

Tallowood School

Annual Report



2016



5459

Introduction

The Annual Report for **2016** is provided to the community of **Tallowood School** as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

Carol Robson

Principal

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Message from the Principal

Welcome to the 2016 Annual Report for Tallowood School. The staff of Tallowood School strive to create a supportive, safe and interesting learning environment for our students. Partnerships with our parents feature strongly in our work, supporting all of our students. Many of our students have complex support needs – physical, medical, sensory and other. Daily efforts by all work towards supporting these needs and celebrating the successes achieved.

The Hills community continues to generously support our students. In 2016 Tallowood School again received a financial benefit from the annual Castle Hill RSL Rattle n Hum car show. In 2016 'Do Something Day' staff from Castle Hill RSL, Parramatta RSL and Lynwood Country Club spent a day sprucing up our Tallowood Farm area with paint, planting and a retaining wall to aid in access to the area for students in wheelchairs.

Staff continue to engage in a range of activities to increase their skills and knowledge working with our students. The Year 12 Graduation celebration, Presentation Day and the end of year concert showcase our students' achievements.

Carol Robson

School background

School vision statement

'Creating pathways for Life'

Our school is committed to each student achieving maximum independence and engagement for their post school life in their communication abilities, emotional wellbeing and respect for self and others.

School context

Tallowood School is a Public, Private Partnership SSP School (School for Specific Purpose) located in Kellyville. The school enrolls students from Kindergarten to year 12. The current enrolment is 99 students. All students have a moderate or severe intellectual disability and many students have additional physical and sensory disabilities, autism or other syndromes. The school population is drawn from seven local council areas including The Hills, Holroyd, Parramatta, Blacktown, Penrith, Hawkesbury and Hornsby. The school opened in 2004 and is purpose built with a range of facilities. It provides a safe, attractive and caring learning environment for our students. Every student has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP), designed in collaboration with families and carers, to identify specific learning priorities. Our skilled staff uses a holistic approach to differentiate the Board of Studies NSW Australian Curriculum in the key learning areas to meet the individual learning needs of our students. Our school has a range of innovative programs including work experience, hydrotherapy, Riding for the Disabled (RDA), sailing, Zumba classes, Tallowood farm and community access programs. The school is generously supported by The Hills community.

Self-assessment and school achievement

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

This section of the Annual Report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading. Staff made an 'on balance determination' of the current performance in each of the domains, based on evidence of current practice.

Learning: The focus in 2016 was on wellbeing, learning culture, assessment and curriculum and reporting. Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is embedded in learning activities in the classroom and in all settings. Students are explicitly taught what it looks and feels like to 'learn, care and be safe'. The individual success of students is celebrated every morning during our assembly. Our staff focus on creating respectful and positive interactions; ensuring good conditions for student learning. In consultation with parents staff set SMART Priority Learning goals to be achieved within the year. The focus on staff wellbeing has a flow on effect on student learning. Reporting to parents and opportunities for teacher/ parent /carer reflection is built into our school year.

Teaching: In 2016 observation and feedback activities targeted specific teaching skills and knowledge. Each teacher completed two peer teacher observations with an identified focus. Professional classroom practice has been enhanced by targeted professional learning. Staff collaboratively focus on developing and embedding meaningful assessments into teaching and learning activities. Staff work collaboratively to design units of work, aligned to the new Australian Curriculum syllabuses. This collaboration has focussed on differentiating the learning for each student.

Leading: Team leaders have supported each member in their team in identifying their professional development goals and the strategies and resources needed to achieve these goals. A number of staff enthusiastically embraced leadership opportunities to initiate and undertake a range of projects in line with the school plan. A number of meetings were organised to lead parents through the processes and information around the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Great efforts have been made in improving communication between school and home through the newsletter, school web page, school Facebook page, emails to parents/ carers and investigating the use of an app. The school leadership team and the administration staff have successfully led the change to the school's new finance system.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine the strategic priorities in our School Plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students. For more information about the School Excellence Framework: <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/school-excellence-framework>

Strategic Direction 1

Each student will be an engaged and successful learner with a voice.

Purpose

To develop a collaborative and supportive learning environment that has high expectations for our students' learning and meets their individual needs and abilities and celebrates their achievements.

Overall summary of progress

Communication dictionaries:

During 2016 communication dictionaries were created for our non-verbal students in wheelchairs. The dictionaries outline the students likes and dislikes and how these are communicated by the student. Having this knowledge will increase the skills of staff in communicating with these students. Parents and carers gave their input into the information compiled. The finished dictionaries are attached to each child's wheelchair.

