School context statement

Palm Avenue School (PAS) is a specialist school within the New South Wales (NSW) Centre for Effective Reading (CER). The NSW CER is a joint NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) and NSW Health initiative.

This Centre provides direct support for rural and remote primary aged students with complex reading difficulties, and their teachers. Students accessing the services of the NSW CER are referred from government and non-government schools.

The NSW Centre for Effective Reading operates its specialist services from four locations. These are Tolland Public School in Wagga Wagga, Buninyong Public School in Dubbo, Royal Far West School in Manly and the Children’s Hospital at Westmead.

Three of these locations, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Westmead form Palm Avenue School.

Assessment

At each hub a multidisciplinary team assesses educational, cognitive/psychological and speech and language aspects of referred students. The assessment teams discuss their findings and implications for learning with families.

The partnership with NSW Health means that the Westmead site provides an additional level of assessment. The team at this hub includes paediatricians, neuropsychologists and speech pathologists from the Child Development Unit (CDU) along with specialist teachers from PAS.

Children attending Westmead generally have suspected additional needs, such as attention difficulties and other coexisting conditions.

Intervention

Palm Avenue School provides intervention support to the schools of referred students through collaborative planning, professional learning for teachers and other key personnel and through regular monitoring of student progress.

Much of the contact with schools and families is through video conferencing.

An important part of the support includes planning to address student need to access the curriculum. The Centre works with each student’s school to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

Response to Intervention

Programs and teaching strategies are adjusted continually in response to close monitoring of student progress.

Where a student does not progress and learn despite the use of well-founded teaching, the Centre’s Learning and Support Team may recommend ways to further support the student.
This year has seen Palm Avenue School continue to strengthen relationships with our valued stakeholders, resulting in promotion of services provided by the NSW Centre for Effective Reading (CER). More importantly, CER continued to strengthen supports to students with complex reading difficulties and their teachers in rural and remote areas of NSW. Executive from Palm Avenue School were invited to the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association annual conference at Narrabri this year and we were overwhelmed with the tremendous support we received for the work we do and their continued efforts in making student learning in rural and remote NSW a priority.

Several very exciting projects have been undertaken in 2014 to continue the work done last year in supporting students with complex reading difficulties. These projects have been led by the senior speech pathologist Rebecca Sutherland and senior clinical neuropsychologist, Dr Antoinette Hodge from the Child Development Unit (CDU) at Westmead Children’s Hospital and have been very much driven by the identified needs of our client schools and students.

Staff from Palm Avenue School, Manly CER and CDU were fortunate to be invited to present at the Special Education Principal and Leaders Association Conference and the Successful Learning Conference this year. This was a wonderful opportunity to highlight our work and our findings to a vast number of schools across the state and those involved in working with students with complex learning difficulties.

As part of the Rural and Remote Blueprint, Network Specialist Centres are now being established in Broken Hill, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Tamworth. We have been in close communication with our colleagues charged with the responsibility of establishing these services in Dubbo and Wagga Wagga through our close geographical location. This is exciting work that looks at ways to bring together coordinated inter-agency health and wellbeing services in collaboration with other government and non-government agencies and we look forward to establishing a relationship with the Networked Specialist Centres.

The new school planning procedures have given us a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the last three years of our progress and also to start planning for the next three years with input from our stakeholders and multidisciplinary staff from multiple sites. Their feedback has been invaluable in helping us to identify our strategic directions to move us into 2015 and beyond underpinned by improving the learning outcomes for students.

Sylvia Pope, Principal
Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of NSW (ICPA-NSW)

Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association (ICPA) is a national organisation of volunteers who share a passion to ensure that students of all ages living in rural and remote Australia have equitable access to education as their metropolitan counterparts. The shared interest in rural and remote students has created an enduring relationship between ICPA-NSW and NSW Centre for Effective Reading.

ICPA-NSW would like to congratulate the NSW Centre for Effective Reading (CER) on another year of achievements. The service continues to grow and expand and become an established provider for children with complex reading difficulties in rural and remote NSW. The feedback from students and schools who receive a service from the CER is both positive and one of gratitude for the skilled assistance and support that is provided.

ICPA-NSW were pleased to have been invited to have representation on several recruitment panels for CER in 2014. This has been a valuable and important role for us to represent the parents of students in rural and remote areas of NSW.

