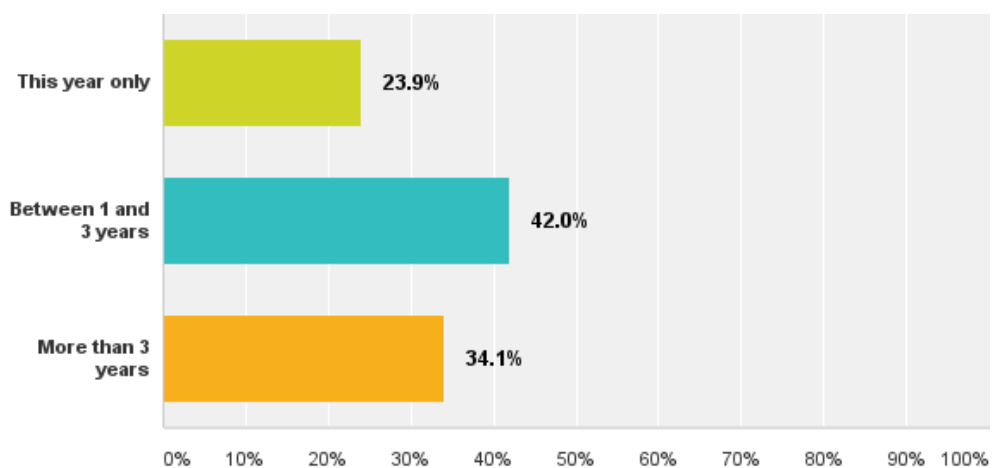


Figure 3: How long have your children been attending the school?

## What do parents believe the P&C does?

The survey asked parents to identify the activities and services for which the P&C is responsible. The survey gave parents a long list and they could choose more than one activity or service. The parents' responses are shown in Figure 4.