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL):

Professional learning for new staff and refreshers for all staff. An Information session was presented to parents on PBL to increase their knowledge on the program. PBL information was included in the fortnightly newsletter. This information focussed on what each value looked like for our students.

Priority Learning Goals for each student:

Professional learning and support for staff to create SMART goals for each student in consultation with their parent. Every student had a communication goal as one of the SMART goals. The communication goal was based on assessment of their communication and the next skill to be taught.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
Parents and staff are informed on Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) and PBL is embedded in school practice.	This year Positive Behaviour for Learning practices were reviewed and staff received professional learning to support improvement. The PBL team continued to use a data base to collate data on inappropriate behaviour. This data was used to plan interventions and improve teaching practices as well as to prevent inappropriate behaviours from occurring in the future where possible. The team designed signage for the school driveway entrance and received quotes for this purpose. PBL was introduced to the whole school community through the school newsletter. Team members made regular contributions, identifying focus areas and rewarding positive student behaviour . A SET (School-wide Evaluation Tool) survey was conducted in term 4 to determine how accurately school-wide PBL is being implemented. The SET consists of a number of evaluation questions that are divided into seven sub-scales. Feedback was provided to specifically highlight the strengths of the implementation at Tallowood School. Some areas were also identified for future direction and/or planning considerations. The overall score was 91.1%.	
75% of students in wheelchairs will have a communication dictionary to assist staff in communicative interactions with	Communication dictionaries have been created for 70% of students who use a wheelchair and have limited to no expressive communication. These dictionaries are attached to students' wheelchairs	

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
the student.	and are often seen being read by school and travel support staff. Staff have commented that they have learnt new things about the students because of these dictionaries. Staff are able to have meaningful and relevant interactions with the students based on the information they have read. Most students display their obvious enjoyment of these interactions very clearly. Staff are more aware of communication systems that individuals are able to use and can incorporate these into communicative exchanges, for example, yes/no responses, using eye gaze or blinking.	
80% of individual priority learning goals are achieved as stated in their SMART goal.	70% of student SMART priority learning goals were achieved. Staff feedback on analysis of the data identified the following reasons for not achieving 80% of goals. SMART goals too hard, needed to be broken down into smaller and more achievable steps. Class disruption and absenteeism affecting the achievement of goals. Differences in teacher judgement on whether the goal was achieved according to criteria.	

Next Steps

All students in wheelchairs will have a communication dictionary created and additional communication dictionaries will be created for an identified cohort of students to increase communication interactions.

Further training for parents in PBL strategies and how to use these strategies at home.

Ongoing professional learning and collaboration in achieving identified SMART goals for all students.

Committee to create a Communication Continuum display board in a prominent area of the school.

To create a storage area for hard copies of communication resources that staff can easily access.

Committee to create more generic communication resources for staff to use that will be stored in hard copy and on server.

Committee to conduct further professional learning in teaching Augmentative and Assistive Communication (AAC) and how to make the necessary resources..

Staff to update existing personal communication dictionaries (PCD) for students in wheelchairs and create new PCDs for two mobile students in their class who have limited verbal language

Strategic Direction 2

Our staff will be high performing and student needs focused.

Purpose

To develop staff skills and capacities in providing quality teaching and learning programs to raise the level of student achievement.

Overall summary of progress

Observation and feedback:

Staff indicated the increased value of this process in 2016. The ongoing building of staff skills and expertise.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
80% of staff indicate the targeted professional learning sessions are valuable.	<p>84% of staff found the targeted professional learning sessions valuable.</p> <p>During term 4 staff participated in 2 small group workshop sessions around the use of Boardmaker, Proloquo2Go, Program Builder and KeyWord Signing. From the survey responses all but 2 staff rated the sessions valuable. Comments from the survey show that these sessions provided 'opportunity to discuss with other staff how they program and what is essential', 'betterknowledge and confidence in using the Proloquo2Go app', 'I learned more from these small sessions. I was given the opportunity to learn in my own pace and hone the skills that I wanted to acquire' and 'I can actually use Boardmaker now! Yahoo!'. The impact from these sessions is increased staff confidence in using a variety of programs to enhance students' learning and engagement in activities.</p>	
100% of teachers undertake an observation.	<p>76% of staff completed two observations. 100% of staff reported that the observation sessions of peers were valuable. 92% of staff found the reflection session with the peer valuable.</p> <p>In 2016 permanent and temporary teachers participated in professional learning workshops titled 'Classroom Observation: A Professional Strategy' and 'Reflection on a Lesson in a Team' from the Classroom Teacher Program. From the survey responses received all but one staff member found both courses valuable, with one comment 'it provided teachers with clear and concise information on how to properly implement classroom observation(s)'. Following these workshops all teachers participated in observation and reflections sessions linked to their Professional Development Plan. Survey results indicated that 'collaboration contributed significantly towards the achievement of my goal', 'personally it helped</p>	<p>6 teacher days</p> <p>\$3000.</p>

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
100% of teachers undertake an observation.	me build my confidence, professionally I was able to deeply evaluate my own teaching' and 'it was great knowing that your observer was there to help you improve your teaching and learning process'. The impact of the observation and reflections enabled staff to 'implement useful behaviour management strategies....' and 'learnt lots of new ideas and skills (strategies) to use in my lessons making them more engaging for students at different levels'.	
50% increase in the use of keyword signing by staff.	Key word signing professional learning has been conducted each term throughout the year. At the commencement of the year data was collected to gauge current levels of signing and this same data was collected again at the end of the year. Data shows the use of key word signing has slightly decreased over the year. There were however different words being signed "most frequently", which demonstrates that staff have taken on board some of the learning that was presented to them. There were also a number of students who were observed to be using signing in the December data collection allowing them to "have a voice" and communicate needs and wants with staff.	

Next Steps

Swans assessment tool to be trialled with students.

To continue the effectiveness of the observation and feedback process.

Every permanent or temporary teacher will pair with a peer for the observation and reflection process. During the first observation they will observe a teaching practice identified in their PDP, following this 80% of teachers will have implemented identified changes in their classroom practice which will be observable during the second observation.

25% of permanent or temporary teachers will have completed the online training course 'coaching for classroom change' through the Teaching Standards in Action (TSA) program.

To host and represent at sporting events on and off the school site regularly each term throughout the year.

To encourage 80% of students to participate in a range of PDHPE class and/or whole school activities throughout the year.

To encourage 50% of students and 80% of staff to participate in 'Crunch and Sip', 'Healthy Lunchbox' and 'Fruit and Vege Month' programs that occur throughout school calendar year.

To launch the 'Live Life Well' program.

Familiarising staff with the new Stage 6 English, Maths, History and Science Life Skills Syllabi by the end of term 3.

English, Maths, History and Science 7 – 12 units of work written to reflect the new Life Skills Syllabi.

Strategic Direction 3

Our community will be engaged and informed.

Purpose

To develop partnerships which are connected and effective. To develop productive networks which support student, staff and family well-being.

Overall summary of progress

Parents feedback indicated the variety of communication strategies between school and home was effective.

Information sessions on the NDIS were helpful in informing parents of this scheme and how to engage in the process.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
Parent surveys indicate a 10% increase in levels of effective communication between school and home.	<p>Parent/ carer survey shows increased satisfaction with the way the school communicates with them. The survey shows that parents feel a sense of belonging and their contributions are valued. Strategies have been developed to promote ongoing improvement in parents' and carers sense of belonging as valued contributing members of Tallwood school.</p> <p>63% of families have accessed the Facebook page. 86% of families have accessed the school website 90 % of parents have read emails from the school 90% of parents have read school newsletter. Parents indicated the following about their information needs: 93% want to know about upcoming school events, 76% want to know about special events so their child can participate, 60% would like training from outside agencies, 43% indicated interest in attending P&C and information sessions, 56% indicated interest in information about leisure and sporting opportunities for their child and 67% liked Facebook and website posts about daily school activities.</p>	
Staff surveys reflect a 20% increase in the feelings of being valued and acknowledged.	<p>This year, staff and student wellbeing practices were reviewed. A survey was developed in term 3 to gain an understanding of; the level of 'morale' within the school, personal viewpoints of 'what wellbeing is' and what strategies staff were practicing to help manage stress. Just less than 50% of surveys were returned. Results determined that 100% of staff enjoyed 'buddy week' during week 5 of every term involving key speakers, a secret buddy and a social gathering. Results also determined that staff had a good understanding of the definition of 'Wellbeing'. This highlighted that 'wellbeing week' was deeply embedded within our school community. A key speaker on macro nutrition and exercise was an incentive for staff to join with over 50% of staff attending. More people participated in completing surveys in 2015. This was discussed amongst staff during the term 4 wellbeing professional learning meeting. Responses were that staff were too 'time poor to fill</p>	

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
Staff surveys reflect a 20% increase in the feelings of being valued and acknowledged.	in surveys' and 'surveys were done too much within the school'. This highlighted that another form of gathering data from staff may be more effective such as a focus group. Overall results showed that less people were feeling valued in their classroom environment than in 2015 and less people were feeling valued as part of a whole school community.	

