

Kotara School

Annual Report



2018



5738

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2018 is provided to the community of Kotara 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.

Brendan Rodd

Principal

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Message from the Principal

The positive culture at Kotara School is partly a result of setting high expectations and then recognising, acknowledging, celebrating and promoting student and staff achievements. This report is a part of that process and is a testament to the effectiveness, diversification and relevance of programs at Kotara School.

Kotara School services the needs of primary aged students and also runs an outreach class in the Nexus Unit at John Hunter Hospital.

The primary purpose of enrolment at Kotara School is the assistance of students to develop greater academic and social skills as well as the development of emotional literacy. This last area is a key component of the Kotara program and comprises the domains of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills and motivation.

Kotara School has an extensive network of partnerships with other service providers and agencies in Newcastle and its surrounding areas. We have developed quality relationships with partner schools and provided a range of professional learning opportunities to support them. The core stakeholders in the program remain our students, parents, home schools, AECG and Kotara School staff. In addition to this we receive invaluable support from Hunter Institute of Mental Health (HIMH), Health, Housing, Police, FACS, Impact and Allambi.

Kotara School endeavours to provide a therapeutic environment with a multi-disciplinary approach to special education and individual student needs. The school, where possible, emulates mainstream school policies and practices to facilitate a smooth transition process back to a mainstream setting as well as to increase student self-esteem and expectations.

Brendan Rodd

Principal

School background

School vision statement

Equip the leaders of tomorrow to be successful, confident, creative individuals through a quality education, in a nurturing, innovative environment so that all students can continue their life-long learning journey and return to their communities equipped for the challenges of an ever changing world.

School context

On the main site Kotara School educates students in Years 3 to 6 with emotional disturbance and behaviour disorders. Kotara School also operates an outreach class in the Nexus Unit at John Hunter Hospital. Nexus is a specialist 14 bed inpatient unit accepting both voluntary and involuntary patients. It provides services for children and young people aged 5 to 18 years who present with mental health disorders that are conducive to inpatient observation and/or treatment.

Kotara School has an enrolment of 35 students who are placed by a regional panel of psychologists, principals and consultants. At any time Kotara School Aboriginal population can be up to 60%, therefore Kotara School embed Aboriginal education across all aspects of the school plan.

It aims to create behavioural change in order for them to return to mainstream settings. It draws students from Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens area. Kotara School is staffed with a school principal, two assistant principals, three classroom teachers, five school learning and support officers and a school administration manager.

Kotara School has extensive partnerships with other service providers and agencies in Newcastle and its surrounds. It has developed quality relationships with partner schools and provides a range of professional learning opportunities to support them.

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 II, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework II. 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.

The results of this process indicated a strong performance from the school in creating a positive and productive learning culture amongst staff and students. The fundamental importance of the Wellbeing area is a major priority of the Kotara program. We have demonstrated this by providing a supportive system to build a culture of trust, respect and valuing of all stakeholders. Kotara School also maintains a strong ethos around support for staff and students' social and emotional wellbeing. Significant resources are employed to access opportunities as well as incorporate professional learning into the processes and culture of the school. The results of this are evident in the way students relate to each other and importantly, in the increased engagement of students in learning. This has always been a central goal for Kotara School.

Staff continue to deliver high quality teaching and learning programs. Staff receive ongoing Professional Learning in the effective implementation of Count Me In Too, Accelerated Literacy, Neurosequential Model of Education, Jolly Phonics and Universal Design for Learning. Attention to individual learning needs has been another component of our progress throughout the year through the use of IEP's and PLP's. A collaborative approach has been implemented where possible across many of the systems at the school. Our semester review meetings with all key stakeholders including census schools, agencies, and parents/ carers are one successful example of this where 90% of students had 1 or more key stakeholders present at their meeting.

The school utilises the NSW Department of Education and Training Curriculum Planning, Assessing and Reporting policy to communicate effectively through the use of A to E reporting in SENTRAL twice a year. Student progress is assessed and evidence gathered through a variety of sources. Ongoing, regular communication with parent/ carers has built a relationship where parents are confident to ask questions surrounding the learning of their child.

Classroom practice has been further strengthened through the adoption of hands on learning tasks through the use of Science Technology and Maths programs with a strong focus on project based learning. This continues to increase engagement throughout the school as well as a love of learning for students who were previously disengaged from their education.

The school has developed new systems and practices to ensure student performance is tracked and measured. This data is also shared with each student's census school. Students are tracked daily, weekly and each Term through their behaviour, and academically students are tracked each semester. This data is also utilised to assist with transition planning for students. Ongoing data collation will enable a continued collaborative approach to learning for our unique setting.

