Palm Ave School
Annual School Report
Our school at a glance

Students

Palm Avenue School is a specialist school within the New South Wales Centre for Effective Reading. This Centre provides direct support for rural and remote primary aged students with complex reading difficulties, and their teachers. Students attending the New South Wales Centre for Effective Reading are referred from government and non-government schools in rural and remote areas of New South Wales.

In 2012, 95 students were assessed by multidisciplinary teams at the three locations of Palm Avenue School. A further 61 students’ progress was monitored. This was a total of 156 students. 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.

Staff

The NSW Centre for Effective Reading staff are highly qualified, experienced practitioners. Staff from Palm Avenue School are specialised in working with students with reading difficulties. Staff at the Centre work in partnership with health professionals and with the student’s home school.

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

Significant programs and initiatives

In 2011 and 2012 the NSW Centre for Effective Reading implemented a significant change to bring services ‘closer and sooner’ to rural and remote students experiencing reading difficulties. Services are provided at four locations – Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Westmead and Manly (in association with the Royal Far West School). The Centre provides assessment and intervention support to students, their families and schools; and professional learning for teachers and other key participants.

Student achievement in 2012

The achievements of all students supported by Palm Avenue School within the NSW Centre for Effective Reading are reported by their home school.

Messages

Principal’s message

2012 has seen Palm Ave School staff develop and refine our practices so we can provide the best possible support for the home schools of students living in rural and remote areas of NSW. Our multidisciplinary teams have worked closely with schools to ensure students with complex reading difficulties are provided with a direct service that complements the reading programs currently used in their home school. This service includes a specific plan for reading intervention as well reasonable classroom adjustments which support the student’s ability to access syllabus outcomes.

We value professional relationships that have been established to support rural and remote schools and will continue to develop our understanding of the challenges faced so support can be tailored to each unique setting.

Research into the area of reading difficulties is ongoing and vigorous, therefore it is important that our staff is continually up-skilled through professional learning opportunities. This year we have had opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning in partnership with staff from the Child Development Unit at Westmead Children’s Hospital and Royal Far West School at Manly with a particular focus on dyslexia, resilience and catering for diversity in the classroom.
Our Centre at Dubbo was fortunate to have a visit this year from the Director General, Michele Bruniges as well as members from the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association. It was an opportunity to showcase the support we offer to students, parents and schools as well as highlighting the enthusiasm with which the staff undertake this very important work.

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 (Acting Principal)

Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association

The Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of New South Wales is a voluntary, non-profit, apolitical parent body dedicated to ensuring that all rural and remote students have equity of access to a continuing and appropriate education. It encompasses the education of children from early childhood through to tertiary.

In June this year ICPA-NSW State Council visited the Dubbo hub of the Centre for Effective Reading which is located in Buninyong Public School. Councilors were given a very warm reception by Jenny Scott who introduced other staff members and gave an in depth tour of the facility. Whilst there councilors spoke to the then Principal of Palm Avenue School, Phillip McNabb, and Assistant Principal, Sylvia Pope, via video conferencing.

It is reassuring to know that the leadership of the Centre for Effective Reading and Palm Avenue School now rests with Ms Pope and Ms Scott and ICPA-NSW is confident that, under this dedicated and expert guidance, these wonderful facilities can only move from strength to strength.

ICPA-NSW supports the efforts of the NSW Centre for Effective Reading and Palm Avenue School to bring these specialised and specifically targeted services, in a timely fashion, to children in rural and remote areas of NSW.

At a governance level, through participation and membership in the NSW Centre for Effective Reading Steering Committee, ICPA-NSW continues to be actively engaged in the work of Palm Avenue School.

Members of ICPA-NSW continue to collaborate with and provide advice to Palm Avenue School and the NSW Centre for Effective Reading through the formal and informal links which have been successfully established.

Linda Kitto Duncan Taylor  
ICPA-NSW Secretary ICPA-NSW President
School context
In 2011 and 2012 the NSW Centre for Effective Reading, brought services ‘closer and sooner’ to rural and remote students experiencing complex reading difficulties. The NSW Centre for Effective Reading operates its specialist direct 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.

At Westmead there is an additional component provided by senior paediatricians (at The Children’s Hospital Westmead Child Development Unit) if a student’s learning is thought to be impacted by co-existing medical issues.

An important part of the support includes planning to address students’ needs across 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.

