



EXPERIENCE

INTEGRITY

KNOWLEDGE

ANNUAL REPORT

2020/21



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HEAD OF SCHOOL'S WELCOME

While it has only been twelve months in the making it would certainly appear that the 2020/2021 school year drew in more than a typical year's worth of adventure, adaptation and challenge. This annual report identifies how through 2020/21 we at Green Shoots International School (GSIS) kept our vision on being an inspirational learning community that fosters happy, mindful and creative thinkers committed to the sustainable development of our world and operated within the eight core values that are the ethos and lifeblood of this school.

Landing in Hanoi to be whisked away in a blue hazmat suit and directly into two weeks of strict quarantine was certainly an amazing introduction to life here in Vietnam. While it required two more weeks of online contact with folks at the school, it did mean that my arrival in Hoi An was soon to be a reality. It certainly was tremendously exciting after such a long delay and many challenges to be able to walk through the campus gates on 21 October to such a warm and open welcome.

Throughout the year there was extensive ongoing work taking place for the renewal of our compliance status with COBIS (Council of British International Schools). The primary purpose that GSIS maintains its good standing of compliance is to assure students, parents, other stakeholders and the public that we are committed and accountable to maintaining, through continuous improvement, a quality international education. The documentation of

our achievement, the commitment to maintaining the internationalism of our programme, the revision of policies to align with developments and the strengthening of our student safeguarding practices were but a few of our areas of focus.

Progress was made with the formation of the new Parent Network which allowed for a collaborative exchange of ideas for school improvement. Input from parents was also received through focus groups. As an outcome, changes were made to how information was communicated and the creation of a GSIS Parent portal which organized relevant information so that this was easily and readily accessible.

Like in schools around the world, the Covid pandemic brought challenges and opportunities to our community. While the experiences of Covid related restrictions intermittently impacted the full operations of the school campus, teaching and learning continued as distance learning strategies were further implemented and fine tuned. With the ongoing need for adaptability and flexibility the curriculum was delivered in an effective and progressive manner to support positive student learning and engagement. While everyone would agree that distance learning is not the ideal, it must be recognised that students and families were positive in their understanding and that faculty developed systems to enhance learning in creative and engaging ways. Pandemic restrictions were

not the only challenges that the school faced through the year. Mother nature brought with her a strong and aggressive typhoon and storm season. Student safety was again paramount resulting in additional school closures and adaptation to learning short-term from a distance.

Through the year the school took every opportunity to support faculty in their ongoing professional development and growth. While travel restrictions prevented international professional development opportunities, internal resources were employed to keep faculty abreast with ongoing education strategies and academic development. True to the events of a not so typical year, a larger number of staff than the norm for GSIS moved on at the end of the school year. This type of faculty movement is part of the nature of international education. It provides for the injection of new and broader thinking, it brings a different and new perspective, it supports our status as an international school; all of which support the academic vitality of the programme we offer and student learning.

In reviewing the 2020/21 year we can honor our achievements particularly in the face of the Covid pandemic, climatic extremes, economic pressures the community and our host country are enduring, the demographic changes taking place around us and the global changes and challenges our world is facing.

I look back at the year and celebrate the tenacity in our endurance, our adaptability within every circumstance, the demonstrations of thoughtfulness and cooperation that we have witnessed and shared as a community, the independence we have all had to show and our planning for sustainability as a school and a community into the future. All of this makes me proud of who we are at GSIS. We are a community that lives by our actions and the values we esteem to and a community that honors respect and integrity.

I am joyed to see the smiles and laughter of learning and look forward, with you all, to the vision of great success that lies ahead for Green Shoots International School.

Rick Elya

MA, Organization and Leadership
MA, Teaching



DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

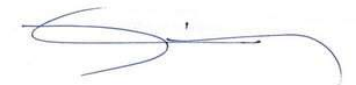
This year was GSIS's tenth year of operation, and we will celebrate our tenth 'birthday' in October 2021, when we mark the actual date a decade ago that we opened our first kindergarten classes in Hoi An. What a decade of discovery!

Rewind another decade, and for the first time in more than 20 years I spent this whole school year outside of Vietnam. It was a strange feeling, knowing that everything I have worked so hard to build over the past decade was facing its toughest challenge yet at a time when I was unable to return to be with you all. Each day I would switch on my laptop at 6.30am and touch base with Rick, Sue, and other members of the leadership and admin teams, keeping abreast of what was happening in Hoi An while looking out of my window at urban Oxford. A truly strange year on so many levels.

Stranger, I'm sure, for Rick, who started his tenure with us working through the night in the US while students, staff and families in Hoi An and Da Nang launched into a new school year online. A few weeks later, as they returned to campus, Rick continued his nocturnal existence in Michigan, awaiting

permission and flights to enter Vietnam through some of the world's toughest COVID travel restrictions. His introduction to life in our home country was a hotel room in downtown Hanoi before he was finally able to travel to Hoi An and meet you all in person....which puts GSIS families one step ahead of me, as I have not yet had the opportunity to meet Rick, or indeed several of our new faculty members, face to face! I very much look forward to doing so as soon as I'm able to re-enter Vietnam.

Many things have undoubtedly changed these past 18 months, but even more have remained the same. The long-term needs of our children have not been changed by the current struggles families and businesses face. The values we hope to instill in them will not be knocked off course by the challenge of life under lockdown or distance learning. We are what we believe, and if we can continue to live that belief even when life is hard then we are proof that life goes on. Like the phoenix, we will rebuild from the ashes and find our equilibrium once again. Allow me here to express my gratitude to, and admiration for, the resilience and hard work of our students, staff and parents this year,



Catherine McKinley

MSc, Public Policy and Management, PGDip,
New Media, Governance and Democracy

GUIDING STATEMENTS

GSIS' **core value of Respect** is fed by seven others: Adaptability, Tenacity, Independence, Sustainability, Thoughtfulness, Integrity and Cooperation. We chose these values because we believe they give us the tools to live fulfilling and compassionate lives. Every year we focus on each value for a period of several weeks. Assemblies, discussions, and classroom activities combine to help students understand the importance of the value being discussed and how to integrate it into their life.

