



PEGS  
Community  
Report 2023

# Who we are

*Our school is respectful, inclusive and safe, and an exemplar for the pursuit of learning. We create future-ready thinkers and learners by challenging and supporting each other to be more and do more. We embrace a diamond model of education, where boys and girls learn in both single-sex and coeducational environments, to promote learning and social and emotional development. We are proudly a Christian based school that also values the diversity of our community; we provide a welcoming environment to people from all faiths and backgrounds. The education and the breadth of opportunities we provide establish the foundations that enable students to respond to challenges, adapt to a changing world, contribute to society and thrive.*

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# What we are working towards

*A community engaged and empowered in the shared pursuit of excellence in learning for an enriching present and an exceptional future.*

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# Board of Management

Bruce Henderson, Chairman 2022, retired April 2023

Chris Clausen, Vice Chairman 2022, appointed to Chairman April 2023

Greg Aplin  
Elizabeth Dapiran  
Paul Phelan  
David Whiting

Director Rev Paul Blacker, resigned 2023  
Robert Gottliebsen  
Andrew Smith  
Tom Wilson

Domenic Cerantonio  
Lisa Lawry  
Sally Tsang

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## Chairman's message

It is with great pride that I report on the numerous accomplishments and activities of Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School during the 2023 academic year. While it was a year of transition for our School Board, with the retirement of longstanding Chairman Mr Bruce Henderson after an incredible 34 years of exceptional service, it was also a year brimming with opportunities and achievements for our students.

Mr Henderson's departure, along with Director Rev Paul Blacker stepping down from his role, marked the end of an era. However, their combined decades of commitment and guidance have left an indelible mark on the school's growth and success. We are forever grateful for their invaluable contributions.

The 2023 school year was a whirlwind of activity, as our students eagerly embraced the diverse range of curricular and extracurricular prospects before them, including the resumption of international tours after a COVID-enforced hiatus. Aspiring aviators and astronomers embarked on the highly anticipated NASA space tour at year's end, and our musicians headed to Europe for the Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival.

Closer to home, our state-of-the-art new gymnasium provided the perfect venue to host the annual One School Day celebration. Witnessing students converge in this impressive space to commemorate the year was an incredibly proud moment.

Our students' relentless pursuit of excellence extended to the academic arena, with outstanding VCE and NAPLAN results reaffirming the exceptional quality of our programs. Yet, we understand that cultivating well-rounded individuals requires nurturing talents beyond the academic domain. As such, our comprehensive offerings in sport, music, drama, dance, social justice initiatives, and outdoor education, continued to provide invaluable experiences for holistic growth.

For families grappling with financial hardship, the Hardship Committee was a beacon of support. Their timely interventions ensured that no child's education was disrupted due to circumstances beyond their control. The profound gratitude expressed by the assisted families is a testament to the committee's compassionate efforts.

The year also presented its share of challenges, such as the sudden announcement regarding the removal of payroll tax exemptions for independent schools. Our Board of Directors deftly navigated this issue, strategically devising solutions to minimise the impact on our families while safeguarding the superior quality of our educational programs.

Upholding our commitment to child safety, all Directors completed mandatory annual training on the Child Safe Standards, as outlined in Ministerial Order 1359. We also conducted reviews of relevant policies and procedures, ensuring a secure and nurturing environment for our students.

Guided by our Strategic Plan's core pillars – Learning and Thinking, Care and Wellbeing, Engagement and Connection, and Continuity and Sustainability – we diligently documented our progress towards achieving the outlined objectives. These themes will continue to guide our way as we stride ahead.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the efforts of our school management team and staff, who tirelessly devoted themselves to providing unparalleled support and opportunities to our students and families. Their dedication is the backbone of our success.

Finally, I must express my sincere gratitude to my esteemed colleagues on the Board of Directors. Their profound wisdom, unwavering engagement, and steadfast commitment have been invaluable assets to our entire school community. We are truly fortunate to have such capable stewards guiding our institution's journey.