It has further enhanced our relationship with the CER and has given us a deeper understanding of the very important work undertaken by the CER in supporting students with complex reading difficulties, their families and schools.

ICPA-NSW congratulates Jenny Scott and Lynne Young-Dwarte (Dubbo) and Carol Kass (Westmead) who have all been successful in gaining permanent employment or promotion during 2014 and who all bring a very sound depth of experience and knowledge to the CER.

ICPA State Council were delighted to welcome Sylvia Pope and Jenny Scott to the annual State Conference in Narrabri in March 2014 and we hope that CER will be represented at the State Conference in Broken Hill in March 2015.

ICPA-NSW is grateful for the warm welcome that we receive when we visit the centres and we are also grateful for the open communication that exists between our two organisations. If concerns are raised by ICPA members in rural and remote areas regarding literacy, the CER are very open to receiving our calls – we thank the staff and executive for being so approachable.

ICPA-NSW is looking forward to a long and fruitful association with CER – as members of the Steering Committee, as parent representatives and also through our shared interest in equitable education opportunities for rural and remote students of NSW.

Duncan Taylor, President ICPA-NSW
Linda Kitto, Secretary ICPA-NSW
Hilary Keighley, Special Education Portfolio
Student information

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

In 2014 access to the NSW Centre for Effective Reading services was gained through a statewide referral process, moderated by local panels. There were two intakes of students for 2014.

Students referred to the NSW Centre for Effective Reading are of primary school age. They present with complex reading difficulties and have experienced lack of progress in previous quality school interventions. Many students accessing the service have associated difficulties with memory, attention, strategy knowledge and use, and/or language processing problems.

In 2014, the number of students accepted for a direct service by the NSW CER was 105.

From 2011-2014 20% students supported by NSW CER are from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

At the same time as working with referred students, a critical aspect of our service is to assist schools to develop their capacity to teach students with complex reading difficulties.

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

Student enrolment profile

Students receiving direct Centre services continue full enrolment at their home school, reflecting the support nature of the Centre’s service.

Student attendance profile

School attendance is reported against the student’s home school.

School attendance is a significant factor contributing to opportunity to learn. Many students supported by Palm Avenue School have developed less-favourable attitudes to learning and some maladaptive behaviours including school disengagement. The Centre provides advice to schools and families about strategies for increasing attendance, engagement and attainment where this has become a compounding issue for the individual student.

Workforce information

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

Palm Avenue School employs special education teachers, senior psychologists and speech pathologists. In 2014 many teaching staff held post graduate qualifications and all allied health professionals met the registration standards of their profession.

Workforce composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative &amp; Support Staff</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Assistant</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counsellor</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Psychologist</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Pathologist</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Palm Avenue School has no Aboriginal staff members. The school’s staffing entitlement has provision for two Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers.

NSW CER Wagga Wagga team
Teacher qualifications

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>% of staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree or Diploma</td>
<td>43 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>57 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Palm Avenue School staff members gained professional learning through executive and staff facilitated presentations and workshops on Nationally Consistent Collection of Data, PLAAST, Rural and Remote Education Strategy, LMBR, Connected Communities, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan and the 2015 School Plan 5P planning process. Staff members also completed Adobe Connect modules for the implementation of the new syllabuses for Science and Technology K-10 volume 1 (or K-6), Mathematics K-10 volume 1 (or K-6), and History K-10 volume 1 (or K-6). Training in the use of the Adobe Connect platform for rural and remote communications was also implemented at each hub.

Mandatory e-learning modules were completed by all staff for Anaphylaxis, Child Protection and Work, Health and Safety, along with annual CPR training being completed.

Staff members participated in a variety of relevant professional conferences including Children’s Hospital Educational Research Institute Conference (CHERI) 2014, The Successful Learning Conference 2014, the Rural Health Conference-Dubbo and the Spectronics Conference 2014. Access was also gained for all staff to participate in the Spectronics Literacy Instruction for Young Learners workshop on technology-enhanced classroom strategies.

In addition to this, professional learning sharing was continued in Semester 1 as a valuable addition to each staff meeting. Topics included current information and research findings on Reading Disorders, Psychology Assessment Tools, ADHD, Working Memory and Effective Feedback.
Case management processes facilitate ongoing quality assurance and review of excellence in service provision to schools and students on caseload. This is achieved through effective planning and acknowledgement of the expertise of hub staff and an emphasis on the collegial, collaborative nature of our team. This process entails face to face discussion at least once a term in each hub about progress of all students and collaborative team discussion on any cases requiring further support. We meet via videoconference each week to discuss progress of students on caseload, ensure consistency of support and enable immediate problem solving.