Student information
In 2012 access to the Centre for Effective Reading services was gained through a statewide referral process, moderated by local panels.

Students referred to the 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.

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all students must 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 support to schools and families about strategies for increasing attendance, engagement and attainment where this has become a compounding issue for the individual student.
Staff 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 2012 many permanent teaching staff held post graduate qualifications and all allied health professionals met the registration standards of their profession.

Staff establishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>4</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/Language Pathologist</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative &amp; Support Staff</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Learning Support Officer</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Assistant</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
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The National Education Agreement requires schools to report on Indigenous composition of their workforce.

One part-time employee is indigenous. Palm Avenue School’s staffing entitlement has provision for two Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers.

Staff retention

The school principal, Phillip McNabb, retired at the end of Term 2. Three positions are in the process of being filled, two senior psychologist positions and the School Administrative Manager position.

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>50%</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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of financial summary</th>
<th>30/11/2012</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
<td>186,765.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
<td>76,443.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>71,510.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>8,786.29</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>343,505.61</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Expenditure</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key learning areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular dissections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual relief teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-operated canteen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenditure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance carried forward</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tied funding was received for the Every Student Every School initiative ($21,250) in 2012 and will be used in 2013. Some funds have been accumulated to redesign work areas ($10,000). Reading books will purchased in 2013 from accumulated funds for each hub. These will be used by schools and students to support students’ plans for reading intervention.

Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.
School performance 2012

Academic
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.

Every Student, Every School
Palm Avenue School received funding to implement a school-based project, as part of the Every Student, Every School initiative. The project commenced in 2012 and will continue in 2013.

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. These resources will be used to support rural and remote schools referring to the Centre. Fact sheets and/or video demonstrations are being developed and will be available on the NSW Centre for Effective Reading website for all schools.

The project team is working in three target areas - Language, Cognition and Transition to High School. The team includes teachers, speech pathologists, psychologists and state DEC consultants.

Learning Support Team
A school Learning and Support Team (L&ST) has been developed during 2012. In situations 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.

Dyslexia Online Training Course
Throughout 2012, all Palm Avenue School staff and many allied health staff completed the online training course ‘Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading’. This provided increased awareness of and skills in understanding dyslexia and significant reading difficulties; and in being able to carry out individual reading assessments and introduce interventions founded in evidence-based research.

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 was established in 2012 to hold materials for loan specifically for schools that the Centre is supporting.
NSW Centre for Effective Reading Website
A website has been developed which provides 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

Progress on 2012 targets

Target 1
Core assessments are implemented with accuracy and consistency.
Our achievements include:
- Establishing quality assurance processes for student reports developed by the NSW Centre for Effective Reading.
- Implementing systematic supervision of the intervention process for students.
- Providing speech pathology support from the Child Development Unit for Dubbo and Wagga Wagga.

Target 2
Identify service standards for referral, assessment and subsequent intervention.
Our achievements include:
- Working with Disability Programs Directorate and the NSW Centre for Effective Reading staff to develop service standards processes.
- Establishing a timeline for each step in intervention.
- Conducting professional learning around service standards with the NSW Centre for Effective Reading and Child Development Unit staff.

Target 3
Establish baseline information for students’ progress resulting from intervention.
Our achievements include:
- Reporting results of assessments within student assessment reports.
- Using data to provide a baseline as an entry point to the Plan for Reading Intervention.
- Using data to demonstrate student progress.

School Evaluation
NSW public schools conduct evaluations to support the effective implementation of the school plan. In 2012 our school carried out an evaluation of Work, Health and Safety (WH&S).

Background
Palm Ave School identified the need to conduct a comprehensive review of WH&S planning and practices. This need was highlighted in the 2012 audit report.

Findings and conclusions
The school was concerned that we did not have an Emergency Management Plan, and with assistance from a DEC officer, a comprehensive plan was developed during 2012. This included evacuation and lockdown procedures and risk management plans specific to our school’s needs. Risk assessments were conducted for walking from the school to the Child Development Unit and for safe travel between the Centre’s hubs. Procedures for reporting injuries and hazards are now firmly in place.

Future directions
WH&S is now being discussed at all staff meetings. The Emergency Management Plan will be reviewed systematically, and documentation maintained rigorously.

Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction
In 2012 the school welcomed the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the service provided.

Many parents and schools commented on the positive and productive relationships that were established between schools, parents, students and health professionals.

Parents and carers were pleased that they were active participants in developing their child’s plan for reading intervention.

Satisfaction was high where schools had consistent contact with the Centre teachers.

Information about the parents’/carers’ experience of the NSW Centre for Effective Reading Westmead was gained through a satisfaction survey. Survey results indicated that:
• Parents were well informed about the purpose of the assessment. 93% knew why they were referred and a further seven percent indicated that they ‘sort of’ knew. Their descriptions of the reasons their children were referred included:

Not at expected level at school and school wanting strategies to assist learning.

• All families indicated that they received enough information before the assessment and all found it either very useful (96%) or ‘sort of’ useful (4%). Comments included:

The initial information package was great and very thorough. Great to be able to read the “what will happen” section.

• Communication with the parents during the assessment was a strength. Most parents found that the assessments helped them with questions they had about their child (70% ‘definitely’, 26%; ‘somewhat’). Positive comments included:

Being able to observe was of great value as you don’t normally get to see your child in that environment. If time permitted, I think a little more insight to what the task was trying to achieve would be beneficial from a parent’s point of view.

• The majority of parents (86%) indicated that they understood all the assessment results when they were discussed during the feedback session. Four said that the language was too complex, or there was too much information. One parent said:

Lots of information and was also a little emotional - it’s been a big week.

• Parents definitely felt included in the discussions (97%) and the majority indicated that they had a better understanding of their child (86% ‘definitely’; 11% ‘somewhat’) after the assessment.

• Parents (93%) found the assessment process very useful. One said:

It’s so nice to know that the team really understands my child and the reasons why he is having so much trouble with comprehension / processing concepts etc. I feel like we are not in a cloud - things are a lot clearer. Thankyou, thankyou, thankyou :)

• Schools are providing positive support to students following the assessment. In response to the question “Is your child getting better support at school because of this process?”, 36% indicated ‘definitely’ and 36% ‘somewhat’.

Support for students following the assessment is an area for ongoing focus.

As part of the 2013 Palm Ave School self-evaluation process we also plan to survey parents in Dubbo and Wagga Wagga; and to survey school staff to gauge the level of satisfaction with the NSW CER service.

Professional learning

In 2012, Palm Avenue School staff members gained professional learning and training in evidence-based intensive literacy support teaching strategies and programs; assistive technologies; understanding learning difficulties; and the required components of DEC ‘compliance’ training.

Staff members attended a variety of relevant professional conferences including Children’s Hospital Educational Research Institute Conference (CHERI) 2012 and the Successful Learning Conference 2012. They also participated in the online course on Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading.

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 and data-driven.
School planning 2012—2014

The school planning policy provides direction for the preparation and implementation of school plans including the identification of priority areas, intended outcomes and targets that are consistent with the NSW State Plan and the Department’s planning documents.

School priority 1
Outcome for 2012–2014

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

2013 Targets to achieve this outcome include:
- 100% of core and supplementary assessments are implemented with fidelity and consistency.
- Reporting assessment outcomes guides planning and ongoing support to students and schools.
- 85% of parents/caregivers of referred students report satisfaction.

Strategies to achieve these targets include:
- Additional assessment tools are selected on the basis of demonstrated need and visible benefit to the teaching and learning process, and are implemented with fidelity and consistency.
- Review purposes, nature and quality of existing reporting practices.
- Professional learning and compliance training in agreed processes for improving fidelity and consistency of all assessment and reporting processes.
- Survey parents about assessment process after final family meeting.

School priority 2
Outcome for 2012–2014

Referred students make visible and sustained progress toward effective reading.

2013 Targets to achieve this outcome include:
- 85% of teachers of referred students report that students make positive gains.
- 100% of Plans for Reading Intervention include goals for intensive intervention and recommendations for classroom adjustments.

Strategies to achieve these targets include:
- Survey teachers about student progress as part of the review process (during final 10 weeks of the intervention).
- As part of the case management process, progress with communication, planning and intervention is reviewed with staff.
- Working parties in Cognition, Language, Transition formed to provide professional learning, and develop evidence-based resources to support interventions.
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, Acting Principal
Jeanette Detheridge, Parent School Liaison
Jennifer Scott, Relieving Assistant Principal
Duncan Taylor, President Isolated Children Parents’ Association

School contact information

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School Code: 5650

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