Next Steps

In 2017 we will further improve parent and carer communication channels with the introduction of the SeeSaw app, which will provide a direct digital communication method between the class teacher and home.

A whole year calendar will be developed to give parents and carers advanced notice of upcoming whole school activities.

The launch of an informal social club for parents and carers will provide opportunities for them to meet off site. It is hoped that friendships and alliances may be formed which will result in more support for our school community.

Parent information and training sessions will be held three times a year and will cover topics of interest as indicated in our survey of 2016.

Key Initiatives	Impact achieved this year	Resources (annual)
Aboriginal background loading	<p>The Aboriginal funding was used to support two of our Aboriginal students with very high complex medical and physical needs.</p> <p>All of the students have a Personalised Learning Plan.</p>	\$3394
English language proficiency	English Language proficiency funding was used in the implementation of communication programs for targeted students.	\$7935
Quality Teaching, Successful Students (QTSS)	QTSS funding was combined with additional school funding to provide executive release to support teachers in the implementation of the Professional Development Process – goal setting and observation and feedback sessions.	\$2700
Socio–economic background	This funding was used for student assistance to enable a number of students to participate in a range of community based activities. This funding also employed some additional School Learning Support Officer time to support two students with complex health and physical needs.	\$6112
Support for beginning teachers	The professional development of two beginning teachers was supported through this funding. One of the staff members used this additionally funded time to complete their accreditation requirements. The funds also allowed for additional time and mentoring for report writing.	\$17037
Targeted student support for refugees and new arrivals	This funding was used to support this students participation in learning programs implemented in the community.	\$860
Norta Norta	This funding was used to provide an additional teacher support for implementing the 'Reading Our Way' scheme with a cohort of students.	\$2390

Student information

Student enrolment profile

Students	Enrolments			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Boys	70	71	71	72
Girls	29	27	27	25

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal	1
Deputy Principal(s)	1
Assistant Principal(s)	4
Classroom Teacher(s)	13.43
Teacher Librarian	0.6
School Administration & Support Staff	19.28
Other Positions	0

*Full Time Equivalent

In 2016 one staff member identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Teacher qualifications

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

Teacher qualifications

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	100
Postgraduate degree	55

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional Learning and teacher accreditation

Professional Learning at Tallowood School in 2016 developed the capabilities of teachers to provide engaging, authentic learning programs for students, based on current best practice.

Total allocation: \$19 864.00

Total expended: \$19 864.00

Average expenditure per teacher was \$993.20

Weekly professional learning afternoons were attended by all teachers and included training in Auslan keyword signing, school planning processes, the Professional Development Framework, classroom observation processes, wellbeing in the workplace and creating individualised communication dictionaries

School Development Days were attended by all staff, including School Learning Support Officers, and covered the following training:

Mandatory Professional learning– Code of Conduct, Child Protection update, Emergency Care, CPR and Anaphylaxis training, attendance at the Annual Special Education conference and SLSO conference, School Excellence Framework and Wellbeing in the work place.

Financial information (for schools using both OASIS and SAP/SALM)

Financial information

The three financial summary tables cover 13 months (from 1 December 2015 to 31 December 2016).

The financial summary consists of school income broken down by funding source and is derived from the school Annual Financial Statement.

Income	\$
Balance brought forward	277 113.58
Global funds	232 874.29
Tied funds	130 510.15
School & community sources	152 546.89
Interest	3 522.18
Trust receipts	348.10
Canteen	0.00
Total income	796 915.19
Expenditure	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	40 474.72
Excursions	13 153.71
Extracurricular dissections	33 964.71
Library	3 750.80
Training & development	25 039.49
Tied funds	115 886.32
Short term relief	77 854.38
Administration & office	70 213.17
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	45 995.48
Maintenance	44 838.83
Trust accounts	348.10
Capital programs	17 591.03
Total expenditure	489 110.74
Balance carried forward	307 804.45

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 December 2015 to 31 December 2016.

	2016 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	0.00
Revenue	597 458.99
(2a) Appropriation	521 426.74
(2b) Sale of Goods and Services	12 678.65
(2c) Grants and Contributions	62 291.37
(2e) Gain and Loss	0.00
(2f) Other Revenue	0.00
(2d) Investment Income	1 062.23
Expenses	-337 149.03
Recurrent Expenses	-337 149.03
(3a) Employee Related	-145 647.93
(3b) Operating Expenses	-191 501.10
Capital Expenses	0.00
(3c) Employee Related	0.00
(3d) Operating Expenses	0.00
SURPLUS / DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR	260 309.96
Balance Carried Forward	260 309.96

There is no opening balance recorded in the SAP finance table. The opening balance for the school for this reporting period is recorded as the Balance Brought Forward in the OASIS table.

The OASIS Balance carried forward amount (ie, funds on date of migration) is included in the (2a) Appropriation amount in the SAP table.

Any differences between the OASIS Balance carried forward and (2a) Appropriation amount is the result of other accounts and transactions being included in the (2a) Appropriation amount.

The school finance committee meets regularly to review income and expenditure and purchase requests. The existing interactive whiteboards will be replaced with Comm boards as .

	2016 Actual (\$)
Base Total	612 306.55
Base Per Capita	10 703.73
Base Location	0.00
Other Base	601 602.82
Equity Total	19 831.15
Equity Aboriginal	5 784.29
Equity Socio economic	6 112.29
Equity Language	7 934.58
Equity Disability	0.00
Targeted Total	3 032 105.83
Other Total	6 924.00
Grand Total	3 671 167.52

A full copy of the school's financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the parent and/or community groups. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

A survey of parents/ carers indicated increased satisfaction with the way the school communicates with them. Parent responses indicate they feel a sense of belonging and they feel their contributions are valued.

100% of parents participate, either in face to face meetings or by telephone with the class staff , in the annual review of their student's Personalised Learning Plan. Parents express their satisfaction with this process and the opportunity to meet with the class teacher to discuss the semester report on their child's learning.

During 2016 many parents valued the opportunity to attend presentations on the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Great feedback was received following a presentation by the parent of a past student.

Teachers indicated a great level of increased satisfaction on the Professional Development Process and in particular the observation and feedback sessions with teacher peers.

Strategies to foster and increase staff wellbeing are embedded into the culture of the school. Many of our students have very complex support needs and staff wellbeing is very important in giving staff the capacity and resilience to manage student needs on a daily basis.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Professional learning and staff collaboration has resulted in an Aboriginal perspective being incorporated into History, Geography, English and Creative Arts units of work. All students have differentiated learning activities about Aboriginal histories, perspectives and current Aboriginal Australia. Seven students have identified as being Aboriginal. All of our students have a Personalised Learning Plan to meet their individual learning needs.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

The school acknowledges and values the cultural diversity of our students and their families. 39% of families have a culturally different background. The highlight of the 2016 Harmony Day was a performance by African Beat. There was great participation by both our students and their families. During morning tea students, parents and staff enjoyed tasting a range of foods from across the world.

The school has a trained Anti Racism Officer. In 2016 there were no complaints or issues reported to this officer.

Other school programs

iPLAY program In 2016, the school worked in collaboration with the Australian Catholic University in implementing the program Activity in Youth (iPLAY). iPLAY is a teacher professional development program, designed to provide school teachers with the skills and strategies to improve sport and PE lessons. The aim of the program is to improve the quality of the school's sport and physical activity program, improve learning and enhance the overall health of our students. The program has had an impact on teacher's professional development and has further enhanced teacher knowledge in planning and teaching school sport and PDHPE lessons. This was evident when iPLAY representative presented at a school teacher development afternoon on the various ways teachers can plan and think creatively when teaching sport to our students. There was a 100% attendance and participation rate of teachers at the presentation. All teachers were trained in the use of tracking devices (pedometers) to be used in sport lessons to track student activity and progress. Verbal feedback from staff suggested that this information enhanced teachers' knowledge and confidence when teaching school sport and PE lessons. Consequently, this may encourage more physical activity in the classroom enhancing the overall health for students. In term 3, 2016 the iPLAY facilitator came to observe 12 teachers instructing sport lessons in classes across age groups K-12. This was done to see if the program was suitable for students within a special education setting. Staff feedback identified the program as too complex for the majority of students across the school. In 2017 the program will be modified for our students.