Classrooms at Kotara School are effective and designated as delivering on the key performance indicators in the School Excellence Framework II. Teachers regularly revise and review their teaching and learning programs, ensuring they continue to meet the individual needs of their students. Professional collaboration time is planned strategically. The key focus for teachers during these sessions is to ensure that the learning they are planning to lead with their students is going to meet the needs as identified by system and school data. All classrooms are well managed with supervisors regularly monitoring teaching and learning programs to ensure that any planning in classrooms is reflected upon by the teachers delivering the lessons.

Kotara School uses pre and post data of assessments to assist in the differentiation of student learning needs. All teachers have been provided with professional learning to enable them to accurately plot students on the progressions. Whilst there have been some initial concerns around the consistency of judgements teachers are making, the leadership team has strategically addressed these with further professional learning, modelling of evaluation of student performance and learning including the development of learning plans to ensure students are being taught the skills and knowledge they need to move forward. The use of this data enables Kotara School to make evidence-informed decisions.

Decisions made about which areas to target explicit lessons in PBL are made using SENTRAL data. Individual Education Plans include information about where students are achieving and the skills and knowledge they need to move forward. In addition to this, the school is responsive to the advice of clinical psychologists, occupational therapists and similar professionals in developing these plans as the judgements they have made in order to determine their recommendations to the school are based on evidence they have collected through their evaluation of the student.

Induction for all staff is a strategic process. All new staff participate in professional learning to fulfil all mandatory requirements under child protection legislation, the NSW DoE Code of Conduct and Work Health and Safety Legislation. All teachers participate in annual training relating to the Personalised Development Plan (PDP) process including coaching conversations with their supervisors, supported by the Principal, for those who are interested in further career development. Part of the PDP process is for teachers to participate in lesson reviews of other teachers and then to collaborate on how the lesson or teaching could be improved. All reflective practices at the school are structured around three very simple questions; What went well? What did we miss? and, Next time let's look at.

This positively structured system allows for teachers to be constructive in their feedback to their colleagues.

Kotara School's school plan is a collaborative working document which assists all key stakeholders to seek quality feedback regarding strategic directions and milestones. The Principal, in consultation with the school executive writes the plan. The current plan contains three strategic directions with each executive member responsible for a direction and the associated milestone. This process is highly collaborative across the whole Kotara School staff.

Kotara School continues to provide opportunities for community engagement and feedback through events, parent workshops, social media, online surveys and traditional communication methods such as Newsletters. Our school, like many SSP's draws students from across numerous catchment areas with many travelling considerable distance to attend. This occasionally provides an obstacle to creating a sense of community in the local sense and can discourage parents from attending events based at the school. This situation reinforces our commitment to creating a community presence online.

2018 has seen Kotara School acknowledged for its continued work in the area of external service provision occurring within the school environment. The school has developed guidelines to build consistency and provide clarity around external service provision and actively sought open communication and a collaborative approach with providers. As with all other school activities, our administrative practices are continuously improving.

The school uses newsletters, Skoolbag App, website and Open Days to engage with the community effectively.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

Strategic Direction 1

Quality Learning and Wellbeing

Purpose

To create a student centred learning environment with high expectations where all students are connected and involved in their learning journey.

Overall summary of progress

Prior to the beginning of the year 2 processes were identified for targeting to improve the outcomes for learners, support their journey at Kotara School and boost their overall wellbeing. Firstly it was identified that staff needed development in identifying and understanding evidenced-based teaching practices to support students on their learning journey and especially in selecting directions in their IEP's and PLP's. As a result of this, Effect Size was chosen as a broad concept for staff to be developed in. This professional learning was to then drive practice across the domains of student learning. The second process identified was ensuring efficacy and fidelity of data collection systems to measure the effectiveness of the implementations against baseline data. This journey was commenced at the beginning of the year with timelines set and learning and systems mapped onto a scope and sequence. By the mid year mark in 2018 the school had undergone and would continue to experience significant movement in staff across the school as they were successful in securing permanent and promotional positions in other settings. All classes experienced at least 1 teacher change however some experienced 2. As a result of this, the emphasis upon extending our staff and the processes that were in place was shifted to ensuring that the with the movement of staff our current systems and processes remained in place.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
All programs and class observations indicate teachers are using researched based pedagogy	Resources – \$500 Professional Learning \$11000 Staffing – \$2000	At the end of the year we are almost back to where we began as many of the staff have been successful gaining employment in other settings.
All students can articulate their goals and their progress they are making towards their personal learning.		Students learning goals are reviewed updated. Due to the significant changes in staff across the school over the year the implementation of the Daily 5 program wasn't deemed to have been completed to the level of fidelity that would indicate anything through the data. The significant changes also had an impact on behaviour in the classes which further impacted these results. With a more stable staff next year it is hoped these interventions will be undertaken with greater fidelity then.

Next Steps

With stability of staff in the new year Kotara Staff will begin the journey anew. 2019 will bring the commencement of a new executive member of staff as well as 100% change of teaching staff. Further to this 2 new classes of students will begin at KS and the induction processes regarding that will commence. With the new year it is anticipated that the timelines and targets of the school plan will be evaluated against the needs of the staff and students in 2019. The initial work on SD1 was positive and it is anticipated we will simply begin this process again with some minor modifications.

Strategic Direction 2

Quality Teaching and Learning

Purpose

Teachers maintain high professional standards, have a deep understanding and explicitly teach adjusted, evidenced based curriculum through a collaborative, collegial approach to programming.

Overall summary of progress

Processes were commenced regarding the Daily 5 model in Literacy at Kotara School, syllabus knowledge and implementation, Visible Learning and a collaborative approach to programming. Despite the fact that the school experienced significant staff turnover the work on the Daily 5 method of Literacy and Numeracy and the collaborative approach to programming was continued. The systematic and flexible nature of the Daily 5 system was reported by staff to be beneficial in programming, student learning and behaviour management. It was also found to be easily transferable to new staff. The initial capacity we developed on the syllabus and Visible Learning was lost due to 100% staff turnover. Teacher systems of collaboration in programming were very successful and were maintained across the year. Evidence of this was gleaned from staff feedback on the system, teacher / exec supervision meetings and student outcomes.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
100% of students progress in numeracy and literacy as per their personal student learning plans	Literacy & Numeracy – \$3500 STEM– \$10,500 Professional Learning – \$1200	Survey – pre and post data Despite the pausing of the second half of the initiatives in this area the initial work on collaboration has been highly successful and has continued across the year. Staff satisfaction with this process was high.
All pedagogy including assessment is collaboratively designed and implemented in line with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers		Implementation of Daily 5 framework including Berry Street Strategies into Literacy and Numeracy.

Next Steps

Due to the success of the Daily 5 model it is anticipated this will be continued into 2019. Though we will begin the year with new staff, efforts will be channelled into ensuring the capacity developed in 2018 will be maintained. Similarly the collaborative programming has proven to be highly effective. This approach will be continued into 2019 due to its success and the processes, support and evidence around this in documents such as the School Excellence Framework II. With the arrival of the new member of the executive staff and the new teaching staff across the school a decision will be made regarding the timeline for the implementation of syllabus and Visible Learning PL.

Strategic Direction 3

Distributed Leadership and System across whole school

Purpose

The whole school demonstrates a high expectation culture in designing and implementing evidence based practice across the school community.

Overall summary of progress

Procedures and policies are continually reviewed and upgraded in a number of areas across the school. Administrative procedures have been created and implemented across Kotara School. All staff are using these procedures to align embedding system practices to assist with a streamlined approach. This was a focus of professional learning afternoons and are now embedded practice. Further processes to extend this will be designed and implemented.

Assessment has continued move across to Sentral and digital portfolio's, these mediums are being used to record student progress. A whole school Scope & sequences has been created, tested and implemented and collaborative programming implemented. This was implemented across all classes however pre and post implementation has been produced and continues to assist teachers to program and differentiate appropriately

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
Increase number of teachers taking up leadership roles within the school / higher levels of accreditation.	Subscriptions and Organisation– \$23, 000 Professional Learning – \$2200	Creation of sub committees to drive and sustain systems
All staff, students and stakeholders demonstrate language towards high expectations.		Implementation of PBL structures are imbedded with all key stakeholders.

Next Steps

As Kotara School continues to progress forward with our school plan, we will continue the growth we have made in Strategic Direction 3. These outcomes are systematically embedded in the culture of Kotara School and are revised to continue improvements in this area. This will always be an ongoing task in a small, specific setting like Kotara School with a significant turnover of staff in the past 2 years.

Student information

Student enrolment profile

Students	Enrolments			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Boys	23	26	21	23
Girls	3	2	6	5

Students are placed at Kotara School through a placement panel process where student are discussed then selected by the placement panel. The panel consists of representatives from the Learning and Wellbeing team and principals from the surrounding areas. Students at Kotara School are share and enrolment with their home school. Students attend Kotara School for 5 days per week for their first term. The student continues at Kotara School 4 days per week and attends their census school 1 day per week in the initial stages of their individualised program. Continued transition is decided on an individual basis and reflects the needs and context of the student at the time.

Management of non-attendance

At Kotara School student attendance reports are printed off weekly and communicated with their census school and home. If there is a concern surrounding non-attendance, Kotara School will make contact with the family to see if we can assist. A plan is then devised, if continued non-attendance occurs a HSLO is informed and DoE policy is followed.