INDEPENDENCE

SUSTAINABILITY

INTEGRITY

TENACITY

ADAPTABILITY

THOUGHTFULNESS

COOPERATION

R E S P E C T

This year started with the appearance of a **new mural** on our campus: our **Values Tree** grew up the side of the Sky Building and was soon covered in handprint leaves added by students and staff. This image was a strong physical representation of the coming together of our community, united by our values at a very difficult time.

When in future years we look back on 2020/21, we will remember the challenges: more distance learning, the struggles of cross-border travel, the financial constraints shared by everyone, the heartbreak of watching local businesses close and not knowing when or if they will reopen. But I hope and believe that we will also look back on this time as one of reflection, renewal, and the beginnings of rebirth for our community. It is when times are tough that our true natures are exposed and our real priorities made clear. We hope that by instilling a solid set of values from an early age, we have helped each and every GSIS student thrive and move toward the long and successful life we know they will live in the decades to come!



GOVERNANCE & STANDARDS

Corporate Governance (Accountability)

The **GSIS Advisory Board** continued to meet regularly throughout the year, helping school leadership balance the short-term needs of our community with the sustainable goals that will ensure we can provide a high-quality education for children over the long-term.

New members: Retiring after several years of advising GSIS's owner, our financial advisor David King was replaced by Tony Graham, whose background and expertise were shared with all families via our weekly newsletter and more widely on the school's website. Shortly after Tony's entry onto the board we welcomed a forth advisor, Giang Tran, who consults on issues relating to sustainable practice, social impact, and values-led development. Giang's biography was publicised through the same channels.

Through the course of five meetings in 2020/21, at which advisors, GSIS's owner, and our head of school were present, the board covered **issues** including:

- The impact of COVID on our community and ways to ensure continued quality learning for our students
- Risk assessment and mitigation
- Long-term expansion plans as we enter our second decade
- Changes to, and expansion of, the GSIS education programme
- Improvements to our communication systems and procedures
- Safeguarding systems development
- Financial management and sustainability
- COBIS membership renewal
- Facilities enhancement, and
- Marketing and enrolment

Consultation and Information Sharing

This year saw the publication of our new **Strategic Plan**, which covers the period from 2021 to 2026 and lays out the school's priorities in four core areas:

- Learn (educational programme)
- Unite (community)
- Thrive (well being)
- Brace (infrastructure)

The strategy was developed following consultation with all stakeholder groups (staff, parents, and students) during the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years.

Staff were interviewed individually or in groups (as per the preference of those who

participated) by GSIS director, and were asked to offer suggestions for change or improvement

Parents took part in Focus Group conversations with our marketing team (see Page 29)

Students raised ideas through the newly formed Student Council, which this year replaced the Earth Ambassadors student group that had, in previous years, informally represented student voices (See Page 25)

The strategy was shared in English and in Vietnamese directly to parents and publicly via our website.

External Validation (Standards)

GSIS became a **Council of British International Schools (COBIS) member school** in 2015, with membership renewable after five years in the summer of 2020. Our renewal was delayed due to travel restrictions introduced by the Vietnamese government, which prevented COBIS accreditation team members from entering the country. Early in the 2020/21 school year, as COBIS launched an online accreditation system, we were able to begin the renewal process, which was successfully concluded in June 2021 and our **membership confirmed for a further five years until 2026**.

The renewal process built upon many of the improvements already made in 2019 when GSIS earned membership of the Council of International Schools (CIS) and became the first CIS school in central Vietnam.

Specific focus this time around was on **safety and safeguarding**: the systems and processes that protect children from harm and ensure a safe working and learning environment. As part of our COBIS membership renewal we

put in place a number of new safeguarding measures and expanded those that were already in place. We:

- Developed Equal Opportunities and Safeguarding Policies
- Identified a Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Created a Single Central Record (SCR) to record staff qualifications and safety clearances
- Gave safeguarding training to all staff and board members
- Installed a new central automatic fire alarm signal system
- Built an emergency exit staircase in the Sky Building, and
- Introduced a school-wide identification badge system including staff, parents and campus visitors

Our COBIS renewal represents the 4th time in our 10-year history that GSIS has been assessed by an international education standards setting body, and these changes have put us **on the path to CIS accredited membership**, which we expect to complete during the 2022/23 school year or before.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

This year, our tenth, marked the **end of our first decade of operation**. Celebrations of this landmark moment will take place in the upcoming school year (2021/22), following our 10th 'birthday' in October 2021.

As in 2019/20, we spent some time **learning by distance** when our campus was closed by local authorities managing the spread of **COVID**. These closures were more limited in nature and shorter lived than in the previous year, allowing us to operate 'normally' for most of the year, albeit with restrictions in place such as temperature checks, mask wearing, separated seating and other precautionary health measures.

The cumulative impact of Vietnam's border closures and the loss of tourism upon which our community is heavily reliant meant that more families needed **financial and other forms of support** from the school (see Support section on Pages 22 - 23 for more details).

In the **Early Years** section this year, we strengthened our focus on **Reggio Emilia** pedagogy, learning from our new Reggio-trained Head of Early Years. The Reggio philosophy encourages young children to lead their own learning, selecting (with guidance from a teacher) activities that interest them and then learning through these activities. Some stand out examples of child-led learning this year included 'the pursuit of coconuts' from trees within their play area and a plan to make playdough that ended up becoming a flour fight!

In the **Primary school**, we prioritised the mapping out of our International **Primary Curriculum (IPC)** units across the year levels to provide students with balanced engagement in topics of study in science and humanities. In the short window of time we had to travel, we took the opportunity to go beyond the town limits and piloted an overnight excursion experience to Hue for the Year 5/6 class as a part of their IPC unit on ancient cultures and local history. Other trips took primary students around Hoi An where they deepened their knowledge and understanding of topics taught through the IPC using real life situations.

Our **Secondary school** launched the **Green Shoots Global Citizenship certificate**, which challenges our oldest students to meet a number of non-academic goals that will prepare them for entry into the International Baccalaureate upon completion of their IGCSE programme. Areas of focus include: Leadership, Action, Personal Development, Internationalism, and Creativity.

This year our **Summer Camp** attracted record numbers of participants, reaching almost 400 children over the four-week period (of which we were sadly unable to open for the final week due to renewed lockdown restrictions in Hoi An). The summer programme was themed around four distinct areas of play and language learning and was developed and led by our Vietnamese lead- and co-teachers and overseen by school leadership.





INTERNATIONALISM



This year GSIS was home to **students from around 25 countries** who received their education from faculty members hailing from 8 countries across 4 continents. No single national group made up more than 11% of our student body, making GSIS a truly international community.

A culture of internationalism is promoted through the **curriculum**, such as IPC units, Global Perspective classes, and our new Global Citizenship Certificate (see page 10) through which we actively seek learning opportunities around the concept of diversity.

Events (see page 31) through the year reflected this diversity, with celebration of the cultures behind our language programmes particularly prevalent. 'Francofun' Week highlighted elements of French culture, and school-wide celebrations of key Vietnamese holidays such as mid Autumn Festival and Tet (Lunar New year) introduced expatriate students to their host culture and allowed Vietnamese students to showcase their heritage.

Evidence of internationalism was an important part of our **COBIS membership renewal process** (See page 9), during which we received commendation from the COBIS accreditation team for our values and vision.

The border closures introduced by Vietnam in response to COVID meant some changes to our **GAP year programme** through which we bring IB Diploma graduates into Hoi An from the United World College group. We started the year with two GAP students who traveled from Hanoi: Miena, a young teacher with an interest in GSIS's sustainability work and Ngan, an IB Diploma graduate from UNIS, Hanoi's premier international school. Miena returned to her family in South Africa after a few months with us when a gap in Vietnam's flight restrictions made international travel possible. Ngan was later joined by another former UNIS student, Lam, also from Hanoi. Their presence within our community was invaluable as we made the most of our inability to travel to learn more about our host nation.

This year we also welcomed two **interns from Da Nang university** who joined GSIS marketing and admin departments and built their professional skills in an international environment. Post COVID, when it is possible to travel reliably between Da Nang and Quang Nam provinces again, we look forward to continuing this outreach programme.



SUSTAINABILITY

Systems thinking

This year we continued our **holistic, school-wide approach to sustainable growth**, remaining focused on balancing the short-term needs of a community under stress during the COVID pandemic with our longer-term commitment to provision of education in our region. Like any **balancing act** this was, at times, incredibly difficult. Despite this, we successfully provided a continuous, high quality education to the children in our care - our primary goal at all times - whilst keeping an eye on the future and preparing to meet future needs as they arise.

In February, our director participated in a **virtual School Leadership conference** hosted by the Council of British International Schools, during which she gave a presentation on Sustainable Practice in Education. She showcased how GSIS integrates sustainability into every facet of life; from curriculum to values, mealtimes to ECAs, purchasing to financial planning, and all other aspects of daily life and long-term thinking. Thanking her after the event, COBIS organisers said participants had been impressed with the degree to which a small school like ours has succeeded in integrating sustainable practice across the board.



Student Action

In August, students and faculty took lessons learned during **sustainability training by Compass Education** the previous year and decided to **'regreen' our campus**. Flowers and other plants were added to our eating deck and to classrooms, while secondary students used their 'Community, Environment, Life Skills and Community' (CELS) class to grow vegetables in the Antheia Garden. Early Years students took a Reggio approach to their own veggie patch using recycled materials found around campus and contributed by older students.

A **beach cleanup** in September brought together students and community members in a pirate-themed effort to keep our town litter-free. In October, a GSIS dad and book author read his book **Too Much Stuff** to younger students, reminding them how we need much less than we think. We also noted **Climate Action Week** with a variety of activities including a week of vegetarian eating.

In November, GSIS entered 25 runners into the Hoi An Heritage Run to raise awareness of the need for **sustainable tourism** in our UNESCO Heritage home town. A few weeks later, secondary students produced a website

showcasing their work on endangered species, and after the Christmas break they visited **GreenViet Education** in Son Tra to learn more about the area's unique ecosystem and biodiversity.

In March, secondary students participated in a **conference looking at the impact of COVID** on our world and hosted by UNIS school in New York. The conference built debating skills and gave our students access to a broad range of ideas from around the world. Unable to mark **Earth Hour** together due to COVID campus closure, we held our own Earth Hour celebration when our campus reopened a few days later. **Earth Week** included a series of school-wide and class-based awareness raising activities.

In April, our Year 10 students launched the **Green Hub**, a place where staff, parents and students can share and recycle 'stuff' they no longer need. A workshop hosted by the students offered an introduction to the Hub and to ReForm Plastics, a Da Nang-based organisation that helps people sort and reuse low-grade plastic that would not otherwise be recycled. We created a collection station for these on campus.



LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

French remains the main second and foreign language at GSIS, with children offered the opportunity to learn the language from scratch or develop strong second-language or mother-tongue skills from one of our two native French teachers. French culture was highlighted during 'Francofun' week, which we were glad to be able to celebrate on campus. The week included contributions from French, Belgian and Swiss families, as well as from the French Institute in Da Nang.

Our **Vietnamese** programme also provided foreign- and mother-tongue options, each delivered in small groups by our qualified co-teachers. Vietnamese culture was widely celebrated throughout the year, as noted in other parts of this report.

Responding to requests from some families for **German** language lessons, we provided

learning space to ensure that this, too, was offered as a mother-tongue class. The lessons were organised by the parents but scheduled within the regular school day. In previous years we have supported **other language learning requests** for mother- and second-language opportunities, including Korean, Japanese, Mandarin and Spanish.

Foreign-language English speakers received support through our EAL programme (see page 22).

All students benefited from a series of events that highlighted the **joy of reading and appreciating language**. These included Book Character Dress-up Day on Friday, which marked the end of Book Week, our annual Read-a-thon, a book swap linked into Green Hub (See Page 15), and workshops by published authors within our community.



THE ARTS

Fine Art

This year the **primary school** built a wide range of artistic skills (drawing, painting, sculpture, muraling, montage) through activities focused around nature, fantasy, architecture, people, toys, cultural masks, animal sculptures, and protest art. Some studied the work of Pablo Picasso as part of an IPC unit 'Who Am I?'.

Secondary students expressed their feelings, self-identity and interests using mixed media, drawing and painting projects that rounded out a portfolio around thought-provoking themes such as Dreams, Travel, Cubism, Identity, and Structure.

Music

A **GSIS choir** was formed this year and ran as an ECA throughout the school year. The choir sang at our community Christmas Show at the Anantara hotel in Hoi An, at the December to Remember celebration, and during school assemblies. We invested in **new musical instruments** and now have access to keyboards, ukuleles, recorders, electric drums, African Djembe drums, and percussion instruments.



Performance

Early in the year, plans to perform **Alice in Wonderland** that had been dropped the previous year due to COVID closures were reignited. Sadly, for the second time, we had to abandon the idea of a full theatrical performance. However, we were able to develop a series of **in-house productions** including the December to Remember performances, and various class-base shows. Secondary students wrote their own fairy tales, which they then performed for their primary peers, and choreographed the movements and dance to a popular song. They began to develop an understanding of Shakespeare, having fun compiling 'Shakespeare Insults'. In primary classes, performance art was interwoven into IPC units of study and shared with peers.



SPORTS & ECAS

This year, the **HPE programme** focused on rugby, wrestling, volleyball, running, creative dance, and gymnastics. Our youngest students also began developing yoga skills to help them build balance and focus. These areas of sporting study continued both on campus and online, with variations to planned classes created as necessary to accommodate distance learning. In the summer term, we experimented with a change to our swimming schedule on the advice of the expert swimming instructors at Swim Vietnam, who advised that an intensive programme over a short period would lead to strong skills development that weekly lessons over the course of a full term.

Despite stretches of distance learning, our secondary students were able to take part in two **inter-school sports competitions**, hosted by other schools in the area. The children gained skills in sportsmanship, resilience, and many other areas of personal development.

These skills were further developed throughout the school year through the new **GSIS house system** (introduced in 2019/20). Following a year of in-class and other activities through which house points were earned, the whole school came together at the end of the school year to play for the House Cup in the Interhouse Championship, which was won by Terra House.

Interrupted by periods of distance learning, our extracurricular activities programme was relatively limited this year. Despite running only during two school terms we still managed to offer 10 different activities ranging from fitness to cooking, sports to minecraft, tinkerlab to mad scientists. One of the most popular was the new Sprouts, GSIS's answer to the Scouts through which students learned to build a shelter, tie knots, start a fire, and cook bread over it. We look forward to expanding this popular activity in coming years. Through the year, our ECA programme reached 120 children.

SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

EAL and SEN

Our **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** class this year provided three tiers of language learning, tailored to meet the needs of each enrolled child. Those with no or very little English had break-out EAL classes each day; students with slightly stronger language skills joined these classes twice a week; and children who needed only a little help to fully access the curriculum were supported within the main classroom twice each week. Support focused on three core areas: 'survival English', phonics, and language linked to the IPC unit of

study taking place within the student's homeroom class group.

To meet the needs of **Special Education Needs (SEN)** students, we refined an internal process for the identification of SEN needs and the tailoring of services we are able to provide, working within the parameters and limitations of a small school environment. Those identified as in need of support were enrolled in break-out group sessions and also received in-class support from our co-teachers.



COVID Support

This year, initiatives that had begun in the first year of COVID-impacted learning were amended and expanded to meet ongoing community needs.

We addressed the **well-being** needs of staff, parents and students in a variety of ways:

- A **mentorship programme** was established to help new teachers transition into our school. Mentors provided practical advice about life in Hoi An and guided new teachers through our curriculum, resource use, lesson planning, and lesson delivery.
- **Other support for staff** included: team building and beach fun activities, professional development days, Christmas and Tet whole-staff meals, and flexible working location (from home or school) during COVID closures.
- **Blogs and meetings** (online and face to face when possible) offered well-being advice and support to parents and students in a range of areas from mental health and well being to getting a good night's sleep and maintaining friendships.

Student pastoral support was expanded, especially in our secondary school, to ensure that young teens in need of social and

emotional counselling had access to help, which was offered in group and on-on-one settings.

To facilitate distance learning when we were forced online, the school offered technical support to families and staff members who lacked the resources to work and study online. We loaned out school iPads and laptops, and offered meetings to help people navigate the online learning environment and platforms used by the school. We further developed and refined our Distance Learning Guide, which covers the new way of learning in four key areas: Academic Services, Technology Support and Communication Channels, Assessment, and well-being. Learning from feedback made in the previous year, we reduced the number of online platforms used and unified procedures, simplifying the distance learning process for families with children in multiple year groups.

GSIS developed a number of support systems to help families suffering as a result of the **financial impact** of the COVID crisis on our community. These were means-tested and included: bursary support (reduced tuition fees), waiver of some ancillary fees (application, etc) and, flexible payment plans.

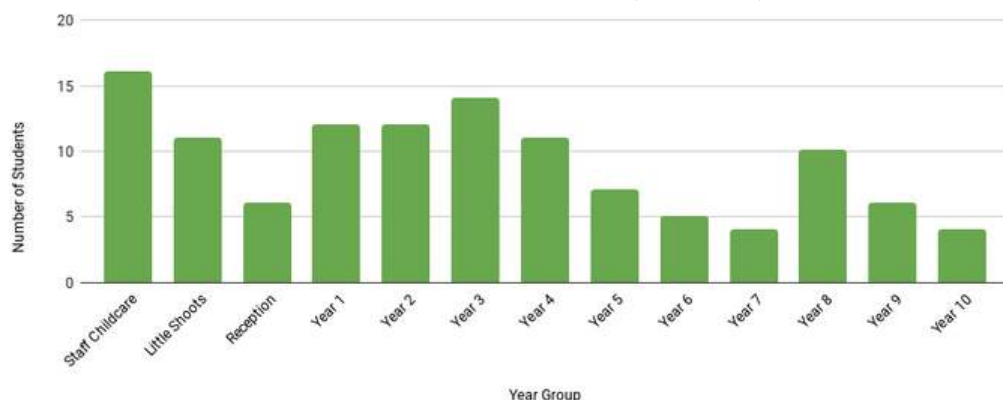


OUR STUDENTS

Current

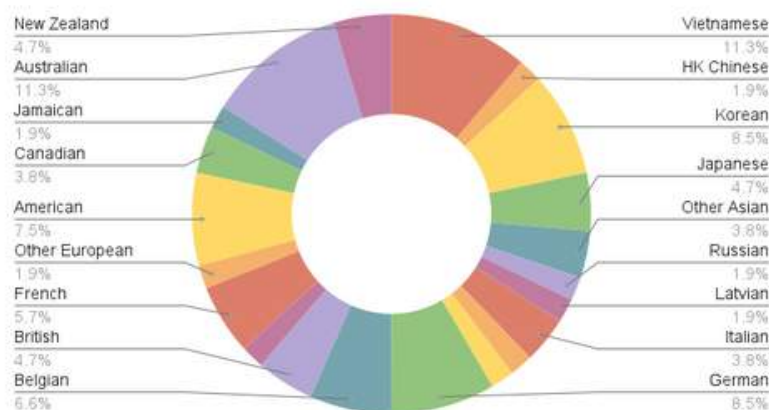
This year we **merged our Nursery class into our Little Shoots class**, bringing the school's youngest children together to experiment and play under our new Reggio programme. Of **100 students** enrolled at the school, the bulk were learning in our primary section.

ENROLLMENT BY CLASS (2020/21)



GSIS students joined us from around 25 countries around the world. Our two largest national groups were Vietnamese and Australian, with Korean and German tied in second place. Half of all families listed English as their first language, and 15% listed Vietnamese. A dozen European and Asian languages made up the balance.

STUDENT NATIONALITIES (2021/21)



This year saw the formation of our **Student Council**: the result of a Year 9 initiative that grew under the guidance of a secondary teacher mentor. The council brought together representatives from each Secondary class, as well as one elected by members of the Year 5/6 class to represent the views of Primary and Early Years students. Student reps and their teacher facilitator met regularly and a system was established to share their ideas and proposals with the Head of School.

Two extended periods of **distance learning**

through the year were challenging for students who missed their friends and the direct contact with teachers that is so important in a school environment. We are immensely proud of their resilience, adaptability, and cooperation during this time. While undoubtedly creating myriad difficulties for us all, COVID is providing young children with opportunities for character growth and development that will serve them well in their adult life, and we remain committed to supporting them every day as they move through this process.

Alumni

GSIS did not graduate an **IGCSE** cohort this year, something for which we were, in retrospect, rather grateful. While they would undoubtedly have grown in resilience, we are glad that no students had to face the challenges faced globally by IGCSE-aged students in a year beset by school closures and cancelled exams.

Our **recent alumni** continued their high school studies around the world, with most focusing on the International Baccalaureate. Several did so under lockdown conditions in countries far from their families. We are immensely proud

of their achievements and are confident that they will go on to bigger and better things as they grow. One GSIS alumni wrote to let us know he has been accepted to study at the prestigious University of Hong Kong. Another plans to volunteer at an NGO offering tutoring support to underprivileged children whose education has suffered during COVID.

Some of our **older alumni** continued or completed their university studies during our 2020/21 school year, with GSIS graduates entering the working world in Europe, Australia and Asia.

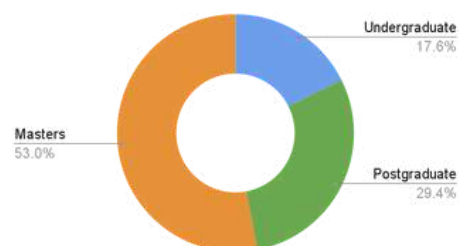
OUR FACULTY

This was an **incredibly difficult year** for teachers, co-teachers, school leadership, and all other GSIS staff as we collectively grappled with the challenges that the Covid pandemic presented in our part of the world: Different levels of lockdown and degrees of isolation, switches between distance and on campus learning (often with less than 24 hours notice), financial restrictions due to decreased enrolments, and the stresses caused by border closures which prevented overseas travel to see family and friends. We offer our **heart-felt thanks** to all GSIS staff, who went above and beyond what would ordinarily be expected of them and kept our children learning despite the challenges.

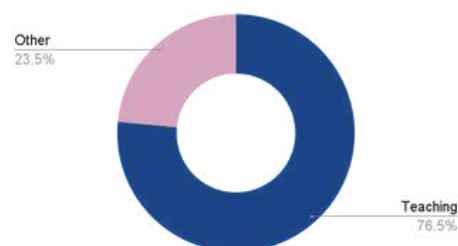
To support our staff, we initiated a series of **well-being programmes** (these are being expanded in 2021/22) and team building activities, as well as in-house **professional development** designed to help teachers adjust to distance teaching. Other professional development activities focused on understanding accreditation and compliance standards, documenting the curriculum, portfolio assessment, and safeguarding.

This year, we saw an increase in the number of **expatriate staff** holding a Masters degree rise to 53% from 41% last year and 31% the year before. Several of our **Vietnamese co-teachers** took extended maternity leave during this school year, and we provided short-term cover by rearranging roles and bringing in new staff who were trained up and will, we hope, become full-time members of the GSIS community. Of the 16 co-teachers employed by the school, 13 hold at least one teaching qualification, primarily in Early Childhood or English language teaching.

EXPATRIATE LEADERSHIP AND FACULTY
HIGHEST RELEVANT QUALIFICATION (2020/21)

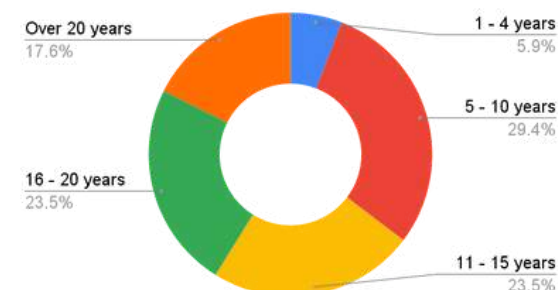


CO-TEACHERS HIGHEST RELEVANT
QUALIFICATION (2020/21)



We recorded an overall increase in the **years of professional experience** held by our expatriate faculty members compared to a year ago. Most notably, only 6% of faculty this year had four years or less of teaching experience. That's half of the 12% we published a year ago.

EXPATRIATE LEADERSHIP AND FACULTY
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE (2020/21)



Last year (2019/20) ended with lower-than-usual **staff turnover** as Vietnam's borders were closed, meaning that faculty members who had completed their contract with us and were due to move on were instead invited to remain for one more year. This led to an increase in the **longevity of faculty members** to well above the international norm of around three years.

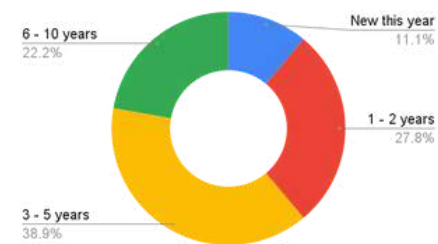
Indeed, almost 60% of our expatriate leadership and faculty had been with us for between three and 10 years before the start of this school year. Short-term recruitment to cover co-teachers' maternity leave meant we saw a slight increase in the number of new co-teachers employed this year. No Vietnamese faculty members left the school at the close of the 2020/21 year.

However, due to the delayed departure of expatriate staff whose contracts were extended because of COVID, and the additional departure of others who chose to return to their families during brief travel windows through the year, the end of 2020/21 saw a higher-than-usual expatriate turnover: something that will be reflected in next year's annual report. While deeply saddened to say 'goodbye' to those who left, their departure has allowed us to bring in new talent and new ideas, which will add significant value to the learning experience of all GSIS students in 2021/22. We were gratified to find extremely high demand for faculty positions at GSIS, with one advertisement for a primary teaching role attracting more than 60 applications. This interest in our school speaks to our reputation as a high quality and well-respected employer.

EXPATRIATE LEADERSHIP AND FACULTY YEARS AT GREEN SHOOTS PRIOR TO 2020/21



CO-TEACHERS YEARS AT GREEN SHOOTS PRIOR TO 2020/21



OUR PARENTS



Our thanks, once again, to GSIS parents for their support and collaboration during this difficult year, the second in which their child's learning was disrupted by the pandemic. The stresses placed on working parents trying to oversee their child's education at home have been shared by families all around the world, but in our community, most have had to do so without access to help from extended family or from the state, and others have juggled these stresses with profound professional concerns resulting from the closure of Vietnam's tourism industry in which they work. We hope that the government will soon find a way to balance the country's health needs with its economic ones, and pledge to continue doing what we can to support our

families with financial, technical and psychological support until then.

To help us understand our community's needs, in early 2021 we conducted a comprehensive focus group survey that asked detailed questions of around 40 families, who were chosen to represent the different stakeholder groups within our school. All others were then invited to a follow-up session if they felt their views had not already been represented. Survey results were shared anonymously with school leadership and a summary was published in English and Vietnamese for all parents to read. Actions taken in response to parental suggestions during the process were reported in the GSIS Weekly newsletter (see page 32) and are ongoing.

Message from the Parent Network

The GSIS Parent Network was formed for 2020/21 and consisted of a group of parents, voted in by other parents, to work closely with and in support of the school. Its role is to focus on 'Welcoming, Communicating, Supporting, Sharing and Collaborating.'

In 2020/21 the group comprised a representative 'Homeroom Parent' for each class from Little Shoots to IGCSE, as well as a 'Lead Parent' for Early Years/Primary, another for Secondary, and foreign language representatives.

The group met with Mr Rick on a monthly basis. At these meetings, input was given into a variety of matters including school menu choices, tools to help communicate a simplified curriculum by year group to parents, and feedback on remote learning experiences.

Despite lockdowns and travel restrictions, several parents also managed to meet for coffee mornings, in line with our 'welcoming' and 'supporting' mandate. A group of parents supported the school to arrange the Halloween party decorations and, for some year groups, Homeroom Parents arranged weekly parent library volunteering. We also squeezed in the opportunity to thank the teachers and administration staff by arranging thank you posters, cards and yummy, home baked cakes for Vietnamese Teachers Day in November.

In the spirit of 'welcoming', newly joining parents were each sent an email by from the Lead Parent to offer settling in support and to connect them with their Homeroom Parent.

For 2021/22 we encourage all parents to get involved: put yourself forward for a role if that is something you'd be interested in, or share your ideas with the chosen PN group.

Astrid Rainey, Lead Parent



COMMUNITY



Fundraising

This year, GSIS students raised money to support three education-related organisations with which we have a long-standing relationship.

Organisation	Aims	GSIS Support
Children's Education Fund (CEF)	Helps girls access an education when their family circumstance makes this difficult	The Freaky Friday Halloween Disco and annual Read-a-thon raised sufficient funds to support Nga, a girl we have sponsored for five year, to complete her high school education and begin her university studies in 2021/22
Kianh Foundation	Educates children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities and supports their families	Funds raised at the Freaky Friday disco also went to Kianh and were distributed to families they work with who had lost crops and livelihoods due to COVID and the floods and storms that ravaged Quang Nam this year
Children's Hope in Action (Chia)	Supports disadvantaged children in Quang Nam province in the areas of education, sanitation, health and disability	Students set up and filled a 'Sharing Shed' to collect food and household items for families supported by Chia and in particular need due to COVID and flooding

Events

Despite, or perhaps because of, the restrictions forced upon us by COVID we increased our community events when these were allowed as a way to boost morale and keep community members connected. **Within school**, we organised many of our traditional events for students and their families, including: Tet (welcoming in the Year of the Buffalo), Trung Thu (Mid Autumn Festival), Francophone Week (this year dubbed 'Francofun Week'), Vietnamese Women's Day,

World Cleanup Day, World Gratitude Day, and our annual Egghobile contest at Easter Time.

Other events were offered to the **wider community**, sometimes in collaboration with other groups and as part of our fundraising programme. These included: the Freaky Friday Halloween Disco, a 'Let's Get Festive' Christmas tree lighting celebration (with Kianh and another charity, Hearing and Beyond), the Hoi An Heritage Run, and an Easter Egg hunt on An Bang Beach.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is always important in a school, but it has become increasingly so under COVID, where opportunities for face-to-face communication are limited. Extensive efforts to improve, simplify, and expand communication with parents, teachers and students began in 2019/20 and developed further in 2020/21.

Sharing Information

Schools must regularly **share information with stakeholders** to support the smooth running of classes and other activities and ensure the safety of students. Reaching diverse cultures and language groups using different formats shared via multiple channels can be extremely challenging. To strengthen our efforts:

- The **GSIS Weekly newsletter** replaced our previous Head of School notes: Using clickable links to short news items, it made accessing important updates easier. Offered initially in English only, the newsletter is now published in English and Vietnamese
- More communication in **Vietnamese**: In addition, we began to share more information in Vietnamese. This included important email updates for parents and staff, facebook posts, and enrolment enquiries
- **Information portals** were developed for parents and staff, with these communities able to access important information such as school policies, distance learning guides, past copies of the Weekly, school menu, well-being and safeguarding resources, and professional development resources
- A **student portal** was developed by our Secondary students as part of their 'Innovation, Design, Engineering, and Sustainability (IDEaS) class. Each student created a portal and a vote determined which would be used by secondary students going forward
- We increased the number of **blogs** published, with a particular focus on family and child welfare, to support families through the pandemic
- A **brand new website**, that went live in June 2021 and is offered for the first time in Vietnamese as well as in English, provides our community and those considering joining it with a comprehensive overview of learning opportunities at GSIS

Collecting Feedback

As well as sharing information, we are always seeking to **gather input from our community**. With COVID making 'school gate conversations' more difficult, we expanded the formal channels through which people can share ideas with school leadership.

- Staff, student and parent communities all saw a revamping of their **representation systems**, making it easier for everyone to share input with the school
- Staff and parent representatives participated in **regular meetings with our Head of School** to convey input from network members
- The newly formed **Student Council** also presented their ideas to the Head of School for consideration
- In addition to the parent survey, we also **surveyed** students about the school menu, parents about the structure and effectiveness of our distance learning programme, and held Q&A sessions to assess support needs



FINANCIAL REPORT

The year was very challenging financially, with fewer enrolled students than in previous years as some left the school due to COVID and others who had hoped to join us were unable to enter Vietnam due to the government's closed border policy. Because many of our families work in tourism, a sector deeply impacted by the closures, we saw increased **demand for bursary support** in 2020/21. We also saw rising requests for support from our Staff Emergency Fund, which offers temporary financial assistance to local staff.

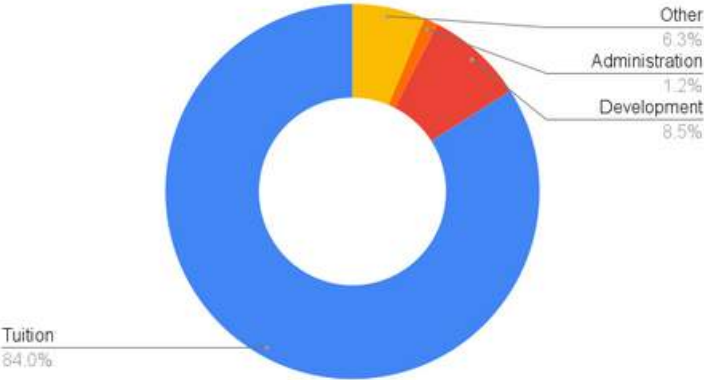
To meet the needs of those in our community hurt by the pandemic while still remaining sustainable over the long term, we **reduced expenses** where we could. Non-essential

campus upgrades and resource purchases were postponed and fee waivers or reductions were sought and agreed with our accrediting agencies. As the bulk of expenditure in any school comprises staffing costs, we were also forced to reduce expenditure in this area. We faced a stark choice: let some staff members go or ask all employees to accept a salary reduction. We shared and consulted with staff and it was agreed that the latter option was both more equitable and more sustainable. Although we received prior agreement from all staff members to take this action, we nonetheless recognise the strain it caused for some and wish here to publicly thank all GSIS staff for their cooperation during this pandemic.

The below charts indicate the breakdown of school revenue and expenditure for 2020/21.

