



Education &  
Communities

# The Ponds School Annual School Report 2014



The Ponds School  
*Believe Learn Achieve*

5765

## School context statement

The Ponds School continues to grow in many ways. Four additional demountables were sited at the end of 2013 ready for the enrolment of 24 new students, from Kindergarten to Year 5 at the beginning of the 2014 school year. This equates to four new classes bringing the number of classes at The Ponds School to 12. An additional eight staff were appointed due to the increase in student numbers.

All students have a moderate or severe intellectual disability. Many of the students have complex needs arising from their additional disabilities including autism, physical and/or sensory disabilities (vision or hearing impairments).

The school is currently situated on a temporary site on the grounds of Riverstone High School. The planning phase for the new school is coming to an end as building started at The Ponds in early 2014. Our school will move to the permanent site for the commencement of the 2015 school year.

## Principal's message

During 2014 the whole school community was involved in the process of developing The Ponds School mission/vision statement which reads:

"The Ponds School provides quality individualised and meaningful education in a safe and caring environment. The Ponds School supports families, encourages independence and assists students become valued members of the community now and into the future."

At the beginning of 2014 an induction course was run for our eight new staff. This course included DEC policies and procedures, use of the internet, intranet and faculty drive, school policies and procedures, a short course on the 4Blocks approach to Literacy, using a Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD), Mobility Options Via Education (MOVE), use of technology, MyPL@EDU, Work Health and Safety and roles and responsibilities. Renee Andrew successfully gained the position of Assistant Principal through merit selection. We also had two teachers and four School Learning Support Officers (SLSO) gain positions through merit selection. A graduate recruit from the Special Education course was appointed along with two part time teachers who gained positions through the transfer process.

Our Variety Club Sunshine Coach arrived early in the year. A special event was held for the handing over of the bus to the school. Having our own bus allowed students and staff to access the community more frequently. Students participated in a range of activities including; sailing on Sydney Harbour with Sailors with Disabilities, visiting accessible playgrounds, participating in hydrotherapy at The Children's Hospital at Westmead, swim school at Riverstone Pool, Red Hands Cave, Riding for the Disabled (RDA), Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) and Calmsley Hill City Farm.

The Ponds School continued to host practicum students and parent and community volunteers. The Ponds School welcomes volunteers and is very fortunate to have enthusiastic and highly motivated volunteers. Volunteers are able to work in a variety of areas within the school including: classrooms, the library and administration areas; photocopying, laminating, binding and cutting. Practicum students were completing courses in Education, Certificate IV, Physiotherapy and Medicine. Throughout the year some very skilled volunteers have become casual School Learning Support Officers.

Our partnership with Riverstone High School continued with their Student Representative Council (SRC) members participating in peer tutoring for a session a week for two terms. Students and staff alike gained knowledge and stated that it was a fantastic experience. We hope to continue this program in 2015 when we move to the new school.

Students from other Department of Education and Communities High Schools and several Independent Schools have volunteered to assist students in classrooms, cover books and produce resources.

All our volunteers are highly valued and greatly appreciated.

Fundraising continued with The Ponds Community hosting a Trivia Night to raise money to maintain the school bus. Seven thousand dollars was raised during a fun filled evening. Minister Ajaka, the Minister for Aging Disability and Home Care visited our school with the local member, Kevin Connolly and donated \$5000 to the ongoing running costs of the bus.

TAG Financial P/L held a golf day in which The Ponds School were the recipients of a great

donation. This donation will assist in funding the technology needed at our new school in 2015. We thank TAG for assisting The Ponds School.

A small group of highly motivated parents/caregivers and staff worked hard to establish a charity called Making it Happen-for children with disabilities Inc. This team began planning a fete for March 2015, entered Muffin Break's Great Bake competition and applied to appear in the Rouse Hill Grill'd restaurant Local Matters initiative.

Rouse Hill Town Centre Management GPT held their community day at our school and renovated our playground. They erected a xylophone, a water feature, painted the raised garden beds, replanted all six garden beds and made two beautiful mosaics. Our students love the transformation of the playground and the produce that was grown was used in class cooking programs or just eaten straight from the garden. We look forward to their ongoing assistance at our new site.

Parent Information Meetings were held at least twice a term. Parents played a significant role in developing the school vision/mission statement, completing surveys on Communicating with the School, Parent Satisfaction and School Evaluation and Planning. Several parents attended a professional learning conference on Pragmatic Organisational Dynamic Displays (PODD) on a Saturday. The best attended meetings were regarding the School Management Plan and the new curriculum.

Parents, caregivers and volunteers are integral to the smooth working of our school.

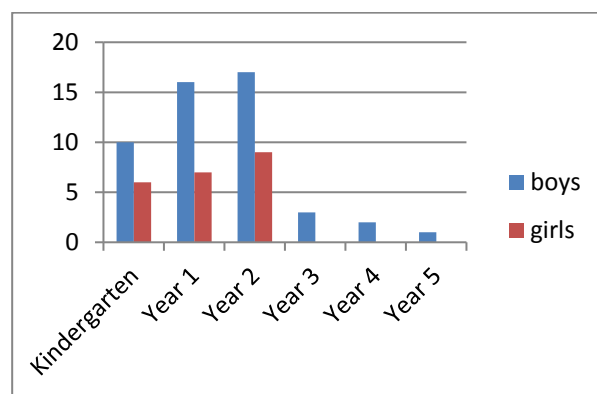
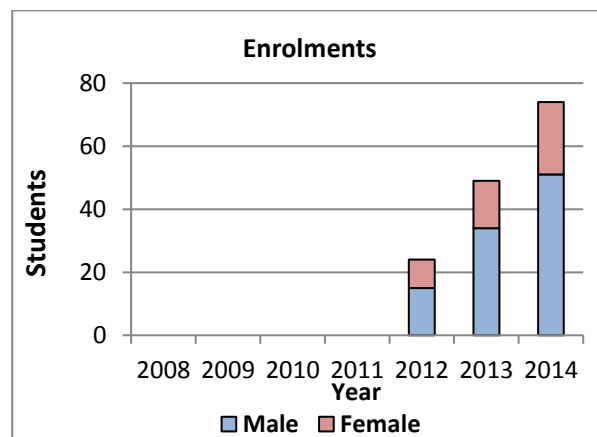
**Leonie Donaldson**