Structure of classes

All classes at Kotara School are provided with 1 classroom teacher, 1 SLSO and 7 students. We have 4 classes situated on site with 1 class located on the grounds of the John Hunter Hospital.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Assistant Principal(s)	2
Classroom Teacher(s)	3.72
Teacher Librarian	0.2
School Administration and Support Staff	6.61

*Full Time Equivalent

An Aboriginal Elder is employed to assist staff and students with cultural awareness and knowledge.

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	40

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Some of the professional Learning completed by Kotara School Staff in 2018 :

- Emotional Intelligence
- Neuro Sequential Model for Education
- Positive Behaviour Management
- Berry Street Education Model
- ICT training
- Minecraft for Education
- STEM (Lego, drones, coding)
- Stronger Smarter strategies
- Crisis Communication
- Audio Visual
- Mind Your Brain
- You Can Do it
- SENA
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Functional Behaviour Assessment

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018.

	2018 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	142,331
Revenue	1,734,390
Appropriation	1,725,836
Sale of Goods and Services	0
Grants and Contributions	6,374
Gain and Loss	0
Other Revenue	0
Investment Income	2,181
Expenses	-1,564,234
Recurrent Expenses	-1,564,234
Employee Related	-1,343,054
Operating Expenses	-221,180
Capital Expenses	0
Employee Related	0
Operating Expenses	0
SURPLUS / DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR	170,157
Balance Carried Forward	312,488

The finance committee at Kotara School meet in week 6 every term to discuss the finances of Kotara School.

This enables the committee to reflect on the budget and the direction of the school adhering to staff spending requests and school structures. Kotara School is currently saving for automated gates and a cola. Both of these items will increase safety and provide student an area out of the rain and extreme heat.

Financial summary equity funding

The equity funding data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' section of the financial summary above.

	2018 Actual (\$)
Base Total	394,983
Base Per Capita	12,936
Base Location	647
Other Base	381,400
Equity Total	67,532
Equity Aboriginal	12,693
Equity Socio economic	54,839
Equity Language	0
Equity Disability	0
Targeted Total	972,023
Other Total	15,682
Grand Total	1,450,221

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

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

In 2018, the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school.

Their responses are presented below. Data from surveys, focus groups and document analysis indicate that:

- 100% of parents/ carers found the Kotara school staff very approachable and easy to communicate with.
- The overall results from both the focus group and survey were positive. Parents appreciated the enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of staff and also the way staff encouraged students to do their best. Learning (literacy and numeracy) seemed to be very important to parents.
- 95% of parents/ carers who attended the NAIDOC Day assembly and focus group session truly believe that Kotara School is helping their child with and education and future.
- 100% of staff are satisfied with the school plan and believe this will assist with the direction of the school.
- Some parents/carers commented that they found it hard to complete the survey as their child had only attended Kotara School for a short time but enjoyed talking with other parents and were happy to be involved in the focus group.
- Increase of participation in IEP/ PLP meetings during 2018.

- The area that parents were most satisfied with was class activities that were interesting and engaged students in learning (85%). The lowest results were from the question about whether Kotara School communicate well with parent and key stakeholders. 50% disagreed with this question.
- 100% of parents expressed frustration with their children's behaviours and would be interested in accessing more strategies.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Due to a transient population of students Kotara School has a constantly changing percentage of student with an aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. These percentages range from 15% to 40% depending on the current intake. Kotara School sees Aboriginal culture and cultural identity as a very important area of student learning.

Uncle Perry Fuller is employed at Kotara School to assist staff in delivering Aboriginal Education and cultural identity. He has taught Yidaki (didgeridoo) to staff and students, and has also performed at school ceremonies such as NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week and school assemblies where students have greatly enjoyed performing with him. He continues to teach Kotara School about traditional knowledge and art both contemporary and traditional.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

Kotara School programs provide the framework within which multicultural education is implemented. Our principles recognise and value differing religious and ethnic backgrounds of the students promoting equal rights and responsibilities of all within a cohesive school society where diversity is valued, thus allowing the school community to develop its social and cultural potential.

School programs, policies and practices are designed to counter racism, tolerance and develop understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious differences. Differences such as ethnicity, language and culture, socio-economic circumstances, sex, gender and geographical location are taken into account when designing educational programs to promote an open and tolerant attitude towards all.

Students participate in a variety of activities within subjects such as Accelerated Literacy which focus on cultural diversity and knowledge enabling students to identify as Australians within a multicultural society and a diverse world. Events and programs such as NAIDOC celebrations and class excursions are also an integral element of the school multicultural education program.