**Chris Clausen**  
Chairman

# Learning and thinking

*Our school provides teaching, learning and thinking of an exceptional quality. Our professional learning and development are built upon both current research and the individual needs of our students. By combining the best of traditional and innovative practices we foster creative and independent thought for students of all abilities.*

New initiatives and developments in 2023 included:

A focus in professional development on evidence-based strategies to support advancements in responsive teaching, with feedback identified as a tool for growth and in developing strategies to support student literacy.

Increased focus on standardised testing data to support targeted intervention programs including Numeracy Plus and Language Plus, offered in the Middle School.

Development of staff groups of practice at Section level to examine best practice statements, strengthen communication and reflection on teaching practice and encourage conversations about pedagogy.

Improved access to data at every level with essential support provided by ICT and eLearning.

## VCE results

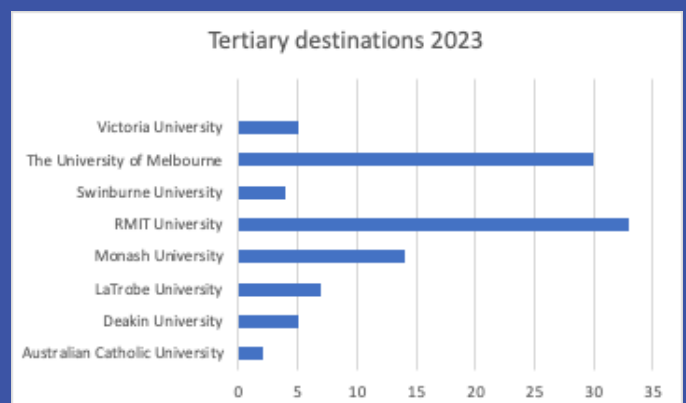
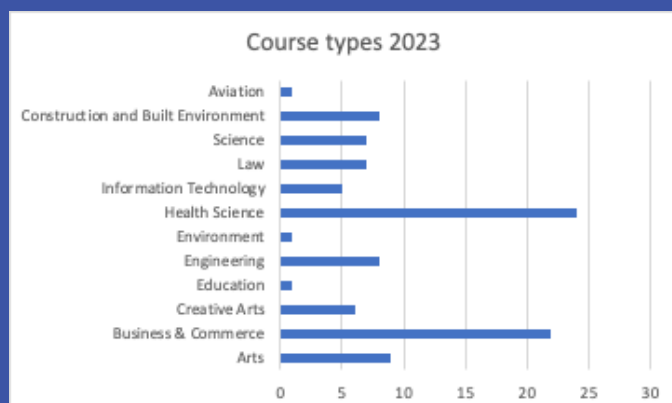
All 297 candidates successfully completed the VCE.

Four students achieved the highest possible ATAR of 99.95 and 23 students or eight per cent scored 99 or above, placing them in the top one per cent of the state and 40 per cent achieved an ATAR of 90 or above. The median ATAR at PEGS was 86.15 placing 50 per cent of our students in the top 14 per cent of the state.

All VCE subjects are scored out of 50 and, in each subject, less than eight per cent of candidates statewide obtain a score of 40 or above. At PEGS 321 study scores were at or above 40. The median study score was 34. Perfect scores of 50 were recorded on 15 occasions in five subjects.

RMIT University was the most popular tertiary destination, attracting 33 per cent of our students, followed by The University of Melbourne at 30 per cent. Health Science was the most popular area of study, closely followed by Business and Commerce, with Arts third. More than 94 per cent of students received an offer for their first or second tertiary course preference.

Destinations of students who completed VCE in 2023 are summarised below:











# NAPLAN literacy and numeracy benchmarks

Students in Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine participated in the annual National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests. In 2023 the date for NAPLAN testing was shifted from May to March, and a new online testing regime designed to provide more information about student progress was introduced in all tests except Year Three Writing. New descriptors were defined for each assessment, meaning results for 2023 cannot be directly compared with results from previous years.

NAPLAN proficiency standards introduced in 2023 include four levels for each assessment at each year level. Descriptors are:

- **Exceeding:** the student's result exceeds expectations at the time of testing.
- **Strong:** the student's result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing.
- **Developing:** the student's result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing.
- **Needs additional support:** the student's result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

More than 80 per cent of PEGS students were identified as Strong or Exceeding expectations in every test component at every level.

Table 1: Percentage of PEGS students achieving exceeding or strong proficiency standards for each assessment in 2023.

Proficiency Exceeding or Strong	Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar and Punctuation	Numeracy
Year 3	91	95	82	83	88
Year 5	94	94	85	91	89
Year 7	93	88	94	86	94
Year 9	88	90	91	83	94

PEGS mean scores are compared with State mean scores in Table 2. As in previous years our scores continue to be well above the State average in all components of the test program.

Table 2: Comparison of State and PEGS mean scores

	Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar and Punctuation	Numeracy
<b>Year 3</b>					
State 2023	416	424	410	419	418
<b>PEGS 2023</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>462</b>
<b>Year 5</b>					
State 2023	507	498	494	503	494
<b>PEGS 2023</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>549</b>
<b>Year 7</b>					
State 2023	545	547	541	543	544
<b>PEGS 2023</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>615</b>
<b>Year 9</b>					
State 2023	572	579	570	564	574
<b>PEGS 2023</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>640</b>

# Standardised tests and competitions

Once again our students participated successfully in a number of standardised tests and national competitions. The following achievements were recorded:

## In Mathematics

Australian Mathematics Competition

Years 3-6: 1 Prize, 15 High Distinctions, 76 Distinctions,  
Years 7-10: 2 Prizes, 15 High Distinctions, 129 Distinctions;

Australian Mathematics Olympiad

Junior: 7 perfect scores, top 10% school,  
Intermediate – 1 High Distinction, Senior – 1 Australian training tournament- Level A;  
Computational and Algorithmic Thinking: 11 High Distinctions, 30 Distinctions;

The University of Melbourne/ACEMS Secondary School Mathematics Competition

Intermediate Division: 1 Outstanding,  
Senior Division: 3 Certificate of Merit;

Maths Games Days

Years 5-6: 2 First place, 1 Second place,  
Years 7-10: 3 First place, 1 Third place;

Maths Talent Quest (Years 2-6) – National level: 2 year-level awards,

Year 6 Award of Mathematical Excellence, 23 High Distinctions.

## In Science

International Chemistry Quiz (Years 11, 12) – 25 High Distinctions;

Junior Science Olympiad (Years 7-10) – 4 High Distinctions, 8 Distinctions;

Australian National Chemistry Quiz (Years 7-10) – 27 High Distinctions, 49 Distinctions.

## In Languages

Chinese: CLTAV Competition Reading

Year 7: Second Prize,  
Year 9: Medallion;

French: Alliance Française Competition

Year 7-10 Recitation - 22 awards,  
Years 11-12: Oral – 5 awards, Writing – 5 awards, First Prize, Best student (Year 11);

German: AGTV Poetry Competition

Year 7: Gold medal, Silver medal and State Third Prize,  
Year 8: Gold medal,  
Year 9: Bronze medal;  
Goethe Institute Summer Camp scholarship (Year 11) – 1 participant;

Latin: National Latin Examination – 12 awards.











# Care and wellbeing

*Care and wellbeing are central to school life. Building on our association with the Uniting Church, we are a community with a strong sense of belonging. We constantly seek to enhance our approach to care and wellbeing so that students are best prepared to make well-informed decisions, and to deal positively with whatever the future holds.*

The appointment of school nurses at each campus has improved consistency of care and supported review of practices at a system level.

Briefings on Workplace Health and Safety legislation, and in particular psychosocial hazards and an updated sexual harassment policy have supported the maintenance of a safe working environment.

Broad engagement of staff and students with the Reconciliation Action Plan has been encouraged. Key actions of the Reconciliation Action Plan include an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence on the RAP committee, cultural competence training for staff, appropriate use of the Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country and taking action against racism through formal curriculum and informal opportunities.

Support for care and wellbeing has also been provided by a number of programs including drug and alcohol education, eSafety incursions, and Victoria Police education sessions. Additional support for parents is provided through parent resource pages on PEGSpace.

Additional actions to encourage student participation and leadership were taken in all Sections, with a new School leadership structure launched and student leaders formalised at each Section.

## Student attendance and retention

The average enrolment from Prep to Year Twelve in 2023 was 2972 and the average attendance rate was 93.6 per cent.

**Table 3:** Average attendance rate at each year level

Primary	Percentage attendance	Secondary	Percentage attendance
Prep	94	Year 7	94
Year 1	93	Year 8	93
Year 2	94	Year 9	92
Year 3	93	Year 10	94
Year 4	94	Year 11	96
Year 5	94	Year 12	96
Year 6	93		

From a total of 295 students enrolled in Year Nine in 2020, 278 remained at PEGS in 2023, a retention rate of 93 per cent.

# Engagement and connections

*Our engagement and connections across the school, families and wider community provides strength and support.*

*Our school is a diverse community, and as a result our students and staff have infinite opportunities to learn from others. Our broad co-curricular offerings promote engagement and increase connectedness across the school.*

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The busy co-curricular calendar enhances student enjoyment of school and engagement in school life. Students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of co-curricular activities including music, drama, dance, public speaking and sport.

In the secondary school students participate in at least two co-curricular activities including at least one season of sport each year.

In summer and winter competitions, students compete in 109 teams across 12 sports in the APS/AGSV competition and 123 teams across 14 sports in the AGSV competition and an additional eight mixed gender competitions and activities.

Highlights of 2023

## **In Sport**

Combined AGSV representatives: 49 students;

AGSV Premiers (equal): Girls Cross Country;

AGSV Athletics: 27 Gold medals;

Triathlon: State Champions, National Championships – 3 representatives;

Victorian All Schools Athletics Championships – 3 Firsts, 2 Seconds;

National All Schools Athletic Championships – 200m Third place;

National Schools Soccer Championships (Year 6) – 2 representatives.

## **In Chess**

Australian Junior Chess Championships – 2 Thirds;

Chess Oceania Zonals – Equal Second, Candidate Master title - 2 selections;

Chess Victoria Zonals –Third place.

## **In Public Speaking**

DAV Schools Competition: Years 9 -12

Year 12 team – semi-finals;

Year 12 State team representative;

Year 11 team – octo -finals;

Year 10 team – octo-finals;

Year 9 – 7 best speaker awards;

Year 7 – interschool debating introduced;

UNSC Evatt Trophy: State finalists;

VCAA Plain English – Speaking Award: State semi-finals;

Rostrum Voice of Youth: Finalist (Year 7) and State emergency (Year 10).



## In the Performing Arts

**Music:** Four major concerts held in the HR Stevens Auditorium featured 700 students from all Sections, the 'Monday@6' online concerts series encouraged students to perform for an extended audience throughout the year and department concerts saw performances by Brass, Woodwind, String, Piano, Percussion, Vocal, Music Technology and Suzuki program and VCE Music Performance students.

'Generations in Jazz' at Mt Gambier made a welcome return to the Music calendar for the Jazz Ensemble and Stage Band in May, with opportunities to listen to and work with an exceptional range of visiting artists.

The mid-year holidays provided the opportunity for a two-week European Music Tour for a group of students from Year Nine to Twelve. Including visits to Salzburg, Vienna and Munich and performances in each city, a highlight was participation in the annual Summa Cum Laude Festival in Vienna.

The annual Concerto Concert showcased the talents of our most advanced students with seven student performers accompanied by the Curro Strings and Symphony Orchestra in works from the 18th to 20th century.

The Choir Camp weekend at Eildon was a highlight in Term One and the approach of Christmas was celebrated by the school community with the Senior and Junior Choirs at the Carol Service at St Paul's Cathedral.

In a continuing collaboration, the Animation Club for Middle School students joined with the Year Two string program in a multimedia showcase during a concert with all Year Two students performing.

**Drama:** Students from Year Seven to Year Twelve presented a contemporary Australian play, *The Chapel, the Fire and the Dead Cat* by Madelaine Nunn. In an exciting initiative, students directed, co-produced and designed the production, working within a Student Mentor Program.

**Dance:** Dance is a summer and winter sport offering and participation in the program has expanded considerably. A lunchtime Junior Dance Club was also included for senior primary students in addition to their regular dance and drama classes.

**Junior Musical:** Actors, musicians and crew from Years Six to Eight took a step back to the Eighties with the performance of *Xanadu: JR* over three nights in early August. A combination of Greek goddesses, big hair and roller disco, the production was a glittering success for cast, crew and audience.



# Continuity and sustainability

*Our focus on continuity and sustainability ensures we maintain the reputation of our school today, and for generations to come.*

*The school has a strong foundation of sound financial, resource and asset management. We continue to implement strategies, systems and processes that reinforce our capacity, effectiveness and financial independence.*

*We know that the success of our school relies on attracting, developing and retaining staff of the highest calibre. We also recognise that developing resources and creating assets, including ICT and facilities remain strategic objectives.*

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## Finance

PEGS ensures that its finances are managed effectively and efficiently so that educational goals are achieved. The annual income for 2023 was \$79.2 million and included \$55.5 million from student fees and \$21 million from government recurrent funding. Expenditure of \$78.2 million included salary and teaching expenses of \$66.3 million and administrative expenses, general, maintenance, provisions and depreciation of \$11.9 million. The surplus was used to finance its capital and IT infrastructure projects.

## Our Staff

In 2023 the school employed 308 teachers in 286.7 full time equivalent positions and 189 non-teaching staff in 148.0 full time equivalent positions. All teachers were suitably qualified and registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. All classroom teachers hold a teaching degree or higher qualification and 30.4 per cent of teachers held a Masters degree or higher qualification. Teacher retention was 90 per cent and non-teaching staff retention was 92 per cent. Staff attendance was 94.5 per cent.

### Professional Learning

Professional learning activities were available to all staff including teaching and non-teaching staff and all staff are required to complete a professional learning plan annually.

In 2023, staff completed 15,802 hours of professional learning. On average, each full-time equivalent staff member completed 4.8 days of training. Approximately 1.5 per cent of total remuneration was invested in professional learning.

In 2023, professional learning was focused on supporting student wellbeing and building positive behaviour practices (2606 hours) across the school.

There was also a strong focus on building leadership capacity (2981 hours), including the Adaptive Leadership program, with 52 staff completing extensive training and team-based project work across the year. All Deputy Heads of Sections participated in a training program to improve positive behaviour practices. Further professional learning to extend on this work was completed by Gottliebsen House teachers, with a view to extend this to other sections in 2024.

Primary and Middle School teachers continued to work with Terri Campbell to enhance their practices in teaching literacy (548 hours).

Senior School teachers completed professional learning in areas including new VCE study design training, collaborative investigation, effective feedback, and Communities of Practice. Staff were encouraged to attend targeted professional learning activities to address specific learning priorities and all teachers completed training to support students with individual needs.

Section based professional learning addressed learning and development and student wellbeing needs and faculty based professional learning improved curriculum knowledge, study design and teaching practices. Staff members were actively encouraged to attend targeted, external faculty association and educational sector conferences and seminars.

New staff completed a total of 549 hours of induction training, including safety and compliance training units. All staff completed Child Safety and Mandatory Reporting training, Sexual Harassment Awareness training, Cybersafety and Phishing training.

Staff members completed 1414 hours of First Aid training, including CPR, Asthma and Anaphylaxis and Perform CPR refresher training, and Emergency Preparedness training.

Three staff members undertook 1576 hours of tertiary studies supported by the school with a study assistance payment.

### **Staff feedback**

Staff members had the opportunity to provide feedback to the school leadership through the MMG Staff Satisfaction Survey. They also provided further feedback through individual discussions, staff meetings and committees including the Consultative Committee, Occupational Health and Safety Committee, and Thinking and Learning Committee. Staff feedback was also sought through annual Professional Learning planning and reviews, new staff satisfaction surveys and staff exit surveys.

Key themes arising from new staff satisfaction surveys were:

- The school has a strong emphasis on building rapport with students, providing a diverse education, and addressing staff concerns collaboratively, leading to a collegiate atmosphere and academic excellence together with a strong sense of belonging and satisfaction among the staff.
- The emphasis on staff and student wellbeing, clear expectations, effective induction processes, and autonomy contribute to a positive, inclusive environment where time and resources are dedicated to professional and personal growth.
- The school cultivates a supportive and inclusive environment, where both staff and students thrive. There is a strong emphasis on wellbeing, and collaborative initiatives, which fosters a culture of care and growth.