## Student information

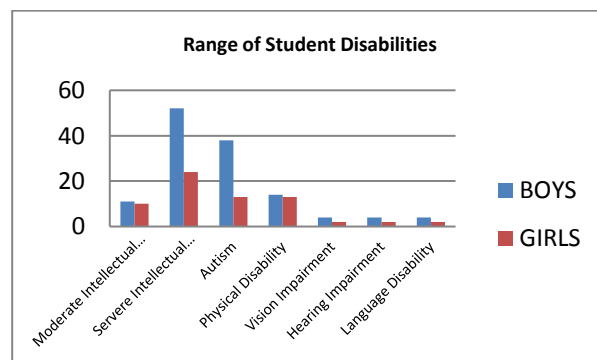
It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all students be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

### Student enrolment profile



### Student attendance profile

Student attendance continues to be high at 90%. Some contributing factors to student absences include: students under the age of six, students with complex medical conditions and a number of students taking extended leave to visit relatives overseas. Student attendance has increased on previous years.



### Management of non-attendance

The Ponds School follows DEC and school procedures and seeks advice from parents

regarding absences. The Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) visits regularly to check attendance and is consulted when a need arises.

## Workforce information

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all staff must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

With the addition of four newly established classes came additional staffing for the 2014 school year. Additional staffing for 2014 included four School Learning Support Officers, three Classroom Teachers and an Assistant Principal. These positions were gained through either merit selection or graduate recruitment.

All new staff came with a range of previous experience, appropriate skills and knowledge in educating students with disabilities and high support needs.

The number of staff will also increase for the 2015 school year. All Department of Education and Communities staffing policies and procedures will be followed.

## Workforce composition

Position	Number
Principal	1.0
Assistant Principal(s)	3.0
Classroom Teacher(s)	10.092
Teacher Librarian	0.4
School Administrative & Support Staff	14.272
Total	28.764

The Australian Education Regulation, 2014 requires schools to report on Aboriginal composition of their workforce.

Currently, no staff members of The Ponds School have identified themselves as being indigenous.

## Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

Qualifications	% of staff
Degree or Diploma	100
Postgraduate	63
NSW Institute of Teachers Accreditation	37

## Professional learning and teacher accreditation

At The Ponds School we believe that through quality teaching provided by a range of

professional learning (which includes encouraging lifelong learners, building capacity, quality and consistency of practice, assisting all staff on their professional journey especially beginning teachers and continually improving our pedagogy) ensures continuous improvement of our students' outcomes.

During 2014 all staff (teachers, School Learning Support Officers and administration staff) participated in a wide variety of professional learning. This included attending courses and conferences, working in collaboration with other schools during school development days, mentoring/coaching and online learning. The following are the areas of expenditure for teacher professional learning:

- Teaching and Learning
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Quality Teaching
- Implementation of the Australian Curriculum
- Syllabus Implementation
- Career Development
- Welfare and Equity

The average expenditure per teacher for 2014 was \$2610.95. The total school expenditure on teacher professional learning was \$33 942.47.

Professional learning completed for all staff included:

- Child Protection, Code of Conduct, Child Wellbeing
- CPR Training
- E-Emergency Care
- Pragmatic Organisational Dynamic Display (PODD) training - in collaboration with William Rose School
- Work Health and Safety overview
- Evacuation, Lockout and Lockdown
- Positive Behaviour for Learning – Classroom Systems modules

Professional learning completed for School Learning Support officers included:

- Health Care Procedures
- Administration of Prescribed Medication



- Auslan signing – in collaboration with William Rose School
- SAM conference – Being Resilient Leaders
- Strategic Financial Management

Professional learning completed for teachers included:

- School Management Plan
- Quality Teaching and Learning and Instructional Rounds - in collaboration with Riverstone PS
- Disability Standards for Education
- Blacktown Special Education Network Meetings (BASEN)
- Accreditation
- Strategic Directions: Linking the Professional Standards
- Appropriate Assessments: PLAN, QRI, South Australian Spelling Test, The Bridge, Best start, Count Me In Too (CMIT)
- Spectronics Conference
- SEPLA conference and meetings
- Shared reading and guided reading
- 2014 new reforms and initiatives
- Introduction to the new Maths and Science and Technology syllabus
- Blacktown Learning Community network meetings (BLC)
- Strategic Financial Management

In 2014, six teachers were identified as new scheme and are working towards accreditation or maintaining accreditation. Of these six teachers four are permanent employees and two are casuals. Currently, no teachers are actively seeking voluntary accreditation at Highly Accomplished or Lead. Many teachers participated in professional learning opportunities to learn more about seeking voluntary accreditation and interest in this area is high.

### Beginning Teachers

The Ponds School had two teachers receiving beginning teacher funding in the first year. This funding enabled the teachers to have additional release, regular mentoring meetings with their

collegiate support leader, a variety of professional learning opportunities and to purchase resources that will enhance their teaching and learning. Some professional learning courses that our beginning teachers attended were: *Delivering sexual health lessons to students with intellectual disabilities* and *Literacy instruction for young learners*.

### Financial summary

This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

Date of financial summary	30/11/2014
<b>Income</b>	\$
Balance brought forward	169751.91
Global funds	391268.37
Tied funds	141174.47
School & community sources	31289.82
Interest	6662.05
Trust receipts	1157.85
Canteen	0.00
Total income	741304.47
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	54387.70
Excursions	11110.99
Extracurricular dissections	16832.64
Library	2875.28
Training & development	18722.07
Tied funds	144895.29
Casual relief teachers	92521.90
Administration & office	44298.50
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	23808.38
Maintenance	6075.66
Trust accounts	34780.71
Capital programs	61335.00
Total expenditure	511644.12
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	229660.35

A full copy of the school's 2014 financial statement and further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

### School performance 2014

#### Academic achievements

At The Ponds School we have high expectations of all students. All staff are committed to providing extensive access to targeted and well planned learning opportunities for a range of

students with diverse and often complex learning needs. Each student has an Individualised Education Program (IEP), developed in collaboration with families and therapists, which works towards the achievement of person centered goals and outcomes from the K-6 Syllabus. Of the 72 students enrolled at the school 72% were working toward the same SMART objective/s in both semesters 1 and 2. 28% of students achieved their semester 1 SMART objective/s and moved on to new SMART objective/s in semester 2. Of the 72% of students who were working towards the same SMART objective/s in both semesters 1 and 2, 58% increased their independence demonstrating their SMART objective/s.