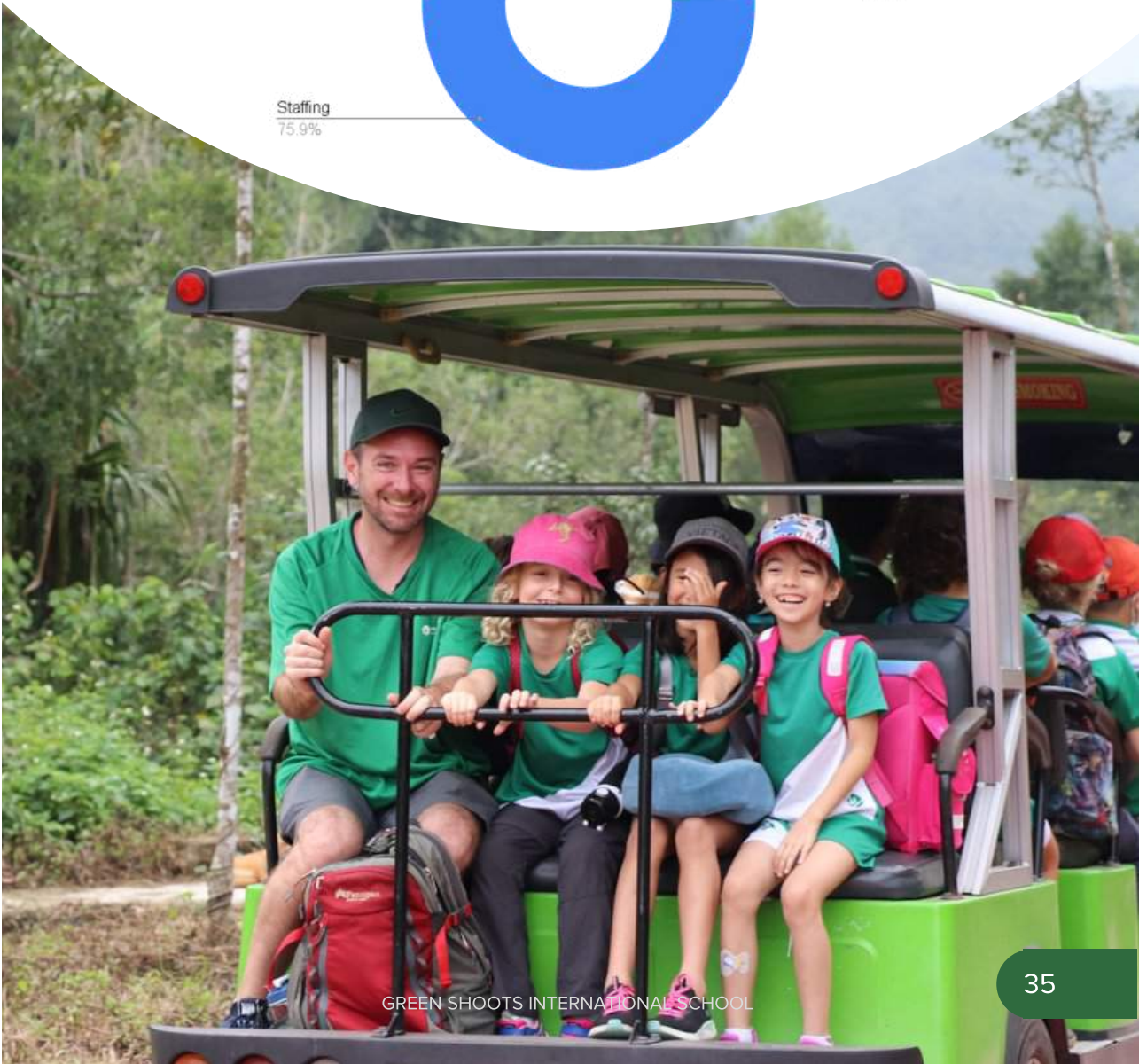
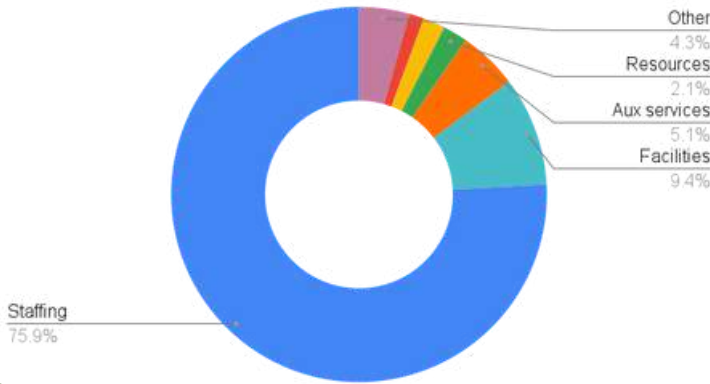
Revenue was derived primarily from tuition fees, which comprised 84% of overall revenue. The annual Development Fee totalled 8.5% of revenue and was used to support spending in the areas that facilitate the long-term development of our school. 'Other' forms of revenue cover fees for services not enjoyed equally by all students and therefore charged separately. These include charges for: the bus service, ECA and Summer Camp participation, sports uniforms, and EAL and SEN support.

REVENUE BREAKDOWN (2020/21)



GSIS **expenses** were, as is standard in international schools, primarily staff related. Staffing made up 75.7% of all outgoings, similar to in previous years. Despite negotiating rent reductions with our landlords during the COVID period, 9.4% was spent on our facilities (rental, maintenance, utilities, IT systems, housekeeping, etc). Auxiliary services (food and bus) were our third largest expense item at 5.1% of total spending. Cost that do not directly relate to teaching and learning at GSIS, such as Admin and Finance (general admin costs, non-PIT taxation, insurance policies, audit and banking fees, etc), Marketing, Accreditations and Memberships, and Other Expenses (pre-paid items allocated to 2020/21) cumulatively totaled less than 10% of all expenditure.

EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN (2020/21)





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