All our professional learning is focused on supporting team members to deliver best practice support to our client schools and students.

Our approach to our own learning, and to providing focused professional learning to client schools, is based upon it being highly contextualized, data-driven and research-based.

The total school expenditure on professional learning course fees in 2014 was $4,494.54. There were significant additional costs for travel across multiple sites.

In 2014, there were no new scheme teachers working towards Board of Studies Teaching and Education Standards (BoSTES) accreditation or teachers maintaining accreditation at Proficient.

One teacher is maintaining accreditation at the voluntary stage of Highly Accomplished. A second teacher is planning to apply for accreditation at Highly Accomplished in 2015.

**Beginning Teachers**

There were no beginning teachers at PAS in 2014.

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**Financial summary**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of financial summary</th>
<th>30/11/2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
<td>194,991.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
<td>77,835.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>36,402.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>4,937.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust receipts</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total income</strong></td>
<td>314,167.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Expenditure**            |            |
| Teaching & learning        |            |
| Key learning areas         | 13,766.87  |
| Excursions                 | 0.00       |
| Extracurricular dissections| 84.42      |
| Library                    | 0.00       |
| Training & development     | 21,794.35  |
| Tied funds                 | 44,760.50  |
| Casual relief teachers     | 0.00       |
| Administration & office    | 24,093.47  |
| School-operated canteen    | 0.00       |
| Utilities                  | 11,419.68  |
| Maintenance                | 2,587.41   |
| Trust accounts             | 0.00       |
| Capital programs           | 0.00       |
| **Total expenditure**      | 118,506.70 |

| **Balance carried forward**| 195,661.13 |

A full copy of the school’s 2014 financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the School Council and/or the parent body. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.
School performance 2014

Academic achievements

NAPLAN

Students’ performance, including NAPLAN results are reported against the student’s home school.

Significant programs and initiatives

Aboriginal education

Aboriginal students are referred from all sectors referring students to the Centre.

Aboriginal students are given priority for assessment and intervention with 100% receiving a direct service in 2014.

In 2014 PAS teachers investigated a book series, Honey Ant Readers, which is written for children from indigenous backgrounds. They are written about Aboriginal stories and illustrated with Aboriginal characters. The books will be purchased in 2015 to support the engagement of indigenous students referred to CER. “The familiarity of the stories helps learners become involved in the books and have a deeper understanding of them.”

Multicultural and anti-racism education

Students on the PAS caseload have multicultural and anti-racism education within their home schools.

Supporting Students with Complex Reading Difficulties and Anxiety

In 2013, factsheets were prepared and published on the NSW CER website as part of the Every Student Every School reform. Building on this model, a project was implemented in 2014 to support primary school-aged students with complex reading difficulties and anxiety.

The aim of the project was to develop resources and professional learning that can be used by psychologists at the Centre for Effective Reading with school personnel, students and parents/carers.

The project was conducted in collaboration with the Child Development Unit Westmead.

A fact sheet for publication on the CER website and a series of webinars are being developed.

Maria Ivanka Milic, Clinical Psychologist, is working with the team to provide specific expertise in the area of anxiety in primary school aged students.
The Language Project
The aim of this project is to develop professional learning to build teacher and school capacity to improve the language/literacy outcomes of students particularly in rural and remote areas of NSW.

This project is accessing the unique skills of specialist speech pathologists, Dr Julia Starling and Dr Ros Nielson, engaged by the Department under the National Partnerships funding. These speech pathologists have worked with CER speech pathologists face to face and via videoconferencing to develop modules that will be presented by CER speech pathologists to selected schools.

The training will focus on understanding student language impairment and implementing appropriate, effective strategies in the classroom.

Four sessions have been developed
· Language Difficulties: Definitions and Impacts
· Direct Vocabulary Instruction
· Strategies for Language-Friendly Classrooms
· Review and Reflection

Trialling of these sessions began in Term 4 ready for use with schools in 2015.

Remote Language Assessment
Children with speech and language difficulties living in rural areas are disadvantaged by their relative lack of access to speech pathologists. Unrecognised and untreated language impairment can impact significantly on literacy, learning and future employment.

Telehealth is an effective way of providing intervention for speech and language issues by providing valid and reliable remote assessments in a simple and practical way. The CER project assessed the feasibility of conducting formal, standardised assessment for students via a Telehealth application.

Speech pathologists from CER used an internet based web application with video conference functionality developed by National Information Communication Technology Australia (NICTA) to assess the validity of providing language assessments remotely using standard computer equipment.

The web application included synchronised image viewing and remotely visible touch screen markers for pointing at images, as well as real time communication video conference functions. The research involved students who attended our hubs in Dubbo, Wagga and Manly. These students had reading difficulties and other comorbidities.

The remote assessments were conducted by a speech pathologist at our Westmead site.

More than 30 students participated in the project by the end of 2014. Preliminary data has shown high correlations between the remote and local assessment results. Behaviour measures in each condition, parent report and clinician feedback across the sites indicated that speech pathology assessment delivered via this Telehealth application is feasible, highly reliable and well tolerated with similar levels of on task behaviour and compliance in both conditions.

It is anticipated that this innovative service delivery model will allow speech pathologists to provide assessments to isolated children in remote areas across NSW.
The Jill Sherlock Library

The Jill Sherlock Memorial Learning Assistance Library provides resources to teachers, allied professionals and parents to support the teaching and learning needs of students with learning difficulties. Resources from this library can be borrowed by all areas of NSW. A reserve section has been established to hold materials for loan specifically for schools that the Centre is supporting.

NSW Centre for Effective Reading

Website

Palm Ave School website contains the Annual School Report, 2015-2017 School Plan and a direct link to the NSW CER website. This website has been developed to provide information and evidence-based resources for schools and parents to support students with complex reading difficulties. It provides information on assessment, intervention, professional learning and research.

www.cer.education.nsw.gov.au

Learning Support Team

The school Learning and Support Team (L&ST) operated successfully in 2014. In situations where a student does not progress and learn despite the use of well-founded teaching, the Centre’s Learning and Support Team recommends ways to further support the student. The Learning and Support Team consists of core members who are representative of all four hubs of the NSW CER, including CDU staff, ensuring there is a specialist in each area. Other participants attend as relevant. Team members work collaboratively to facilitate a multidisciplinary team approach to planning to meet the additional needs of students, their teachers, and Centre staff.

Presentations about NSW CER

In 2014 team members contributed to a range of conferences to broaden understanding about the service provided by PAS as part of NSW Centre for Effective Reading.

In the spirit of providing support to colleagues across the state, team members from Education and Health spoke at: Successful Learning Conference at Epping in Sydney, Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association annual conference in Narrabri, Learning and Support Teachers conference in Metropolitan Sydney and to the School Counsellors In Training Day at Westmead.

Representatives from the Executive of Royal Far West and the Child Development Unit visited PAS Westmead for information sharing about CER.
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:

- Collection of student data at initial and review assessments
- Case management which incorporated ongoing collection of students’ response to intervention
- Survey of parent satisfaction in all PAS hubs
- Multidisciplinary teams across multiple sites

School planning 2012-2014:

School priority 1 - Assessment

Outcomes from 2012–2014

Comprehensive, interdisciplinary assessments inform effective support and programming for referred students

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2014:

- Further assessment tools were selected and used (York Assessment of Reading Comprehension, the Wheldall assessment of reading passages, the Wheldall assessment of reading lists)
- Staff received training to ensure fidelity of administration of assessment tools
- Surveys were evaluated and indicated that parents/carers were very satisfied with the assessment and reporting processes

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

- Additional assessment tools were selected on the basis of demonstrated need and visible benefit to the teaching and learning process
- Professional learning and compliance training occurred in agreed processes for improving fidelity and consistency of all assessment and reporting processes
- Satisfaction survey results for parents/carers about the assessment process, were completed after the final family meeting and evaluated

School priority 2 – Intervention

Outcomes from 2012–2014

Referred students make visible and sustained progress toward effective reading

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2014:

- Student response to intervention was measured during the final 10 weeks of CER support. All students made gains, with varying degrees of progress depending on variables such as the beginning level of literacy competencies, cognitive abilities and speech and language skills
- Weekly case management meetings were held between the Assistant Principal and hub teams to review progress with the intervention process
- Fact sheets for Cognition, Language, and Transition were finalised and uploaded to the CER website. CER personnel referred to these fact sheets and advised schools of their availability and relevance to referred students