The majority of staff members leaving PEGS reported in exit surveys that their experience had been either positive or very positive on all measures, with areas of highest satisfaction relating to teamwork, pay and conditions, clear work expectations, feedback from coordinators, workload, staff wellbeing, and student care and wellbeing.







# Surveys of Satisfaction

MMG Education was engaged to conduct satisfaction surveys of parents, students and staff in 2023. Results across a range of domains was compared with the MMG database comprising scores from schools recording an average Capacity to Contribute comparable to PEGS.

## Student survey

Students from Year Six to Twelve completed the MMG Education survey. Data was received from 1714 respondents, representing an 88 per cent response rate, and results across a range of domains was compared with the MMG benchmark. An average satisfaction rating of 70 per cent is compared with the MMG average database of 75 per cent. High satisfaction scores (defined as over 70 per cent) were recorded for PEGS students in the following key benchmark areas: Academic Program, Cocurricular Program, Music Program, Facilities and Resources. Attention on student wellbeing and student perception of school management and leadership were areas registering as in need of review.

Differences across year levels were evident for measures of student wellbeing and perceived safety of the environment with Year 6 students recording High/Very High mean scores for emphasis placed on student wellbeing (80 percent) while Middle and Senior respondents recorded a mean moderate satisfaction score of 63 per cent. These scores are compared with the MMG benchmark of 69 per cent.

## Staff survey

All staff members were invited to participate in the MMG Staff Satisfaction survey measuring staff satisfaction. Emphasis was placed on academic performance, student wellbeing, communication within the school, management and school leadership, facilities and resources, climate and culture, staff wellbeing and professional learning. 288 members, (44 per cent) across all Sections of the school chose to participate, comprising 189 teaching staff (63 per cent) and 99 general staff.

Considering perceptions of the school program, PEGS staff recorded an average satisfaction rating of 75 per cent compared with the MMG average database of staff scores of 77 per cent. Staff members reported a very high level of satisfaction (defined as over 80 per cent) with the quality of the academic program, and high mean scores (over 70 per cent) for other key benchmark areas: Sports Program, Co-Curricular Program, Music Program, Facilities and Resources, Management and Leadership, Reputation and Affinity.

Scores for staff-related factors examined in the survey were compared with the MMG Staff Benchmark Database, with an average of 73 per cent recorded for both groups. PEGS staff registered a very high score for Staff Attitude and equal or better scores

than the benchmark for Professional Learning and Goal Congruence. Overall, scores for staff wellbeing, professional learning opportunities and leadership support showed some variability across items although the PEGS mean accorded with the MMG benchmark in each case.

## Parent survey

Parents were invited to participate in the MMG Education online survey of satisfaction. Data was received from 894 respondents representing a 46 per cent response rate and included 142 per cents new to the school. Results across a range of domains was compared with the MMG database. An average satisfaction score of 78 per cent compares with the MMG School benchmark of 80 per cent with very high satisfaction scores (defined as over 80 per cent) recorded for the following key benchmark areas: Overall Satisfaction, Academic Program, Facilities and Resources, and Music Program. Parents new to the school expressed very positive experiences (87 per cent agreement) related to starting at PEGS. In particular, orientation support for their child, provision of information and services related to enrolment procedures were very highly regarded.

Compared with the reference group, the perceptions of PEGS parents were most favourable with regard to the academic program offered and the facilities and resources provided to support learning. Somewhat variable scores were recorded for Student Wellbeing, with mean scores for Junior School parents in the Very High range (over 80 per cent) for Safe and Caring Environment and Middle and Senior School parents in the High range (over 70 per cent).

Parents ranked the following reasons as most important in choosing PEGS for their children: Quality of teaching (98 per cent), Academic standards (96 per cent), Focus on student wellbeing (96 per cent), Balanced education (93 per cent), Quality education at reasonable expense (93 per cent).