### Amazing Achievers

*Believe Learn Achieve* is the school motto because we believe that all students can learn and achieve their goals.

During 2013, Amazing Achievers Awards were introduced to be awarded to those students that had achieved their person centered goal. Parents were informed of their child's achievements and invited to attend the assembly when the award was presented. 33% of students gained an Amazing Achiever Award during 2014.

Our Celebration Assembly formally recognises students who have made great progress and gained skills in Key Learning Areas and significant programs. The recipients of these awards were:

English – Carter Cross

Mathematics – Imogen Todd

Human Society and It's Environments (HSIE) – Daniel Andre Sa

Science – Vinny Villiam

Creative Arts – Paul Madrid

Physical Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) – Caelan Murphy

Communication – Aayan Malik

Technology – Miata Jibba

Positive Behaviour for Learning - Caitlin Bartolo

Library – Cameron Henderson

Community Spirit – Aliah Ahmad

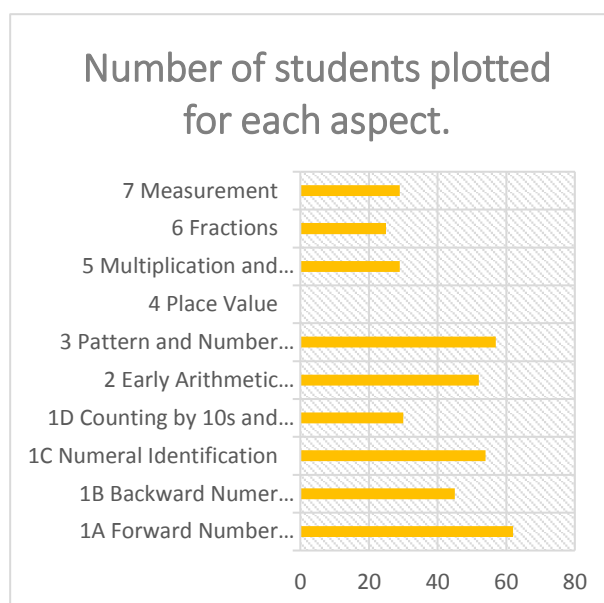
Premier's Sporting Challenge – Alex Hearne

Principal's Award – Janaya Hanson

### PLAN Assessment

The following data was collected and analysed from the Term 4 entries on the PLAN (Planning Literacy and Numeracy) website.

The data below shows the number of students who were plotted on the learning continuum for Numeracy. These students were placed on level 0 and above. All students at The Ponds School were working towards Early Stage 1(Kindergarten) and Stage 1(Year 1 & 2) outcomes in Numeracy. There were 74 students enrolled in Term 4, 2014.



The aspects that students were plotted the most for were:

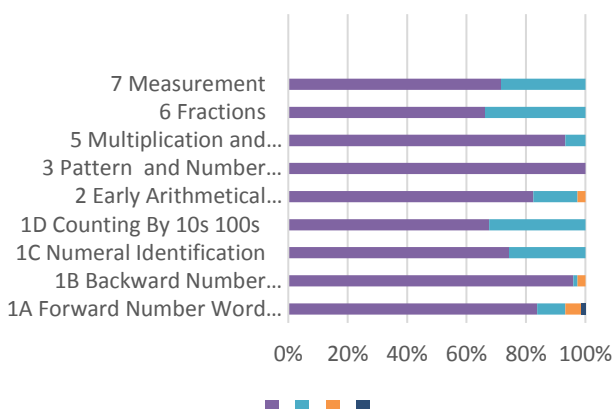
- Forward Number word sequence (Aspect 1)
- Pattern and Number Structure (Aspect 1)
- Numeral Identification (Aspect 1)
- Early Arithmetical Strategies (Aspect 2)

These results are to be expected. Aspects 1 and 2 on the Continuum cover the Identified Early Numeracy strategies students are required to be taught first in order to understand more complicated concepts and are the foundation of which other Numeracy skills are built.

There were no students plotted on the Aspect of Place Value as none of the students had reached the level where they were able to have a deep understanding and knowledge of or be able to independently use Place Value when reading, representing and comparing numbers.

Most students were achieving at level 0 for each Aspect.

Percentage of students working at different stages



The above graph shows the number of students and the stage they were working at for Numeracy.

The yellow represents students working towards Early Stage 1 (pre-Kindergarten)

The light blue represents students working at Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten)

The green represents the students working at the beginning of Stage 1 (year 1)

And the dark blue represents students working at the beginning of Stage 2 (Year 3). Only one student achieved this result in the Aspect of Forward Number Sequences.

Most students at The Ponds School were working towards Early Stage 1(pre- Kindergarten) in the area of Numeracy.

With the implementation of TEN (Targeted Early Numeracy) and (Count Me In Too) in 2015, It is hoped that more students will be able to build their knowledge and skills needed in Early Numeracy to allow them to progress further along the continuum.

## Other achievements

### Community Access

During the course of 2014 the students at The Ponds School participated in Community Access which is as an integral part of the school program. They were able to visit a variety of interesting places and encouraged to participate in new and exciting activities. Community Access provides the students with valuable opportunities

to learn and grow beyond the classroom, to practise safe travel and apply existing skills and knowledge to new settings. The venues and activities were all carefully selected for their suitability in terms of meeting the educational and safety needs of the students at The Ponds School. Students with high support needs attended hydrotherapy and twenty four other students participated in an intensive two week Learn to Swim Program at the Riverstone pool.

Four classes visited *Livvi's Playground* in Yamble Reserve, *Calmsley Hill City Farm* and *Nurragingy Reserve* where they were able to access playground equipment, interact with farm animals and engage in water play activities. A number of students went sailing on Sydney harbour with *Sailors with disABILITIES* whilst others went horse riding with *Riding for the Disabled* (RDA).



Two groups of students visited *Red Hands Cave* in the Blue Mountains as part of their Aboriginal studies. Other students travelled to the *Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA)* to participate in the *Bella at the House* program whilst another group attended the *Riverstone High School Showcase* concert. A few classes embarked on a fitness program which involved walking (sometimes running) around the Riverstone football field three to five times per week.



## **Significant programs and initiatives – Policy and equity funding**

### **Aboriginal education**

Throughout 2014 The Ponds School maintained a rich Aboriginal Educational focus in teaching and learning through the following programs;

- NAIDOC Day allowed the whole school (students, staff, families and friends) to take part and celebrate by participating in a range of cultural activities such as boomerang painting, cultural dancing, body art, and cooking and tasting Johnny cakes and Lilli Pilli jam.
- Classes participated in a Human Society and its Environments unit of work on Aboriginal cultural heritage which included excursions to Red Hands Cave in the Blue Mountains.
- A range of resources were purchased to promote an Aboriginal perspective in all Key Learning Areas.

### **Multicultural education and anti-racism**

The multicultural perspective at our school is maintained through programs such as Harmony Day, consulting parents and caregivers, use of interpreters and notes in languages other than English, ensuring quality inclusion of multicultural perspectives and teaching programs that promote intercultural understanding.

Our 2014 Harmony Day turned out to be a great success with parents and caregivers attending and providing a large selection of dishes from a wide range of cultures for morning tea. Students were encouraged to wear cultural dress or the colour of Harmony Day – orange. The day began with an assembly where each class displayed a poster they had prepared.

Our School is committed to promoting the Department of Education and Communities Anti-Racism Policy at every level of our school.

- Our school has an active Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO).
- We promote all students and their families cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.
- Our school culture, practices and procedures promote acceptance, a sense of belonging and a positive attitude towards all.

- Our teaching strategies and professional learning events follow the DEC Anti-Racism policy at all times.

### **Aboriginal background**

The Ponds School has a small student population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. During 2014 the Aboriginal Background funding assisted the school to purchase items needed for our highly successful NAIDOC Day and provide a range of resources to promote an Aboriginal perspective in all Key Learning Areas.

### **Socio-economic background**

The Ponds School is allocated funding for assisting families from low Socio-economic backgrounds. During 2014 this funding allocation was used to provide students with a school uniform and access to excursions and extra-curricular activities.

### **Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)**

Positive Behaviour for Learning gained momentum in 2014. Our goal was to obtain and maintain commitment to PBL from all stakeholders across the school year. The team met fortnightly and was comprised of a parent representative, SASS, teachers and our PBL coach from another SSP.

Professional learning for all staff was conducted. Updates were shared during staff meetings, within the newsletter and on the website and at parent meetings. The whole school was involved in creating The Ponds School vision statement. PBL bags were created and distributed to staff containing stamps, stickers, data slips, a PODD and other playground essentials. Clear and visible communication systems were established across the school by developing a PBL teaching matrix and representing the behaviours we wanted to see using words, photos and symbols and placing them in appropriate places around the school. All staff collected data in all school environments such as minor incidents, major incidents and accidents and injuries. Data from these forms was used to improve practice through the development of student Behaviour Support Plans and putting interventions in place. The team developed a teaching matrix. A school wide rewards system that is inclusive of all learners was developed. Froggie awards were also developed to encourage students to do the



right thing. One PBL premise is to catch the students being good. Students were given a stamp on the back of their hands if they were doing the right thing in the playground. In the classroom students completed stamp charts. When a student completed 5 stamp charts the parents were invited to assembly where a certificate was presented to their child. School wide routines for non-classroom settings were also developed.

## **Integration**

In 2014, a group of students participated in an integration program with John Palmer Public School. The purpose of this program was to:

- Develop and improve students' skills in communication and interaction.
- Promote friendships between peers.
- Further meet the educational needs of students in the areas of reading, writing and spelling.

During Terms 3 and 4, students travelled once a week to an Early Stage 1 class. Students participated in literacy activities under the instruction of teachers from John Palmer PS and The Ponds Schools. Students developed skills in handwriting, phonics, reading and technology as they used classroom computers and iPads to complete small group activities. Students displayed positive behaviours and learnt how to transition between small group activities in the classroom.

Students also shared recess with their peers at John Palmer where they learnt to initiate interactions and develop friendships that continued for the duration of the program.

Teachers developed skills in collaboration as they implemented programs together and also strengthened partnerships between schools so that integration programs could continue to run in the future.

Throughout Semester 2, 2014 a group of students from classes 11 & 12 participated in an integration program to Riverstone PS. This program was initiated so that our students could:

- Gain an insight into education within a mainstream setting
- Develop friendships across educational settings

- Further develop social skills that have been implemented within the classroom
- Continue with their curriculum development in literacy and numeracy.

Each week, two of our students walked to Riverstone PS with an SLSO to spend a session and recess with students from one of the support unit classes there. All of the students involved in the program enjoyed the opportunity to participate and were great representatives for the school. Teachers from Riverstone PS expressed their pleasure in having our students in their class and were impressed with their abilities and attitudes. We hope that in the future we will be able to continue this program in a similar fashion with schools close to our new site at The Ponds.

## **Learning and support**

2014 saw the development of a School Learning Support Team. The team consisted of teachers, executive and specialists. The purpose of the team was to support individual students in behaviour and learning. These students made up tier 3, the top 1-5 % of students in the Positive Behaviour for Learning pyramid. These students were identified as needing more targeted support and individual interventions. The Learning Support team is based on the values of collaborative consultation:

- People with diverse expertise arriving at solutions to mutually defined problems.
- People who are committed to the provision of quality programs and successful learning and behaviour outcomes for all students.

During 2014, the team developed a whole school policy and procedures that included:

- Defined roles and responsibilities of the team within the school.
- A school wide support matrix, defining supports in place for students, staff and parents.
- A referral system for individual students and an outline of supporting documents.
- Teacher checklists to be used in the classroom to assess behaviour, learning, hearing, gross motor and the sensory needs of individual students.

- A collection of individual behaviour and education plans.
- A collection of visual behaviour and learning supports.
- A list of Department human resources and services.

Future targets for the Learning Support Team are:

- Continue to develop action plans for implementation of learning support across the school.
- Provide direct support to students and teachers in classrooms through a range of strategies (including direct instruction, delivery of adjusted learning programs, assessment and monitoring of progress) including the areas of social integration, language, communication, literacy, numeracy and behaviour.
- Identifying targeted professional learning for staff in areas of need.
- Working collaboratively with parents and therapists to provide a range of targeted individual supports.

### **Volunteers, visitors, practicum and work experience students**

Throughout 2014 The Ponds School continued to welcome as many volunteers, practicum students and work experience students as we are able to.

As a school we feel that we are very fortunate to have so many parents and community volunteers that assist our students in the classroom and other areas such as the administration and library on a daily basis. This assistance often enables us to run the high quality learning programs that we offer.

Our agreement with the University of Western Sydney Medical Department was continued throughout 2014. The medical students spent time with several classes over the course of their 2 week practicum. Parents were given the opportunity to give permission for a medical student to complete a case study of their child. This program is sure to enhance future doctors' knowledge of children with disabilities.

In Term 1 this year six students from Casuarina School attended a work experience program at the school. It was a great to see our students and their students working and learning together.

The Ponds School also initiated a program with Macquarie University Physiotherapy Department. Within this program many of our students were given the opportunity to work one to one with students studying physiotherapy. These students were able to work on many of their gross motor skills in these sessions. This program also continued in their homes for many of our students.

Over the course of the year our school has also been involved in a variety of practicum programs for both School Learning Support Officer's and teachers. It has been great to see the improvement that many of these students have made and to know that we are helping to shape their future employment within the field.

### **Special events**

The Ponds School hosted many events this year, both within our school and welcoming the community in.

We were able to celebrate the arrival of our own school bus on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June. The sun was shining and our Variety Sunshine Coach looked resplendent.

Many very important people attended. We had representatives from Variety, Laminex, Colquhoun's, Kevin Connolly- the member of Riverstone, the fundraising team from Bus the Night, Learning and Engagement advisors and officers from the DEC, drivers, escorts, parents, caregivers, students and staff.

The formal proceedings included speeches, cutting of the ribbon and cutting the amazing cake. After the ceremony and lots of photos, our students enjoyed playing on the jumping castle, enjoying bubbles and eating popcorn. The adults enjoyed a very tasty afternoon tea.

Thank you to all those involved in ensuring that our dream became a reality and we now have our very own Variety Sunshine Coach.

All our students participated in an Autumn Sports Day, where a range of activities were set up around the school, and different classes combined to work as a team to participate in the events. A Mad Hatters sausage sizzle was followed after, with everyone wearing their crazy hats that they had made.

To promote Education Week, all the students made artworks, that were then displayed in the

school for parents and caregivers to come in and purchase. The school held a Book Fair and parents were able to purchase books for their children and for the school library. The parents were also invited to join the classes for a very exciting lesson, based around the theme 'Lighting the way to a better future'. The school raised money for Variety by participating in a Santa Fun Run, 'Go Blue for Autism' by hosting a crazy hair day combined with 'The World's Greatest Shave' where money was raised by shaving a volunteer parent's head.

## **School planning and evaluation 2012–2014**

### **School evaluation processes**

NSW public schools conduct evaluations to support the effective implementation of the school plan. The processes used include:

- Information sessions and opportunities for feedback with parents/caregivers
- Professional dialogue on what's important to The Ponds School
- Surveys on Communication and School Evaluation and Planning.

### **School planning 2012-2014:**

#### **School priority 1**

##### **Technology**

#### **Outcomes from 2012–2014**

- The creation of school wide iPad programs that are based on 'best practice' and linked directly to outcomes from the syllabus.
- Professional learning on effective implementation of iPads to support learning across all areas and specifically in regards to communication.
- Continued professional development in regards to all accessible technology devices and how to use them to provide all students with greater access to the curriculum.
- Development of a support network with the greater community, parents and within the community of schools, which supports students learning in the classroom and at home.

- Exploration of B.Y.O.D (Bring Your Own Device).

### **Evidence of achievement of outcomes in 2014:**

#### **School iPad Program**

The Technology team has worked hard towards the creation of an iPad program that would suit the needs of all students within the school. Our first step involved the purchasing of a Mac Book Pro in order to support the use of the configurator program to manage iPads across the school. Following this the school applied to Apple to receive Volume Purchasing rights that enable us to purchase selected Apps at a reduced rate of 50%. We then moved onto purchasing new iPads in order to create a class set that can be utilised across the school. Two class sets are now available in the library and are being utilized to support student learning in many classes across the school.

So far no set programs have been written or implemented in regards to the use of the iPad's. Teachers are however including them in their programming and in 2015 the Technology team will continue to work on this goal.

#### **Professional learning**

To increase professional knowledge of iPads some professional development was implemented throughout 2014. Staff were provided with training on how to use particular apps to support both student learning and behaviour. The main app that was used in this training is called Pictello and is a social story based app. Staff were provided with an overview of how the app works and then explored a variety of other ways that the app could benefit our students.

In 2015 our strategy is to further develop our teaching and learning programs to effectively include and implement iPads and their apps. We also aim to build on and reinforce student's knowledge and skills ultimately creating 21 century learners. This professional development also needs to incorporate all accessible technology devices and how to use them to provide all students with greater access to the curriculum.

#### **Community**

In Term 3 2014 our parent community was invited to attend an information session in regards to Technology. A small portion of our

parent community was able to attend this session and provided us with the following feedback:

- They would like to be involved in an iPad group where they could learn more about specific apps and the iPad in general.
- They would like to be a part of our Volume Purchasing program and receive the discounts that would be available because of this.
- They were happy with the amount of technology that was being utilized across the school and saw the benefits of the technology for their children.

In 2015 our strategy is to create a community group that is specific to the use of technology and how it can be used to support students with special needs. The use of iPads would be only one area that this group would be learning about. All Augmentative and Alternate Communication (AAC) devices as well as any other areas of technology that would support our students would be looked at within these sessions.

#### **Exploration of B.Y.O.D**

At The Ponds School many students bring devices to school that help them both academically and with behaviours. However currently as a school we have not begun exploring the idea of B.Y.O.D and how it would affect our students or be implemented at the school.

#### **Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:**

- One aspect of our professional learning program this year was to pay for staff to have access to all of the Spectronics webinars that were presented at their annual conference. These webinars allowed our staff to view many of the latest trends and practices being used to support the learning of students with a disability.
- At The Ponds School each class now has their own class iPad. In addition to this all of our classes have access to 1 class set that can be booked out from our library. This has enabled our teachers to embed the use of iPads into their daily routines and lessons. Many of our students are engaged by the activities available on the iPad's and many others have found them a useful tool to help self-control behaviours and learn a variety of daily routines.

- Towards the end of 2014 we have begun to look at ways to integrate technology into all of our Key Learning Areas. In many ways this is already being achieved at The Ponds School but our aim now is to have it included within our programs and to ensure that it is being used to enhance what our teachers are already doing.

#### **School priority 2**

##### **Literacy – Improving Literacy for students with complex learning and communication needs**

##### **Outcomes from 2012–2014**

- The development of a school-wide comprehensive communication system, to support students expressive and receptive communication skills, across curriculum areas and environments.
- The identification and development of school-wide literacy assessment tools and systems for tracking and monitoring the progress of both Emergent and Conventional Readers and Writers.
- The identification of evidence-based and research-based strategies for improving literacy outcomes for both emergent and conventional readers and writers.
- The development of a training package to build capacity amongst staff, across special schools and units, in developing and implementing quality literacy programs for students with complex learning and communication needs.
- The identification and development of resources to support literacy instruction with students with complex learning and communication needs.

##### **Evidence of achievement of outcomes in 2014:**

Assessment results indicate:

- 75% of students working at the Emergent or Early Conventional levels.
- 25% of students working at the Conventional level.
- PLAN data indicated that 30% of students progressed in their skills, 65% of students maintained their skills and 3% showed some regression in skills.



- Plan data indicated that students showed the highest levels of improvement within the vocabulary knowledge, reading texts, speaking and phonics areas. Areas for improvement included writing, comprehension and phonemic awareness.
- Bridge data indicated that 30% of students progressed in their skills, 68% of students maintained their level of skills and 2% showed some regression in skills.
- Bridge data indicated that students showed the highest levels of improvement within the reading and oral language areas. Areas for improvement included writing, alphabet and phonological awareness.
- Whole to Part data indicated that most students excelled at word identification, with a need for more intensive work in the oral language comprehension and reading comprehension areas.
- The establishment of a whole-school communication system being implemented across all classes and environments, which provides staff with the ability to model and students with ability to communicate across a range of functions by using a range of vocabulary.
- 35% of students with comprehensive communication systems in place across home and school.
- 100% of students with access to a comprehensive communication system across curriculum areas and playground.
- 49% of students used a comprehensive communication system within the community while on excursions.
- The development of a package of training resources, which can be used by Special Education teachers across schools to develop their understanding of evidence and research-based strategies for assessing and teaching Literacy to students with complex learning and communication needs. A draft version of this package has been trialed at one Special School.



#### **Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:**

2014 saw the continuation and expansion of our Literacy project into all twelve classes; supported by five Speech Therapists, three Occupational Therapists and one Physiotherapist from the Penrith ADHC team. Therapists and teachers were involved in varying levels of joint assessment and team teaching opportunities. At the collegial support and whole-school level, the project involved all twelve classes and students through the implementation of collaborative programming, mentoring, team teaching opportunities and whole-school professional learning in communication. Specifically, strategies included the trial of a range of Literacy assessment tools, which guided programming, assisted in tracking and monitoring student progress.

These assessments targeted a range of skills and a range of abilities, including early emergent, emergent, early conventional and conventional. They included:

- The Bridge: An assessment of emergent reading and writing skills.
- ERSI (Early Reading Screening Instrument): An assessment of early conventional reading skills.
- Whole to Part (WTP): Using the QRI-5 to assess conventional reading skills.
- PLAN.

Collaborative programming to develop joint units of work that were differentiated to meet the individual learning needs of students and classes. This collaboration saw teachers trialing a number of evidence-based or informed Literacy strategies aimed at developing the skills of early emergent, emergent, early conventional and conventional readers and writers. These included:

- The use of core vocabulary, PODD (Pragmatic Organised Dynamic Display), Aided Language Displays, Key Word Sign and PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) for communication during lessons and across routines.
- The use of a variety of types of texts which support differentiation through incorporating a range of interests and comprehension levels including fiction, nonfiction, poetry and multimedia.
- Shared Reading lessons which focused on increasing opportunities for interaction, increasing the functions of communication, expanding students' vocabulary and developing language comprehension.
- Guided Reading Lessons which focused on developing comprehension, reading accuracy and fluency.
- Joint text construction (whole word writing) which provided opportunities for students to make choices, expand their vocabulary, build language comprehension and learn early print concepts.
- Independent writing opportunities (letter by letter writing) which provided students with the opportunity to engage in writing for a purpose, practice using their writing tool and develop skills at all levels of the writing process.
- A variety of alphabet, phonemic awareness and phonics based strategies; including word walls and name wall activities, alphabet play, Making Words programs and phonemic awareness games.
- A variety of speaking and listening programs including news, barrier games and play programs.

The completion of a one-day communication and PODD (Pragmatic Organised Dynamic Display) workshop by teachers, School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs), executive, parents and therapists. This has resulted in:

- The trial of a range of light and high tech options for reading and writing including iPads, adapted keyboards, alphabet-flip charts, eye-gaze charts, switch adapted books, websites (Reading Eggs, HelpKidzLearn).

### **School priority 3**

#### **Numeracy**

#### **Outcomes from 2012–2014**

- To increase whole school knowledge and understanding of the new Mathematics syllabus K-10 and the Numeracy Continuum.
- Quality teaching in the area of Mathematics is explicit, integrated and differentiated to support student learning.
- For all teachers to conduct a variety of summative and formative quality assessment tasks ensuring honest reporting and feedback to parents.

#### **Evidence of achievement of outcomes in 2014:**

During 2014, The Numeracy Team focused on achieving the following goals:

- Increasing whole school knowledge and understanding of the new K-10 Mathematics syllabus and the Numeracy Continuum
- Ensure that Quality Teaching in the area of mathematics is explicit, integrated and differentiated to support learning

#### **Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:**

To increase whole school knowledge weekly professional development was implemented in Term 3. Teachers explored:

- The new syllabus.
- The strands and sub strands.
- The knowledge, skills and content points for teaching and learning.
- Assessment of, for and as learning.
- Differentiation.
- The Planning for Literacy and Numeracy continuum of learning (PLAN).
- General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Perspectives.

Professional development sessions tried to meet the learning styles of the teachers and followed a structure of theory and then practice.

After the professional learning took place, a survey was given and data was collected on the teacher's improved understanding and confidence in using the new Mathematics syllabus.

- 46% of teachers rated their confidence and understanding as extremely high
- 33% rated it as high
- 21% rated their understanding and confidence as sound

100% of teachers surveyed indicated that they needed more professional development in using the PLAN continuum, with only 21% indicating that they are using PLAN to inform their teaching and learning.

From this we can conclude that 80% of the staff are confident and have a sound understanding of the new syllabus as well as being confident in planning from and implementing it in their classrooms. The Numeracy Team will continue to provide support in using the new syllabus in 2015 so that all staff feel they have a deep knowledge and understanding.

When surveyed teachers indicated they would like further professional learning via demonstrations of hands on activities across the key concepts in mathematics, specifically for students in a specialist context.

To ensure Quality Teaching in the area of Mathematics was explicit and differentiated to meet student learning needs, teachers explored differentiation according to the:

- content
- process
- product and
- environment

Teachers planned lessons and decoded programs thinking about how they could differentiate their learning activities for individuals or a group of students using these areas. 100% of teachers surveyed said they felt confident in differentiating the new syllabus for their students.

In ensuring honest reporting to parents, the Numeracy Team provided teachers with Professional learning on the different forms of assessment that can be used to gather student data. Teachers looked at:

- assessment of student learning
- assessment used to plan for student learning and

- discussed how students could assess their own learning

57% of staff indicated they felt confident and used these forms of assessment currently.

Teachers were asked whether they were using formal or informal assessment methods in their classrooms.

- 21% of teachers said they used formal assessment methods, such as a paper test to collect data on student understanding of a skill.
- 77% of teachers said they used informal methods such as student observations, checklists, photos and videos as evidence of student understanding of skills.

The data shows a need for the implementation of a formal evidence and research based assessment in Numeracy and Mathematics, to have consistency across the school and ensure honest reporting to parents.

When asked if teachers thought Best Start was a relevant formal assessment that could be used at The Ponds, 85% strongly agreed.

As PLAN is based on the stages of student learning in Numeracy and a tool used across the state to consistently plot student progress, 85% of teachers also strongly agreed that PLAN should continue to be used to guide their teaching and learning.

## School priority 4

**Personal Development Health and Physical Education – Developing Fundamental Movement Skills to enhance the health and wellbeing of students**

### Outcomes from 2012–2014

- For all students in all classes to be accessing a minimum of 2 hours per week of physical activity.
- For all students to be accessing at least one community linked activity per term.
- To increase the amount of sport and active leisure activities that students are accessing within the community.

- An increase in engagement and learning; decrease in behaviour referrals and time out of class for identified students.

#### **Evidence of achievement of outcomes in 2014:**

In 2014, our project was enhanced and expanded, through the establishment of a Fundamental Movement Skills Team. This team included a parent representative, School Learning Support Officer (SLSO), Classroom Teacher, PDHPE Teacher and Assistant Principal. The team focused on increasing physical activity for our students across curriculum areas and environments, through the implementation of a number of targeted and innovative strategies. These strategies included:

- Providing a dedicated PDHPE teacher for 3 days per week through our RFF program, with specialist skills in swimming, hydrotherapy and PE.
- The trial of collaborative programming, team teaching and joint assessment for PDHPE within one Collegial Support Team.
- The implementation of a school-wide movement in preparation for learning program, which saw students being involved in daily walking, gross motor and mobility programs.
- The exploration of Sensory Integration and its application within our teaching and learning programs, through the completion of an online professional learning course and team teaching opportunities with a Senior Occupational Therapist from ADHC.
- The provision of MOVE (Mobility Opportunities Via Education) training for parents, teachers and SLSOs supporting students with physical disabilities.
- Linking fundraising with whole-school physical activity programs (i.e. September, Move-a-thon and Santa Fun Run).
- Whole school sporting events and carnivals (i.e. Sports Carnival and Easter picnic and games).
- The organisation of 'Come and Try' days, which gave students and parents experiences in a range of community-based activities, such as Sailability, Riding for the Disabled (RDA), Hydrotherapy, Swim School, bushwalking and excursions to accessible

playgrounds (e.g. Nurragingy and Yamble Reserve Ryde).

- the provision of a whole-school weekly dance program (Dance2BFit).

An audit of timetables, student reports and programs, together with the completion of parent and staff perception surveys, provided rich data through which to evaluate the program's success and areas for further development in 2015. Data indicated:

- 100% of students participated in 2 or more hours of physical activity per week.
- Students made gains in gross motor skills, attention, focus and behaviour over the year.
- Students developed important community participation skills, such as walking with the group.
- Students were happy when engaged in physical activity, resulting in improvements in overall mental health and wellbeing.
- Students tried and were successful in a range of physical and community-based activities that staff and parents had not considered possible.
- Student's with physical disabilities experienced increased levels of inclusion and participation in the playground and whole-school events.
- An increase in staff confidence levels with the use of equipment to support students mobility skills.
- An increase in staff confidence in working with a range of student abilities and needs, across the school.

#### **Analysis of data:**

- Providing a range of class, team and whole-school physical activities within the school environment supported staff in increasing meaningful physical activity opportunities for all students.
- Collaborative programming, team teaching and joint assessment supported staff in differentiating the curriculum and improved students' engagement and learning outcomes.
- Providing students with regular opportunities to move and be physically active before and



during lessons improved engagement and behaviour.

- Students benefited from being provided with repeated opportunities to practise gross motor skills across environments and with a range of people.
- Providing joint professional learning opportunities (through attendance at MOVE training, mentoring, team teaching and the inclusion of parents within school and community-based programs) and support within programs from a Senior Physiotherapist from ADHC has increased parent and staff expectations for students with physical disabilities, increased the number of opportunities being provided to students to practise and develop mobility skills; resulting in improvements in students mobility outcomes.
- Staff and parents value the provision of a range of school and community-based physical activities across the week, term and year.

#### **Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:**

- The development and implementation of pedestrian and bike safety programs.
- To continue to investigate and evaluate the application of Sensory Integration programs within teaching and learning programs through the development of an Action Research project.
- The continuation and expansion of student involvement in school and inter-school sport carnivals and competitions.
- The provision of a 2-day Basic Provider MOVE course; available to parents, teachers, SLSOs and executive from across the school.
- The provision of Hydrotherapy training to parents, teachers, SLSOs and executive from across the school.
- The continuation and expansion of collaborative programming, team teaching and joint assessment opportunities.
- The continuation and expansion of 'Come and Try' programs available to students, staff and parents within the school and community environments.



#### **School priority 5**

##### **Implementing the NSW syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum**

##### **Outcomes from 2012–2014**

Raise awareness and understanding of the NSW Syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum. All teachers will access and use the syllabuses to plan for a diverse range of learners.

##### **Evidence of achievement of outcomes in 2014:**

- Building staff and community awareness of the NSW syllabus for the Australian Curriculum.
- Participating in curriculum leadership development and multi-modal PL to raise awareness of the changes in relation to special education.
- Understanding the key similarities and differences with current NSW Syllabus.
- Develop further understanding of the Quality Teaching and Learning (QTL) framework as relevant to the NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum.
- Increased teacher knowledge of NSW Syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum: this will be demonstrated by all teachers reporting from the new syllabus and programming using the program builder or a variation and professional dialogue being consistent with the new syllabus.

- Accessing and engaging in state and regional leadership development modules and materials to support the implementation of the new syllabus.
- Facilitate and adapt the e-syllabus format in preparation for implementation.
- Foster collaboration through learning communities and networks.

#### **Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:**

- Whole school professional learning sessions, collegiate support group meetings and professional dialogue.
- Staff Development Day – Instructional Rounds with Jenny Gore.
- Online evaluation and survey when completed for a day per collegiate support group.
- Creating and uploading professional learning activities and evaluations through MYPL@EDU.
- Adobe Connect syllabus PLUS K-6 for English, Maths and Science and Technology. Produced by the DEC in regards to the new syllabus.
- Selected teachers to access and engage in learning communities and networks.

### **Parent/caregiver, student, and teacher satisfaction**

In 2014, the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about communication, school evaluation and planning.

The school evaluation and planning survey was completed by completed by 31% of parents/caregivers. The survey included questions under the headings of: Therapy and Family Supports, Individual Education Plans, Communication and Reporting, Teaching and Learning and Leadership and school culture.

From the survey results it can be seen that parents and caregivers thought that communicating and reporting and leadership and school culture were a great strength of The Ponds School. Areas of improvement were mainly under the headings of therapy and family supports and teaching and learning, which included:

- their child being involved in activities within the community

- my family receives the respite services they need
- my family is supported in managing my child's behaviour at home
- the school works closely with my child's therapists
- My child gets the therapy services they need
- I use my child's communication system at home and in the community
- My child uses technology at home to practise skills they are learning at school
- I am confident in helping my child use technology

The communication survey was completed by 69% of parents and caregivers.

The data gained indicated:

- The majority of parents and caregivers use, prefer and find that the communication book gains the best communication outcomes when communicating with the school.
- The two next popular methods of communication are phone calls and meeting face-to-face.
- The majority of parents and caregivers have read their child's reports, the school newsletter and student journals.
- Overwhelmingly the data indicated that parents and caregivers read the newsletter to find out information about the school.

The Ponds School strives to continually improve its practice, by gaining feedback on relevant aspects of the school from parent/caregivers, students and staff.

### **Future directions 2015-2017 School Plan**

NSW DEC is implementing a new school planning process for 2015-17. The new plan will be published on the school's website from the beginning of Term 2 2015.

A range of planning processes and strategies were implemented which incorporated the whole school community within the School Planning Process. The Ponds School Principal along with Principals from the other five SSP schools in the North West and Western Suburbs of Sydney met with a representative from the DEC High

Performance Unit throughout 2014 to discuss the 2015-2017 School Plan and work through the modules.

The Principals were able to provide feedback in regards to the modules before they were put on the High Performance page. The network held a Professional Learning evening and involved the executive teams from the SSPs. This ensured that the executive from each school had a clear vision of what the new school plan would need to encompass. During term 4, The Ponds School held staff meetings to discuss What's important? Where are we now? Where do we want to be? We also held a whole school staff meeting and discussed what to keep, chuck, change and add.

Two surveys were distributed to all parents at the end of 2014. The first, was seeking information in regards to communication. There was a 69% return rate. The other survey topic was School Evaluation and Planning. This survey had a return rate of 31%.

The Ponds School executive chaired a parent focus group and gained data on the following statements:

- Things my child has participated in at school.
- Things I am pleased about.
- Things my child has learnt at school.
- Things I am concerned about.
- What should the school do next?

All information that was gained has been used within the School Plan 2015-2017. Much time during the Leadership meetings has spent developing the School Plan and the executive had a School Plan planning day to work through each strategic direction.

Information in regards to the School Plan will be communicated with the whole school community via Newsletters, the school website, the school Facebook page and discussed at staff meetings and Parent Information Meetings that are held once a month.

## **Strategic Directions and Purposes**

### **Strategic Direction 1**

#### **Connecting and empowering the community**

Purpose:

To build stronger purposeful relationships as an educational community by leading and inspiring a

culture of collaboration and trust. To empower students, families, agencies and staff to engage meaningfully with their community.

### **Strategic Direction 2**

#### **Leading Innovative, differentiated teaching and learning**

Purpose:

To develop and sustain a culture of high expectations, inquiry and innovation; using and creating evidence-based practices through reflection and collaboration, to provide quality individualised, meaningful education in a safe and caring environment.

### **Strategic Direction 3**

#### **Creating highly skilled, confident and resilient leaders**

Purpose:

To develop leaders at all levels of the school community (students, staff and community) with a capacity to inspire, lead and sustain exceptional practice now and into the future.

## **About this report**

In preparing this report, the self-evaluation committee has gathered information from evaluations conducted during the year and analysed other information about the school's practices and student learning outcomes. The self-evaluation committee and school planning committee have determined targets for the school's future development.

Leonie Donaldson – Principal

Greg Wood – Deputy Principal

Clay Starr – Assistant Principal

Anne Bennett – Assistant Principal

Renee Andrew – Assistant Principal

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Parents can find more information about Annual School Reports, how to interpret information in the report and have the opportunity to provide feedback about the report at:

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/emsad/asr/index.php>