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

- Student progress was measured as part of the review process (during the final 10 weeks of the intervention)
- As part of the case management process progress with communication, planning and intervention was reviewed with hub teams by an executive staff member
- Working parties in Cognition, Language, Transition, Technology were formed to (i) provide professional learning, and (ii) develop evidence-based resources to support interventions. This was funded by the Every Student Every School strategy
School priority 3 – Focused Professional Learning

Outcomes from 2012–2014

PAS staff use evidence-based practices to support schools of referred students, develop systems to support teachers and use data to support decision-making

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2014:

- Teaching staff completed online training in Speech, Language and Communication difficulties. Staff attended and presented at the Successful Learning Conference and the Children’s Hospital Education Research Institute conference (CHERI)
- All staff participated in professional learning sessions on the new English Syllabus to develop means of incorporating syllabus outcomes into interventions for diverse learners
- Selected staff investigated and provided training for other staff members in the literacy demands of the mathematics and science syllabuses

School priority 4 – Equity of Access

Outcomes from 2012–2014

All eligible students, including those from remote and isolated Aboriginal communities, have equal access to support

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2014:

- Professional learning in Aboriginal Education occurred, for example, The National ATSI Education Action Plan 2010 -2014 and 8 Ways Pedagogy
- Personalised Learning Plans and Plans for Reading Intervention were integrated and negotiated with referring schools during initial planning
- There were discussions at NSW CER Steering and Coordinating Committees, and with Aboriginal education communities to expand ways in which Aboriginal students can access CER

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

- Ways for making the service more accessible to Aboriginal students were discussed, for example, use of Adobe Connect to support intervention and country hubs assessing and supporting students not able to access CER Manly and CER Westmead
- Professional learning for all staff on Aboriginal Education and Training policy, programs and best practices was provided
- Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) were requested from referring schools for all Aboriginal students

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

- The executive team led implementation of focused professional learning
- Teachers, allied health and CDU staff developed increased understanding of aspects of learning difficulties and how to address these in mainstream school settings
- There was support and supervision to enable continuous improvement in the implementation of the new English syllabus
School priority 5 – Organisation Effectiveness

Outcomes from 2012–2014

All communication, assessment, collaborative planning, intervention and focused professional learning meet Service Standards

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2014:

- There were increasing levels of staff participation in monitoring organisation effectiveness
- Staff developed greater openness to discussing areas of challenge in organisation effectiveness
- The caseload for teachers was reviewed
- PAS Principal became an integral member of placement panels
- Survey results were collated and published in the Annual School Report
- Preparation was commenced for the introduction of Learning Management Business Reform (LMBR)

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

- Student monitoring processes were reviewed and evaluated
- Professional learning for all staff, around organisational effectiveness, occurred based on results of the annual performance review processes
- All staff collaborated in reviewing service standards, and reviewing the PRI process
- There was continuous focus on the key reportables for service delivery: timely, responsive, practical, effective
- The Senior Administration Manager and Principal participated in training in LMBR

Parent/caregiver, student, and teacher satisfaction

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

Their responses tell the story:

School responses

- ‘We feel empowered, confident and upskilled after CER. It has been the best support process we have experienced’
- ‘Xxxxx is having more success in other KLAs due to reading instructions and confidence – A reading machine!’
- ‘Xxxx has continued to impress me! He has started asking where words are from … He asked me what Americans call our jelly as their jelly is our jam and also was China called China because of the country or because of the tea cup! WOW. He now collects a dictionary before he starts work’

Student responses as observed by teachers and parents

- ‘Impact on reading skills and behaviours in the classroom – very confident – not lowest in reading group anymore’
- ‘Xxxxx had a fabulous time at camp and was able to interact better with peers who were able to understand his speech and intentions much more clearly’
- ‘All is going well for Xxxx. The parent says he is the happiest he’s been for 2 years, which is very nice’

Family responses

- ‘Thank you … wonderful to bring Xxxx to such a place. He was made very comfortable … me too …’
- ‘When recently out shopping Xxxx had stopped to look at a magazine and started
reading it, then asked if he could buy it (never happened before’)