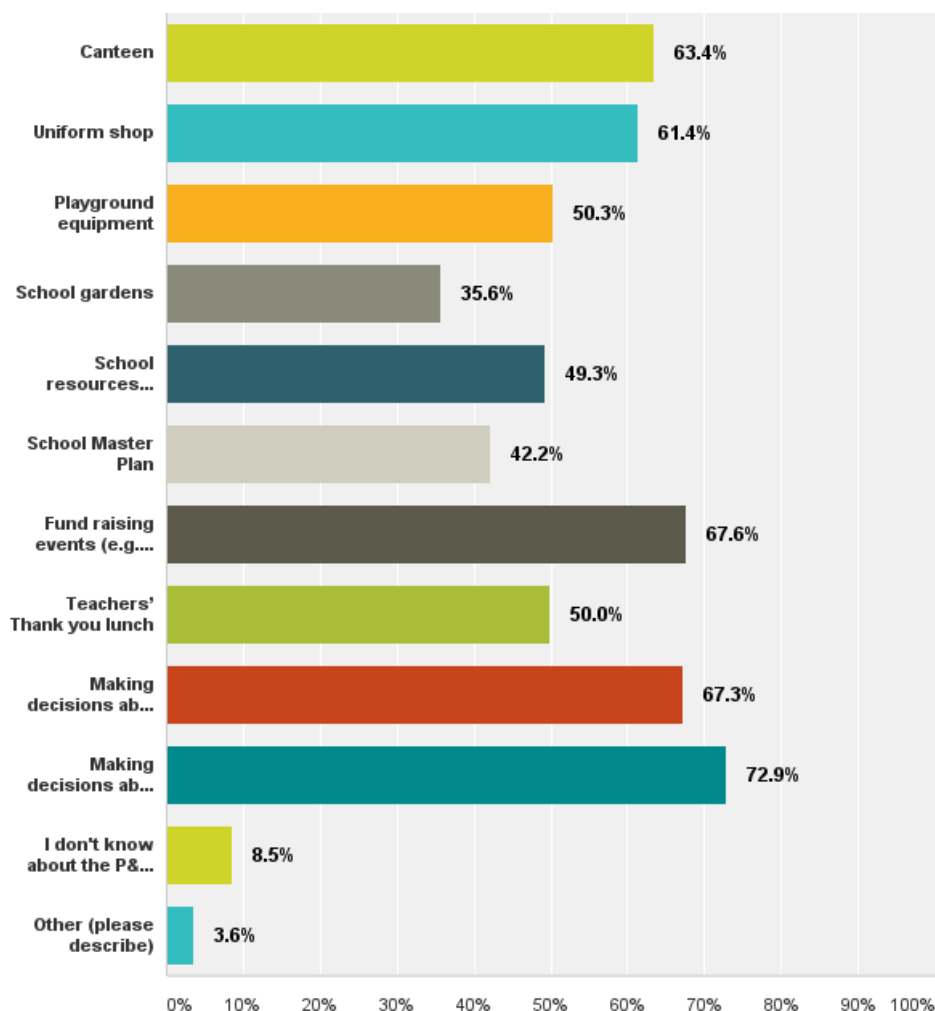


Figure 4: Parents' knowledge of P&C activities and services

Our P&C is responsible for all items in the list above. Parents are more aware of some P&C activities and services than others. For example, the majority of parents understood that the P&C was responsible for fundraising events and making decisions about how fundraising money is spent, making decisions about how the parent P&C contribution is spent, and the running of the Canteen and Uniform Shop. Parents were less aware about the P&C's work for the school gardens and the Master Plan. Additional comments from parents suggested that some believed the P&C contributed to some of these items only, rather than being responsible for them.

### *What does this information tell us?*

Opportunities exist for better communicating with Chatswood parents about the wide range of activities and services for which the P&C is responsible.

## How do parents prefer to receive P&C information, and do they use the school website?

The survey asked parents how they would prefer to receive updates from the P&C. About 80% of parents want to receive the information by email – either through the weekly school newsletter or a separate P&C email (see Figure 5). Discussions with the school have identified more than one email mailing list for parents, so it will be important to choose the most comprehensive and update version.

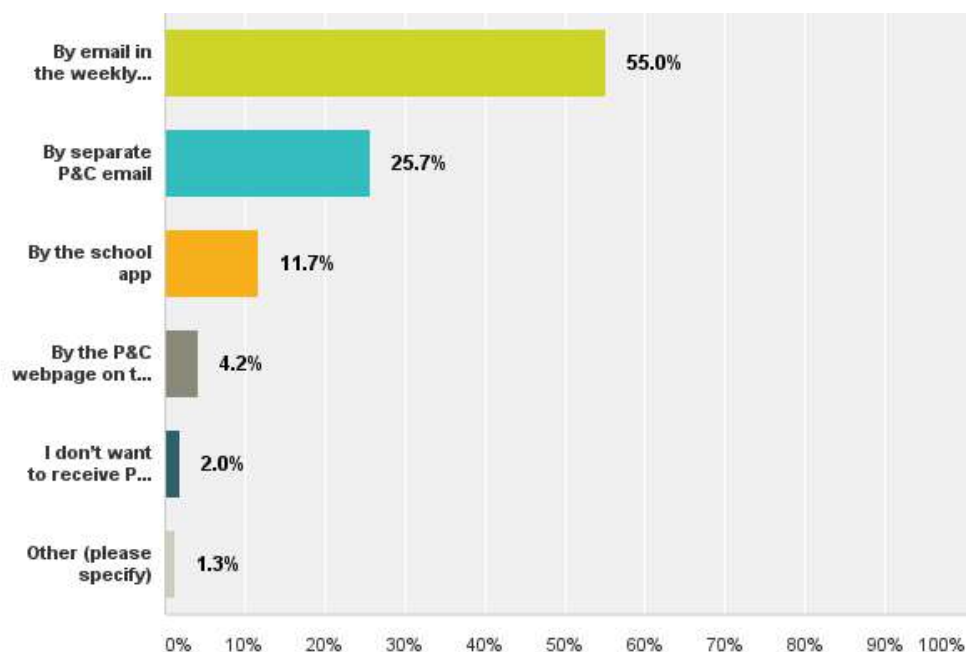


Figure 5: Parents' preferences for P&C information

The survey also asked parents how often they visited the school website and the P&C page on the school website for information. Nearly all parents in the survey (94%) said that they had visited the school website at least once or twice. Very few parents (6%) had never visited the school website. By contrast, 52% of parents said that they had never visited the P&C page (see Table 1). Of those parents who had visited the P&C page on the school website, the most common reasons were to look at the minutes of P&C meetings or to read information about the P&C.

Table 1: Visits to the school website and the P&C page on the school website

	Once a week	Once a month	3-4 times a year	Only once or twice	Never
How often have you visited the school website?	23.1%	23.1%	24.1%	23.8%	5.9%
How often have you visited the P&C page?	3.4%	9.3%	11.7%	23.4%	52.2%

***What does this information tell us?***

Providing parents with P&C information by email is likely to be more effective with parents than using the P&C page on the school website.

## Do parents know about the P&C Master Plan?

The P&C Master Plan has been developed by a subcommittee of the P&C to help guide the P&C about investing in buildings and other capital works around the school in the short and longer term. Diagrams of the Plan have been on display in Block A for the past 2-3 months, and a detailed document about the Master Plan is available on the P&C page on the school website. A copy of the Plan has also been on display at the Bush Campus (by the office). The Plan includes ideas about better access to and from different buildings within the school, possible development of new buildings, and improved traffic flow around the school. The Plan is intended to provide early ideas and provoke discussion.

The survey asked parents whether they knew of the Master Plan and if they wanted to make comments about it. Most parents who responded to the survey were not familiar with the Plan: 44% had not heard about it at all, and 38% had heard about it but not looked at it.

***What does this information tell us?***

Opportunities exist for better communicating with parents about the P&C Master Plan. Displaying the Plan in other commonly accessed locations around the school may help increase awareness, for example, near the new display screen at the upper COLA and outside the Hall.

## Are parents satisfied with the online Canteen ordering system?

The P&C is responsible for the running of the school Canteen. The profits from the Canteen are one of the main sources of fundraising by the P&C.

The survey asked parents how satisfied they were with the online Canteen ordering system. Importantly, nearly two-thirds of the parents in the survey did not use the ordering system. Among those who did, approximately half were very satisfied with the system (see Figure 6 next page).

Parents provided the following additional comments:

- More healthy options
- More frequent menu changes
- Less sugar/sweets
- Food is overpriced
- Online fee is too high
- Some parents reported difficulties with the online system in terms of timeliness and reliability



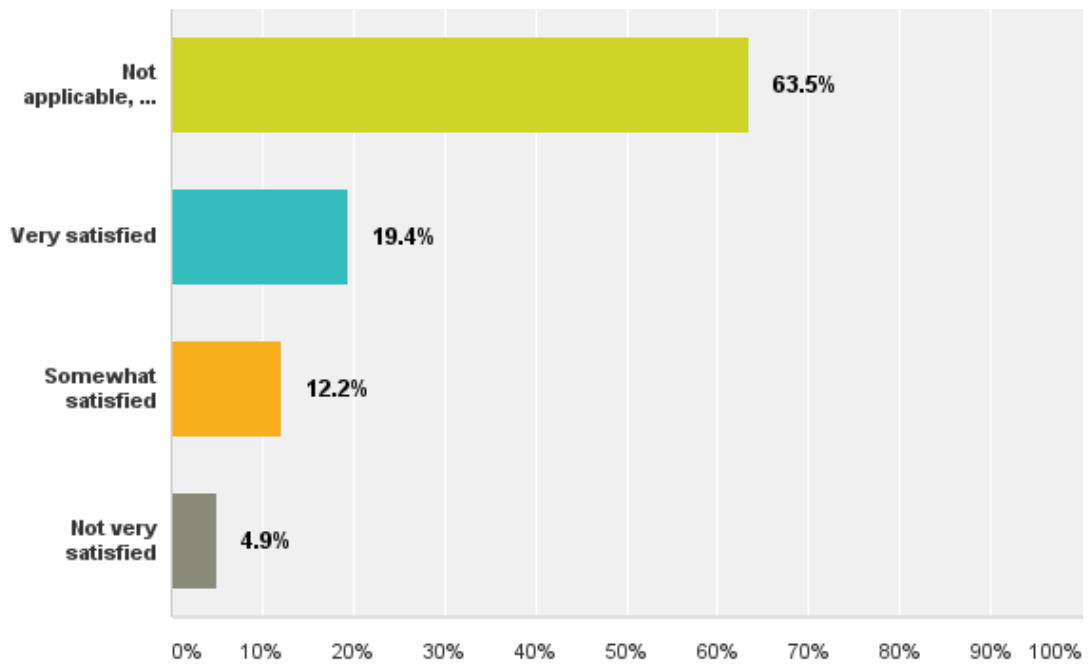


Figure 6: Parents' satisfaction with online Canteen ordering system

***What does this information tell us?***

Clearer communication about the Canteen pricing structure, and the menu selection process and healthy food guidelines may increase parent satisfaction, and entice more parents to use the online Canteen ordering system.

**Do parents want a new online Uniform Shop ordering system?**

The P&C is responsible for the running of the school Uniform Shop. The profits from the Uniform Shop are also one of the main sources of fundraising by the P&C.

The survey asked parents if they would be interested in a new online Uniform Shop ordering system, and 70% supported this idea. Parents provided the following additional comments:

- Current differences across clothing items within the same size may make affect online ordering and the need to return/exchange items frequently
- How do parents return and exchange items ordered online?
- What would be the pick-up arrangements for online orders (by post? sent home with students? collected from school?)
- Some items are too expensive (e.g., hats that are easily lost and need replacing)
- Some items are ill-fitting and not easily adjusted (e.g., boys' winter sport pants)

***What does this information tell us?***

Parents support the introduction of an online Uniform Shop ordering system. Some practical issues need to be resolved to make the system work efficiently. A review of the pricing of items may identify opportunities for increased competitiveness.

## Are parents interested in participating in P&C activities?

There are many opportunities for parents to help the P&C to provide activities and services for our school and our children. For example, the P&C coordinates the recruitment and support of class parents each year, and the running of a large number of social fundraising events including various BBQs, discos, bush dances, breakfast events, Trivia Night, and the Moon Festival. These activities and services are only possible because many parents volunteer to help, either on a regular or occasional basis.

The survey asked parents if they would be interested in participating in the following activities: attending P&C monthly meetings, helping with the Canteen or Uniform Shop, and helping with fundraising events. Nearly two-thirds of parents (65%, 202 parents) said that they would be interested, and a number of parents provided further comments indicating that they already do so.

Some parents who had limited spare time felt they were not able to participate or were interested in making occasional/limited contributions rather than regular ones. Other comments suggested that some parents may not be well informed about the importance of parents volunteering their help so that the large number of P&C activities and services can be successful. Some parents suggested that better communication about this, including translated information, may increase parents' awareness of and participation in P&C activities and services.

Importantly, 35% of parents (102 parents) did not answer this question. This finding could suggest that these parents do not wish to participate in any P&C activities and services, or that they do not want to participate in the ones listed in the survey (P&C monthly meetings, the Canteen, the Uniform Shop, fundraising events). This issue needs further investigation.

### *What does this information tell us?*

Opportunities exist to increase involvement of more parents in P&C activities and services through more education and raising awareness. Review of the information about the P&C provided to new parents, for example, in the starter pack for school, may provide further communication opportunities.

### 3. NEXT STEPS

The responses from parents to the 2014 P&C Survey have provided incredibly valuable information about areas for improvement, and stronger engagement with the wider parent community. Priority actions in 2015 will include:

- Increased communication with parents about the P&C, its activities and services, and the range of opportunities available to parents to participate and contribute
- Greater use of email communication
- Increased communication about the P&C Master Plan
- Translation of key information into other languages
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### Acknowledgements and thanks

The P&C would like to gratefully acknowledge and thank the following people for making the survey project possible:

- The many parents who completed the P&C survey
- The students in 5G, Mr Galbraith and Mr Skelly for helping to invite parents to complete the survey, and assisting with interpreting results
- Ms Hill for inviting Korean-speaking parents to participate in the survey
- Mr Dodds for his support in allowing school staff and resources to be involved
- Parents, Andrea Austin, Melinda Holmes and Angela Todd for managing the survey project.