

# BERALA PUBLIC SCHOOL



*TO LEARN  
IS TO  
FLOURISH*

## **VISION STATEMENT**

We see Berala Public School as a safe, caring and well resourced environment where our school community promotes a zest for life and a passion for teaching to inspire lifelong learning and informed choices for all students.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Our purpose is to provide stimulating learning experiences and programs which recognise the various stages of learning for people and to guide the individual development of students, within the context of the diverse school community, towards maximum individual achievement. These experiences and programs will enable students to achieve, as a minimum, basic skills, knowledge and values necessary for a person to:

- live a happy and successful life
- contribute meaningfully to society
- cope effectively with change

It is the parental expectation that Berala Public School will give emphasis to:

- the teaching of skills basic to all-round development of the child
- the professionalism of the teachers
- the instilling of self disciplined behaviour for children

## **GUIDING PRINCIPALS**

- we will be flexible, positive and open in our daily routines
- we will listen to different views and give our school community the opportunity to express them
- we will cater for individual needs and well being by implementing relevant programs
- we will communicate with our school community
- we will focus on the school being the centre of the school community

# SCHOOL PROFILE

Berala Public School was established on its present site in 1924 following its original establishment within the Berala Presbyterian Church in 1922. Today, Berala Public School is the largest primary school in the South Western Sydney Region with an enrolment of 1065 students. The school supports students and their families from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds with Chinese (40%), Arabic (22%), Turkish (6%), Pacific Island (6%), Vietnamese (6%) and Afghani (4%) as the main groups of over 35 cultural backgrounds. 96% of students come from Non English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB).

A wide range of student academic ability and social need exists within the school. There is a large percentage of students who perform at the top end of academic achievement. These groups are significantly higher than comparative regional results. There is a small percentage of students who do not achieve at the national benchmarks. Every year a large number of students are successful in gaining entry into academically selective schools and classes. Students perform very well in the national (NAPLAN)) and international tests (UNSW) which are held very year. "Extension" classes are created for each grade from Year 2 – Year 6. This enables high achieving students to work together to consolidate and extend their learning. The school effectively supports students with special needs, such as English as a Second language (ESL) and Community Languages, through the skill of teachers, whole school programs and DET resources. The challenge for the school is to lift the performance of students who fall below the national benchmark. The students play an active role in school decision making through a dynamic and hard working Students' Representative Council (SRC) and the positions of Captains and Prefects.

The school is staffed with a fulltime entitlement of 68.036 teaching staff and 6.272 SASS staff. This entitlement is comprised of 78 teachers and 7 SASS staff. The breakdown of this entitlement shows that the school has:

- Twenty K-2 classes and twenty one 3-6 classes
- Executive staff of Principal, two Deputy Principals, six Assistant Principals and a part time Assistant Principal Mentor for Early Career Teachers
- Forty one classroom teachers, nine Community Language teachers (three Chinese, two Arabic, one Turkish, one Vietnamese, one Farsi and one Tongan)
- Seven ESL teachers
- Three Learning Assistance teachers

# Afghani (Farsi speaking) Community

## BACKGROUND – PARENTS’ SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

- ❖ Most parents have never been to school. They come from poor villages where there were no opportunities.
- ❖ Out of nine parents only 1 had had any schooling.
- ❖ Most parents have had their first child in Afghanistan and their second in Australia. Their children that were born in Afghanistan went to school there.
- ❖ The schools were very different from Australia. At the start there were no tables and chairs. No books were supplied, people had to buy their own books. Therefore people who did not have the means to buy the books missed out. Sometimes 3 books would be shared between the whole class.
- ❖ Teachers came from Iran and Kabul and were mostly trained.
- ❖ Schooling is compulsory in Afghanistan which is fine for the people from urban areas. Although, the people from rural Afghanistan often found it hard to send their children to school for lack of funds.
- ❖ Apart from one of the parents at the meeting, the rest of them do not know how to read or write in their own language.

## PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

- ❖ Good education for their children.
- ❖ They expect their children to have the opportunities that they themselves never had and not be ‘blind’.
- ❖ Parents want their children to be good people.
- ❖ Parents want their children to be good workers and contribute to their society.
- ❖ Improved social skills.
- ❖ Even though they all miss their homeland they want their children to have the best and be given the same opportunities as everyone else in Australia.

## HOW THE SCHOOL CAN SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN

- ❖ Teach parents **how** to help their children with their work. Most parents don’t know how to approach their children to help them.
- ❖ Parents currently attend English classes here at the school once a week but they would like to make that 2 or 3 days per week.
- ❖ Social skills classes not only for the children but also for the parents so that they may teach their children how to interact with others.

# Chinese Speaking Community

## BACKGROUND – PARENTS’ SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

- ❖ Streamed classes with ability grouping
- ❖ School days were from 7.30am till 5pm. Education of the child was solely the teacher’s responsibility therefore the parents only concentrated on work.
- ❖ There were morning sessions and afternoon sessions that were taken by different teachers.
- ❖ Children sat in rows with the teacher at the board. Very teacher directed, structured and strict.
- ❖ Tests were administered all the time.
- ❖ They had 5 or 6 subjects each day and there was homework for each subject each night that needed to be handed in the next day.
- ❖ Parents didn’t need to be literate as the teacher took over every aspect of the child’s education.
- ❖ Books were paid for by the children themselves. If someone could not afford to buy the books themselves there were bursaries, grants and welfare that would aid them.
- ❖ All books had to be taken to and from school every day.
- ❖ All tests completed at school are sent home so that the parents know where their children stand. Very strict education system.
- ❖ Social skills were not important only academic performance.

## PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

- ❖ Parents like the active learning style in Australia but would like help about how to help their children.
- ❖ They want their children to have more practice in grammar.
- ❖ Parents want the self-esteem of children, who don’t make it into the enrichment class, not to be damaged.
- ❖ Parents want their children to have the opportunity for the best education which includes getting into selective schools.
- ❖ They expect high achievement levels.

## HOW THE SCHOOL CAN SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN

- ❖ Communicate with parents on a regular basis not just at the end of the year.
- ❖ At the end of each term books should come home so the parents have the chance to improve their children’s weak points.
- ❖ Parents would like a copy of the class programs as to what will be taught ahead of time so they know what their children will be learning.
- ❖ Parents need to be taught themselves what it means to be an active learner and how they can teach their children to actively participate in learning in the classroom.
- ❖ More specific teaching of grammar.
- ❖ Mathematics online was a suggested resource.

# Turkish Speaking Community

## BACKGROUND – PARENTS’ SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

- ❖ Half of the parents were born in Australia and the other half in Turkey.
- ❖ In Turkey, schools are much more disciplined and strict. Classrooms are set in rows of desks.
- ❖ The lessons are teacher directed but when there are topics that are not understood by the students, the teacher will take the time out to explain it.
- ❖ There were lots of textbooks; one for each subject. All the learning, teaching and homework are done from these textbooks.
- ❖ Content that is taught in each grade is ahead of the content taught in Australia.
- ❖ Children were able to start Kindergarten close to the age of 7 but now it has changed and the starting age is about 6 and is compulsory.
- ❖ There is lots of after school tutoring and students are very competitive.
- ❖ Even though there were a lot more parent/teacher meetings to discuss student progress than in Australia, the level of parent participation/helpers was almost non-existent.
- ❖ Even though almost every child goes to school in Turkey, the school system is unfortunately money orientated. The more money you have, the better resourced school you can go to.
- ❖ Teachers have the same qualifications regardless of whether they teach in a village school or a very wealthy city school.
- ❖ Every morning students sing the national anthem and recite the national pledge.

## PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

- ❖ Parents want their children to be confident.
- ❖ They want their children to be responsible, upstanding citizens.
- ❖ Parents are not worried if their children are not A+ students, as long as they do their best in something they enjoy to do.
- ❖ Children should be happy and feel supported in their choices.

## HOW THE SCHOOL CAN SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN

- ❖ Continuation of extra-curricular activities. They are great.
- ❖ Parents would like another opportunity to speak with teachers at the end of Term 2. This does not have to be such a formal parent/teacher interview but more of just a casual chat about the progress of their children.
- ❖ More excursions.
- ❖ More assistance for the students transitioning to high school.

# Vietnamese Speaking Community

## BACKGROUND – PARENTS’ SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

- ❖ In the South, North and Middle of Vietnam schooling was split into morning and afternoon sessions, and children would attend one session only (4 hours per day)
- ❖ Schooling was split into three stages: K-5 (Primary), 6 – 9 (High School) and 10 – 12 (High school – preparation for tertiary education)
- ❖ In the densely populated regions like North and South Vietnam there would be 40 – 50 children in each class. In the Middle regions of the country class sizes were about 30.
- ❖ Classrooms had tables and chairs but were very small and very hot in the summer months as there was no air-conditioning.
- ❖ Lessons were very teacher directed but teachers took the time to explain if something was not understood.
- ❖ No class/group discussions. Creativity was not encouraged and children were not allowed to say what was on their minds.
- ❖ Text books were bought by the children and if the child could not afford them they would just have to look on with someone else in the class.
- ❖ Memorisation and rote learning were the methods used.
- ❖ Children were shamed in front of the whole school for misbehaviour.

## PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

- ❖ Parents want their children to grow up as respectful individuals.
- ❖ They want their children to “have a better life” than they did.
- ❖ Parents expect their children to have more opportunities and learn in different ways.
- ❖ To get a good job and do well in life.

## HOW THE SCHOOL CAN SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN

- ❖ Give parents advice on how to encourage their children to want to come to school.
- ❖ More frequent discussions with the teacher.
- ❖ Detailed information about homework supplied by the class teacher.

# English Speaking Community

## BACKGROUND – PARENTS’ SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

- ❖ There are many multi-lingual families who speak English as their first language. A number of parents actually attended Berala Public School for their primary education.
- ❖ Teachers were all very caring and loving.
- ❖ Not too much pressure in the classroom and most children were encouraged to learn at their own pace.
- ❖ Group-work was encouraged although at one school reading groups did not exist.
- ❖ For parents who had non-English speaking parents and who were coming to school with no English, Berala Public School was excellent with their ESL program.
- ❖ Parents who attended other schools around our local area were also given access to ESL classes.
- ❖ Help was always available if the students needed any.
- ❖ Parents who came from foreign families and who went to school in areas that were not so multicultural in those days did experience some form of racial discrimination. In present time this type of behaviour no longer exists.

## PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

- ❖ Parents want their children to get the best possible education so they have the ability to choose their path in life.
- ❖ They want their children to have confidence and self-esteem.
- ❖ Parents ultimately want their children to reach their full potential.

## HOW THE SCHOOL CAN SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN

- ❖ Workshops for parents on each subject so they can better help their children.
- ❖ Homework should involve all subjects (esp. in Kindergarten)
- ❖ As children (K-2) have a lot of energy parents would like to see more sporting activities.
- ❖ More information about extra-curricular activities and for what grades they are available.
- ❖ Student achievements should be acknowledged publicly such as in the Berala Beat.

# Pacific Islander Community

## BACKGROUND – PARENTS’ SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

- ❖ Children went to school usually by bus.
- ❖ Text books are supplied by the government.
- ❖ Classes are usually teacher-directed.
- ❖ Level of education is lower than Australia such that a Year 4 student from Australia would be at Year 7 level in Fiji.
- ❖ Teachers are all trained through university and college.
- ❖ There was corporal punishment by way of the ‘rubber hose whacking’ in class and assembly. They believe it was good for discipline.
- ❖ There were lots of excursions.
- ❖

## PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

- ❖ Parents want their children to get a good education in order to continue on to tertiary studies.
- ❖ They want their children to get good jobs and earn a comfortable living.

## HOW THE SCHOOL CAN SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN

- ❖ Workshops for parents on each subject so they can better help their children.
- ❖ Information on **how** to help their children.

# **SUMMARY OF PARENT EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIRED SCHOOL SUPPORT FROM CULTURAL MEETINGS**

## **Parents expectations for their children at school**

- They want their children to gain confidence and have a high level of self-esteem.
- Parents want their children to be responsible and upstanding citizens who contribute to their society.
- Want their children to get the best possible education and be given equal opportunities to learn.
- Parents want their children to reach their full potential.
- All parents want their children to be happy and have the opportunity to choose their 'path' in life.
- They want their children to earn a good, comfortable living and be happy doing it.
- Most parents would like to see their children continue on to higher studies as long as that is what they want to do and makes them happy.

## **How the school can support parents to help their children**

- The majority of the cultural groups mentioned that most parents don't know how to help their children or what it means to be an active learner. They would like *workshops to teach them how to help their children*.
- Most parents would also like *workshops on each subject* so they know what their children learn which would make it easier for them to help.
- Parents would like more *opportunities to communicate regularly with teachers*.
- Parents would like *more information on homework ahead of time*. Also for Kindergarten students the parents believe their homework should involve more than just reading and spelling, it should involve all subjects.
- Most parents were happy with the extra-curricular activities that are provided but would like to see *more sporting activities*.
- A lot of parents don't know what grades *the extra-curricular activities and sporting activities are available* for, so they would like them to either be displayed somewhere or published as a list in the Berala Beat.