- (I would have liked) ‘a little more detailed information as to what things would be done ... I would have liked a little more information – (about) the results’
- ‘Xxxx is dancing across the loungeroom’
- A teacher sent us a grandmother’s comment that ‘Xxxx is reading signs in the environment He read “free lunch for kids” – at the pub. He is keen to read books – he read a fishing magazine on the way back from the fishing competition while the other kids were watching TV’

Post assessment surveys provided the following information:

- 92% of families who attended Dubbo or Wagga for assessment said that they were made to feel very comfortable. Parents commented positively on the “sign with the child’s name on the door welcoming them”
- 74% of families who attended Westmead for assessment were very comfortable in the hospital assessment area
- 78% of parents/carers found it very useful to watch their child during the assessments
- 93% of parents/carers reported that they understood the assessment results when they were explained by CER staff

A smaller sample of parents/carers of students who were assessed at Westmead indicated that:

- They found the report easy to read and understand (86%). The same number indicated that the report was helpful
- The child’s school found it helpful when the parent discussed the report with them
- All families found the process gave them a better understanding of their child’s strengths and weaknesses
- 67% of parents were able to follow through on recommendations made in the report

29 schools responded to an electronic survey relating to the Plan for Reading Intervention developed for their student following the assessment.

- Schools commented on Centre staff monitoring and feedback. 4% found this somewhat useful, 35% found this very useful and 61% found this extremely useful

- The majority of schools (85%) commented that after their involvement with the Centre they felt quite confident or extremely confident in their ability to support students with complex reading difficulties
- Most schools indicated that they were extremely likely (68%) or quite likely (16%) to recommend others to refer students to the Centre

We believe that the survey responses were so positive because CER staff, through multidisciplinary assessment, are able to look at the whole child, considering factors that may contribute to or coexist with learning difficulties. Many parents commented that one report and one set of recommendations was definitely preferable to receiving several individual reports from health professionals and educators.
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.

PAS 2015-2017 school planning entailed thorough preparation which involved learning about the new 5P approach to be used in all NSW DEC schools. An action plan was developed to lead the implementation of the PAS school plan. The school self-evaluation team worked with staff to build their understanding and capability around the new planning process.

Stakeholders and staff were invited to contribute to the planning process in various ways. The previous school plan was carefully analysed for strengths and areas for improvement based on school data.

Emerging needs were identified and this allowed us to articulate three strategic directions. These directions encompass the dreams for the future and purpose of Palm Avenue School and how we will add value to our work supporting students with complex reading difficulties in rural and remote schools in NSW.

PAS defined improvement measures for each strategic direction and the purpose, people, processes, products and practices were identified. These measures will be carefully tracked using implementation and evaluation milestones.

Strategic Direction 1:
Equity of access
Students living in rural and remote areas including Aboriginal students are at a higher risk of experiencing difficulties in literacy than their counterparts in metropolitan areas.

Our purpose is to facilitate improved access to the service in order to address this imbalance.

Strategic Direction 2:
Organisational effectiveness
Educational communities require strong relationships inspired by a culture of collaboration, engaged communication, empowered leadership and organisational practice to improve student outcomes.

Our purpose is to function effectively across multiple sites with multidisciplinary teams.

Strategic Direction 3:
Currency in evidence based practices
Students experiencing complex reading difficulties require systematic and explicit teaching that at times may be qualitatively different from the regular classroom instruction.

Our purpose is to ensure that staff have current knowledge of research, skills in enabling technologies and expertise in their specialist areas.

Projects were identified to implement various aspects of the school plan during the next three years.
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.

Sylvia Pope, Principal PAS
Jenny Scott, Assistant Principal PAS Dubbo
Duncan Taylor, President Isolated Children Parents’ Association
Linda Kitto, Secretary ICPA-NSW
Hilary Keighley, Special Education Portfolio ICPA-NSW
Rebecca Sutherland, Senior Speech Pathologist Child Development Unit, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead
Jeanette Detheridge, Parent School Liaison PAS Westmead
Linda Lockett, Special Education Teacher PAS Westmead

School contact information

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Institute Rd, Westmead NSW 2145
Ph: 02 9687 0377
Fax: 02 9687 7288
Email: palmave-s.schools.nsw.edu.au
Web: http://www.palmave-s.schools.nsw.edu.au
School Code: 5650

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: