School context

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

From 2011, the NSW CER brought services ‘closer and sooner’ to rural and remote students experiencing complex reading difficulties.

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 in rural and remote areas of New South Wales.

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.

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, anxiety and other comorbid 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 students’ 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. In cases 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.
Principal’s message

2013 was a time of significant change in education. Educational systems and schools are moving into models of more local decision making and authority. Palm Avenue School is excited by the enormous potential these changes will bring and looks forward to working with schools to continue to improve the learning outcomes for our students particularly those we work with directly in rural and remote areas of NSW.

This year saw a strong focus on working in multidisciplinary teams to develop high quality evidence based resources to build capacity of schools and address the learning needs of students with complex reading difficulties. This was achieved through the development and implementation of a project as a response to the Every School Every Student (ESES) education reform so that Specialist Schools become Centres of Expertise. One of the aims of this reform is to strengthen opportunities for schools with specialist expertise to collaborate, develop and share their knowledge more widely across the school system.

Through our work with schools we have identified some areas of need both for the students and schools we work with directly but also those indirectly via our website. Palm Avenue School, has worked collaboratively with all partnerships within the NSW Centre for Effective Reading, including the Child Development Unit and the service based at Royal Far West School to develop resources to address the areas of language difficulties and cognitive impairment. In particular we focused on vocabulary, attention, organisation and planning and transition materials as these continue to be significant areas of need for students with complex reading difficulties. Those materials are now available on the NSW Centre for Effective Reading website for access by all NSW schools.

The end of the year saw the announcement of the Rural and Remote Education strategy blueprint. We look forward in great anticipation to our role in this and to the outcomes and actions being realised so that we work together in closing the gap and lifting the educational achievement in rural NSW.

I certify that the information in this report is the result of a rigorous school self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of the school’s achievements and areas for development.

Sylvia Pope, Principal

Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association

Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association (ICPA) is a national organisation of volunteers who have a passion for ensuring that young people living in rural and remote Australia have equitable access to education from pre-school years through to tertiary education.

ICPA-NSW has had a very keen interest and involvement in Palm Avenue School and the NSW Centre for Effective Reading. It has representation on the steering committee that governs the NSW CER as well as being available for selection panels, should they be required, as parent representatives. It is essential that rural students have access to assistance with their learning and ICPA-NSW and NSW CER both share this passion.

ICPA-NSW has always received a very warm welcome from staff at Palm Avenue School and the NSW CER and a close bond has formed over the years. ICPA-NSW hopes to assist the NSW CER by maintaining a presence on the steering committee and also by supporting and promoting
Palm Avenue School and NSW CER and bringing attention to all the wonderful work they do.

ICPA-NSW congratulates Sylvia Pope on her recent recruitment to the permanent position of Principal of Palm Avenue School. ICPA-NSW also congratulates the NSW CER for recruiting to fill positions in Wagga Wagga, Dubbo and Westmead. It is not always easy to recruit and retain staff in the regional areas so it is a great achievement and a credit to the organisation. ICPA-NSW looks forward to continued collaboration between the two organisations so that students in rural and remote locations can receive the assistance they require.

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

Student information

In 2013 access to the NSW Centre for Effective Reading services was gained through a statewide referral process, moderated by local panels.

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 2013, 143 students were supported by multidisciplinary teams at the three locations of Palm Avenue School, with an additional 41 students supported through NSW CER Manly.

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.

Management of non-attendance

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 2013 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>1.4</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><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Australian Education Regulation, 2013 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.

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>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Institute of Teachers Accreditation</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial summary
This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

Date of financial summary 30/11/2013

Income
Balance brought forward $231490.66
Global funds 70750.00
Tied funds 55630.73
School & community sources 0.00
Interest 6012.52
Trust receipts 0.00
Canteen 0.00
Total income $363883.91

Expenditure
Teaching & learning
  Key learning areas $26482.51
  Excursions 0.00
  Extracurricular dissections 0.00
Library 473.51
Training & development 3533.75
Tied funds 94661.84
Casual relief teachers 1060.24
Administration & office 27332.58
School-operated canteen 0.00
Utilities 11598.22
Maintenance 4986.80
Trust accounts 0.00
Capital programs 0.00
Total expenditure $170129.45

Balance carried forward $193754.46

In 2014 reading books will purchased for each hub from accumulated funds. These will be used by schools and students to support students’ plans for reading intervention. Tied funds received in 2012 and 2013 from the Every Student Every School education reform will continue to be used in 2014 as the school initiative is developed further. Some global funds have been accumulated to redesign work areas.

A full copy of the school’s 2013 financial statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

School performance 2013
The progress of students on the Palm Avenue School caseload is reported by their 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 2013.

Every Student Every School
The Every Student Every School education reform is an initiative of the Commonwealth Government to build the capabilities of schools to meet the educational needs of students with disability. The program has a strong focus on professional learning.

Palm Avenue School received $42,000 funding to implement a school-based project, as part of the education reform to establish Specialist Schools as Centres of Expertise. The project commenced in 2012. Palm Ave School will continue to add to this project in 2014.

The aim of the project is to provide professional learning and to develop high quality, evidence-based resources to build expertise in addressing the needs of students with complex reading difficulties.
The project teams are working in three target areas - Language, Cognition and Transition to High School. The teams include special education teachers, speech pathologists and psychologists from Palm Avenue School and RFW, along with speech pathologists and neuropsychologists from CDU and staff from DEC State Office. The teams have worked with a graphic designer to provide high quality presentation of documents and interactive material.

Fact sheets were developed on Language, Attention, Organisation & Planning and Transition to High School. An additional fact sheet on Information Processing will be completed in 2014. These resources will be used to support rural and remote schools referring to the Centre; and are available on the NSW Centre for Effective Reading website for all schools to access.

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 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 2013. 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.
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:

- Survey of parent satisfaction in all PAS hubs
- Case management
- Multidisciplinary teams across multiple sites

School planning 2012—2014: progress in 2013

School priority 1 - Assessment

Core assessments are implemented with accuracy and consistency.

Outcomes from 2012–2014

Comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessments inform effective support and programming for referred students.

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:

- Further assessment tools were researched and purchased
- Staff participated in training in administration and interpretation of these assessment tools using internal and external experts
- The majority of families indicated that they understood the assessment results and that following their child’s assessment they had a better understanding of the way their child learns
- Effective case management supported the accuracy, relevance and timeliness of reports as stated in NSW CER Service Standards
- Collaboration to ensure higher correlation between assessment findings and intervention recommendations.

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014

- Further training is planned as staff become more familiar with new assessment tools
- Collaboration of multidisciplinary teams to achieve consistent verbal and written reporting of new assessment tools
- Forums to ensure collaboration and consistency now include staff meetings, professional supervision meetings within disciplines, work plans for allied health staff, management meetings and case management meetings

School priority 2 – Intervention

Teachers of referred students report that students make positive gains.

Outcomes from 2012–2014

Referred students make visible and sustained progress toward effective reading.

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:

- Began development of Survey Monkey tool to assess teachers’ perception of students’ self-efficacy and academic gains
- Formalised post intervention assessment procedures have increased NSW CER staff’s capacity to measure student progress
- 100% referred students have made gains
- Resources in Cognition, Language and Transition were developed by ESES working parties and shared with staff to address identified areas of need of students referred to the NSW CER.

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

- Collaboratively analysing spreadsheet data that has been consistently collected and recorded, to support decision making
- Implement School Satisfaction Survey
- Resources in Cognition, Language and Transition developed by ESES working parties have been uploaded to NSW CER website for use by all schools
- ESES project will be presented at the Successful Learning Conference and to school counsellors in training.
Professional learning

Palm Avenue School staff members gained professional learning and training in four modules of the new English K-10 Syllabus, Plan for Reading Intervention, NSW DEC educational reforms, new assessment tools, assistive technology, Adobe Connect, MultiLit, Disability Standards for Education; and the required components of DEC “compliance” training in Child Protection, Anaphylaxis and use of Epipen, Emergency Care, Code of Conduct, Merit Selection Panel Training, and Work Health and Safety.

In addition to this, professional learning sharing was introduced as a valuable addition to each staff meeting. Topics included information about 8 ways Aboriginal pedagogy cards from one of PAS teachers, word analysis from a PAS speech pathologist, and English as an Additional Language/Dialect learning progression from PAS psychologist.

Allied health and some PAS staff participated in collegiate supervision and support with the senior neuropsychologist and the senior speech pathologist from the Child Developmental Unit. 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.

Staff members participated a variety of relevant professional conferences including Children’s Hospital Educational Research Institute Conference (CHERI) 2013 and the Successful Learning Conference 2013. In addition, staff from PAS (Dubbo hub) and CDU collaborated to write and present a paper at the 2013 CHERI conference entitled “Effective Intervention Starts with Effective Assessment”.

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 2013 was $12,106. There were additional costs for travel across multiple sites.
Parent/caregiver, student, and teacher satisfaction

In 2013, the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school. In 2012 information about the parents’/carers’ experience of the NSW CER was gained through a satisfaction survey about the assessment administered by the Child Development Unit. This survey was extended to Dubbo and Wagga Wagga hubs in 2013.

Results of the surveys indicated that all families received good information before the visit and that they understood the assessment process. The majority of parents said they felt very comfortable during the assessments.

The survey responses indicated the importance of the role of discussion of assessment results with parents/carers in giving families a better understanding of the way their child learns. This finding will be explored further in 2014.

100% families at Westmead watched their child’s assessment and all found it useful. 66% families at Dubbo and Wagga Wagga watched their children’s assessment and all who did, found it useful. Centre staff will continue to encourage families to observe assessments by pointing out the value this will add to their understanding of how their child learns.

It was pleasing to note that 100% of families felt listened to and understood by the Centre staff and all were satisfied with the assessment process.

Parent comments included:

“I was very happy with being able to view (child) throughout the assessments. All the staff were very kind to (child) and me.”

“I found it excellent and am very grateful to have been able to receive this support/knowledge for my child. The staff were all excellent. The experience has been most positive.”

In response to the question “Did you find it useful watching your child while the assessments were happening?” one parent said that it “made them realise how difficult (child) found lots of tasks”.

Students and teachers provided valuable unsolicited comments:

“We had our presentation night last night and (child) was awarded the most improved in his class! His parents were sitting behind us and they were pretty happy. (Child) has been in my room this morning and he is beaming with pride. All our hard work has paid off!”

“(Teacher) tested (child) today and he came out level 21 instructional. So we were all pretty excited … (child) was pretty happy with himself.”

“I am finding that (child) is more confident in most areas of class. He is contributing more often. It is great to notice new things he is picking up.”

The Centre is currently developing further survey tools including a School Satisfaction Survey, a Parent Satisfaction Survey about the Report and a Coping at Home profile for parents to complete before and after intervention.
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

Duncan Taylor, President Isolated Children Parents' Association

Jeanette Detheridge, Parent School Liaison PAS Westmead

Jenny Scott, Relieving Assistant Principal PAS

Rebecca Sutherland, Senior Speech Pathologist Child Development Unit, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead

Linda Kitto, Secretary ICPA-NSW

Hilary Keighley, Special Education Portfolio ICPA-NSW

School contact information

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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: