SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015

CONTEXT

St. Patrick’s Special School is a non-graded co-educational Catholic special school that provides a specialised educational program for students aged 5 to 20 years with intellectual disability. Many also have a range of additional complex disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Down Syndrome which significantly inform their approaches to and styles of learning, the ways they make meaning, their social and communication skills, fine and gross motor skills, and capacity to function independently.

The school is staffed by teaching and allied health staff (speech pathology & occupational therapy) and support staff. There is a staffing ratio of approximately 1:2. However, for a range of reasons, some students require 1:1 support for varying lengths of time.

The school’s leadership team is currently made up of:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal (Curriculum & Faith Formation)
- School Operations Coordinator (including Positive Behaviour Support)

In recent years the school has placed a strong emphasis on developing and sustaining team-based approaches to teaching and learning. This involves class and inter-disciplinary teams (therapists and educators) working collaboratively together to design, implement and evaluate approaches to and resourcing of student learning.

The school’s speech pathologist and two part-time occupational therapists enable a multidisciplinary approach to supporting the delivery of curricula. While clinical services are not provided, therapists work across the school to support professional staff in the development of programs and practices designed to meet the individual needs of students.

Specialist staff in the areas of Art and Music work across the school.

- Music is centered on exploring sound, expressing oneself, communicating, making choices, singing, listening, performing, improvising and composing. Music from a wide range of times and cultures is used as starting points for engagement. A broad range of tonal, digital, ICT and sensory equipment is used to support performance and expression. Students have the opportunity to make music together, perform to one another, share musical experiences and be empowered by the bonding, nourishing, healing and community aspects that music offers.

- Visual Arts lessons are planned under two broad categories (sensory play and skills based). During sensory play lessons students use fine motor, sensory and play experiences to explore and develop their creativity and imagination. These lessons are also a vehicle for promoting communication, sensory integration and social skills development through art based activities. Skills based lessons offer opportunities for cognitive and sensory exploration as students share, explain and interpret their artworks. They work independently and collaboratively.
Other programs include:

- Gross Motor Program exists under the umbrella of Occupational Therapy and focuses on enhancing students’ capacity for sensory integration. The program utilizes a student directed approach, allowing students to explore equipment respecting the students’ inner drive to meet the thresholds of their nervous system. The program also provides opportunities for guided discovery and the opportunity to learn new skills.

- PICS (Playful Interaction and Communication Strategies) is a way of integrating a number of interaction models to fit with a diverse range of students. Each model has similar foundation principles but features that suit different students and different communication partners. When interacting with a student it is not always best to have a purest approach, but in tailoring the interaction to meet individual needs of the student and the disposition of the communication partner, the most appropriate elements from each approach are sourced.
  - Each interaction and communication approach contains elements that illustrate the value and importance of play, and playfulness when interacting with a student. Following the child’s lead is one such element, enabling the practitioner/carer to tune in to a sense of connectedness with the child, helping him/her climb the developmental ladder.
  - Positive, nurturing interactions are what support the social emotional development of the student. Enabling that student to build on their strengths.
  - When we establish a basis for communication and socialisation with our students, all other areas of teaching and learning become easier and more meaningful. We use affect (emotion) gesture, tone and words to communicate with others our intentions and ideas.

Each holiday break the school hosts a Vacation Care Program run by Minda Inc.

The school owns and operates three 22 seater buses. These are used to transport students to and from school and enable students to access the community during the school day. Students come from various areas around Adelaide and from a range of socio economic backgrounds.

**ENROLMENTS**

50 students (max. enrolment – 50)

24 primary and 26 secondary/tertiary students

The students are grouped into 7 classes as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Junior class 5-9 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Primary classes 9-12 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Middle classes 12-16 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Senior secondary class 17-20 yrs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
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STAFF
54 staff employed, most part time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Full Time Equivalent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Support Officers, bus drivers &amp; bus support staff</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Pathologist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (including Finance Officer)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employees who identify as Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander: 0

STAFF RETENTION & ATTENDANCE
Retention rate: 100% of teaching staff continued service into 2015. One teacher completed their term at St. Patrick’s at the end of 2015. One teacher appointed (permanent 0.6) beginning 2016.

Teacher Attendance: 2640 days per year
279 absent days
89% attendance rate

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS
Undergraduate:
- Bachelor degrees: 15 (84%)
- Diplomas: 4 (22%)

Postgraduate:
- Masters degrees: 3 (17%)
- PhD: 1 (6%)

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
- Expenditure: teachers $12,124
  ESOs $15,306
  Total $27,430

- Professional learning at St. Patrick’s incorporates two key stands:
  - School based programs involving all or part of the staff working together with either external facilitators or our own staff as facilitators
  - Individual programs – staff have access to individual professional learning budgets to use in ways individually relevant to their work here.
  - We also undertake periodic mandatory training as required by WHS & Child protection requirements
  - As much as possible when staff attend off-campus sessions, two or more attend together with the responsibility to share what they’ve learnt with colleagues.

- The majority of professional learning was organised and facilitated by or through the Staff Curriculum Committees (Literacy, Numeracy, Well-being, Positive Behaviour Support) The role of these committees is to:
  - ensure each area has a high profile across the school
  - provide professional reading & encourage/facilitate PD
  - promote resources & share good practice
Student health & wellbeing: a key focus for professional learning throughout 2015
  - Circle of Security (all staff)
  - Being with children’s feelings (all staff)
  - Sensory Attachment Intervention (all staff)
  - Mindfulness (all staff)
  - Evaluating class environments to meet students’ sensory needs (all staff)

Mandatory in-service:
  - Plans to support learning (OEDP & Moving & Handling):
  - RAN Training (Responding to abuse & neglect) (all staff)
  - Basic Education Life Support (BELS) + Midazolam and Epipen - all staff

Communication & interaction in-service
  - Intensive Interaction (PICS group with all staff)
  - Play-based approaches: Mater Meo (Advanced), DIR Floortime (Advanced)
  - ICT: iPads as communication tools

Other:
  - Cognitive Coaching – developing thinking skills with staff (Principal & Assistant Principal)

STUDENT ATTENDANCE
Total possible attendance: 50 students x 200 days = 10000 days
Days absent: 459 days
Total attendance: 9541 days
Attendance rate: 95%

When a student is not attending school for the day, parents / caregivers telephone or email the school informing personnel of the student’s absence and this is accordingly documented. If a student has not arrived by 9.30 am, school personnel make contact with the parent / caregiver by phone. Parents are required to submit an “Exemption” form if they are requesting an extended absence for their child from school.

BENCHMARK RESULTS & SENIOR SECONDARY OUTCOMES
With parental consent all eligible students were exempted from participating in the NAPLAN testing program. Individual student progress was reported during 2015 via two school reports and through reviews associated with the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

SATISFACTION LEVELS
Staff
Staff met with a member of the leadership team each semester. These professional conversations were based on the ‘Circle of Security’ Professional Development all staff participated in at the beginning of the school year, i.e. ‘learning is grounded in relationship and being present, in enabling independence grounded in security.’ This is as true in our work with our students, as it is with our colleagues, and our parents and families and, of course, ourselves. Staff were invited to reflect on what this means for themselves and their work during the year. As well as the challenges, insights and questions it brings to their work.

In addition, at the beginning of 2015 the leadership structures were reviewed. Our leadership framework at the time had been in place for 4 years. It emerged that the decisive view of teaching and allied health staff was to reduce formal leadership roles and place more emphasis on ‘local’ decision-making and staff working together in teams. Staff also recommended a change to meeting structures with Teaching & Allied Health alternating with Class team meetings. General whole staff meetings were reduced and Cluster meetings ceased.
Parents
Parents of students new to the school were interviewed by the principal during Term 3 about their experience of the school in the first 6 months. Comments from the review can be found at the end of this report.

Students
This is not obtainable in traditional ways with our students.

SCHOOL INCOME
- Commonwealth Govt. (Recurrent grants) 2,138,330
- State Govt. (Recurrent grants & additional Special needs) 1,169,835
- School fees 143,038
- Other recurrent income (various sources) 33,467
- Catholic Education Office 25,346
- Other (Long Service leave, Worker’ Comp., CCI rebate) 66,352
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$3,576,368

GRADUATES
Three students graduated in 2015. One student is accessing day options, one student is participating in supported work, and one student is undertaking a combination of supported work and day options.

South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
- Senior students are enrolled in the following subjects: Business & Enterprise, The Arts (Visual Arts), Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Learning Plan
  All passed their SACE modified subjects

A Transition Evening for parents and carers from Our Lady of La Vang and St Patrick’s was held at the school. Transition Coordinators from both schools organised and facilitated the session. This provided parents with information about the varied services available for their children after leaving school. Presenters from Family Advocacy, Bedford, Minda, Disability SA and Centrelink (Dept. of Human Services).

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
- Asbestos eaves removed at the end of 2015.
- Implementation of Gross Motor Program, as per review in 2014.

School Leadership
- A review of the leadership model was conducted with teaching and allied health staff throughout Semester 1. As a result our model was changed which reflected staff discussion and which we believe enhances decision-making responsibilities of class & AH teams. Junior and Senior school coordinator roles were ceased at the end of 2015
- New structure: Russell Stanley – School Operations & Behaviour support
  Chris Lemon – Assistant Principal
  Craig Battams – Principal

CURRICULUM
- Assessment & Reporting process and format adjusted to include Australian Curriculum Capabilities & Early Year Framework Learning outcomes. These are differentiated for individual students twice yearly.
IEP goal setting – increasing focus on long term outcomes and how to support students to work towards these.

Electives on alternate Friday afternoons. The options include City to Bay Training, Music, Craft, Games & Technology, Moving & Soothing, Cooking, Engine Room, Swimming and Song Writing/Performing.

City to Bay – a great experience for all concerned

CATHOLIC IDENTITY:
- Liturgy: Ash Wednesday (class based), St. Patrick’s Day, Easter liturgy, Whole school Masses each term, End of year Mass @ The Monastery
- Staff prayer & reflection – held on pupil free days at beginning & end of each term (led by principal)
- Fr. James McEvoy continues to lead Masses each term (at school) and our end-of-year Mass at The Monastery.

PARENTS AND FRIENDS
- The Parents and Friends Committee continues to be active in fundraising and community building.
  - Welcome BBQ (beginning of year)
  - International Family Day (mid-year)
  - Art Show – a great success with many parents attending and art work sold
  - Bunnings Sausage Sizzle
  - Mother’s Day & Xmas Raffles
  - Xmas Party for students
  - Mothers and Fathers’ Dinners

Parent Liaison
Activities include:
- Publication of Buzz Book
- Organising the new Parent Buddy System – 41 families participated.
- Weekly walking group with parents/carers
- Morning teas each terms, including: Term 1 – Welcome, Term 2 – Buddies, Term 3 – Toilet Training Information Session, Term 4 – NDIS get together
- Promotion and coordination of Siblings Group
- Preparation & distribution of 16 year old packs, and assistance with completion of Centrelink requirements.
- Researching & communicating changes to Tax File Number application process.
- Attendance at Minda parent group information meeting
- Support for Old Scholars gatherings
- Promotion of external information sessions and services
- Personalised respite information for specific families
- Communication with families via newsletter
- Updating relevant webpages on the school website
- Updating & resourcing (including loans) Parent Resource Room
- Promotion and assistance with Companion Card and Transport Assistance application forms
- Assisting parents with the NDIS queries.
- Promotion and assistance with Companion Card and Transport Assistance application forms
- Behind the scenes help with P&F functions e.g. Art show, international day, welcome BBQ

OTHER:
- Speech Pathology students continue to undertake 3rd or 4th year placements at St. Patrick’s. Six students completed these in 2015
APPENDIX A

PARENT SATISFACTION

Parents of students new to the school were interviewed by the principal during Term 3 about their experience of the school in the first 6 months. The same questions were asked of each parent. Respondents have been de-identified and have been given a number. Parent 1, 2, 3 etc. The data, which is very positive, has been collated, forwarded to respondents for confirmation and then distributed to them. Findings have been discussed with staff to support us with our ongoing school improvement process.

How were you feeling beforehand?

1. Very nervous and not sure about whether we’d made the right choice? I was mainly focused on language development and the importance of interacting with typically developing children. I was worried about ..........’s health concerns, her eating, sugar levels etc., would she be looked after properly. It’d mainly been us and our very close family who had been involved with............. and letting go of this was a challenge

2. I was very nervous and very unsure as to whether we were making the right choice – ............... had been so happy at his previous school and I felt so much a part of the school. I was concerned about whether we’d done enough for him, whether attending a special school marked defeat, whether ..........'s language development would deteriorate and the implications of not interacting with typically developing children

3. We were worried/concerned/uncertain- not so much about coming here but more about ...... .....’s place at his prior school and, if he’d remained there what the future would be for him, would we continue to get phone calls to pick him up and so on. They did a good job but we felt in the end they weren’t equipped or resourced to take the next steps with................. whatever these might be

4. Apprehension. ................. had been attended to really well at his kindy where he was obviously cared for and loved. The pre-school however had seemed less personal and it felt like he was a little lost in the crowd. We worried that this might be the pattern with school

5. We had done our homework. We felt ............ was ready for school and St. Patrick’s provided what we wanted for him

6. We were excited about the change although with considerable sadness about leaving ..................’s previous school where she had been accepted so beautifully into the community. We felt some nervousness about what was next but all in all ok

7. I was concerned for the staff, that ................. may prove too challenging for them and therefore concern for him because he is quite different. The school had a good feel about it though and, from the start, it felt different here than some other places I had visited, not like an institution but a group of people. I felt that this would be followed up with the way the staff worked with ............ Our approach as a family has been very consistent with DIR Floortime and I’m delighted that this is consistent with how things are being done here

8. A bit sad to leave the previous school where ............ had been very happy. A little concerned about how he’d deal with the change given his like of routines although he’d been to Vacation Care here so felt he would cope ok. We were relieved that ................. would spend less time on the bus. The associated routines of waiting for the pickups and drop-offs etc, would be alleviated
What was your experience of transition? How did this shape your feelings about your child and his/her education?

1. Fantastic, …………. was very happy right from the start. I felt we were on the same page quickly, the greetings in the morning, the friendliness of staff and the attention to communication about all the things that I was concerned about was good from the start.
2. We were very affirmed because …………. was very happy right from the start. We felt we were on the same page quickly, the friendliness and approachability of staff, the quality of communication and the comments made about what they observed. …………. is always excited to come to school. The holidays are not a great time for him.
3. Very good, liked the adaptability, the fact that it was left to us to work with ……………..’s class teacher to work out what suited ……………. It has been flexible to suit his needs as they emerged.
4. Good. We felt the process catered to ……………. We felt better that our initial apprehension may not be realised and ……………. wouldn’t be lost.
5. Very good. We felt informed, a part of it all and good about …………. coming here. Experience at Vacation care didn’t go well. Perhaps this was because there were different expectations on the same site and not being able to do the things …………. would normally do here. ……………. likes coming to school. This was evidenced one morning when he wasn’t having a good morning and was reluctant to come in but after he saw a staff member from his class he changed his mind and came in happily. The staff knowledge of and care for …………. is really good.
6. It hit home finally that …………. had some issues which couldn’t be dealt with satisfactorily in a mainstream setting. This involved a degree of letting go which wasn’t always easy. We have both felt informed, comfortable with the staff and the information we’ve received. The BBQ and morning tea were both really good. ……………. settled in very quickly and seemed so comfortable from very early on so this confirmed we’d made the right decision.
7. Really good. I am amazed that …………. settled so quickly and bonded so quickly with the staff. This enabled me to relax. I noticed that he was quite comfortable with others quite soon. ……………. is very much a people person. It’s people more than things and equipment that interests him. I felt very quicky that …………. was being left with people who wanted to understand him, genuinely cared for and liked him and that the school was safe.
8. Very good. We enjoyed the BBQs and the new parent meeting. ……………. settled in and seemed comfortable very quickly. This confirmed we’d made the right choice.

What are your thoughts about how your child is being catered for?

1. Very good. ………….’s language is developing really well, it is intentional, she is scanning and pointing, her articulation is improving and she is also very happy. She likes coming to school.
2. Very good. ………….’s language is developing really well and he is saying more.
3. Very happy. We feel …………. is developing very well. His language is developing and he is communicating more happily and effectively. Toileting and eating are going very well (and there’s been no phone calls to come and get him!)
4. As much as we can at this early stage, we feel it’s going well.
5. Very affirmative of our philosophy. Wondered whether it was time to push …………. a little harder particularly around his language. We feel it has dropped off in recent months. Made some suggestions about they’d worked at home using Proloquo2go with ……………. We would also like an outline of the specific things the staff are working on at school so this can be followed up home. The staff could also perhaps draw on ……………. (mother) a little more because she is an excellent resource due to her time with ……………. at home.
6. Very good. We are delighted at how ...............’s language is coming on. This had been one concern that her language may diminish because of the limited social modelling of peers at St. Patrick’s but the reverse has been true. ................. is beginning to use a loud voice at home and with this it seems her pronunciation has improved. .................is now much more understandable. .................likes coming to school, has formed friendships and is sleeping really well at night. She is very chatty.

7. I feel ...............is catered for very well. The approach taken at St. Patrick’s is very consistent with the approach we’ve taken at home

8. Very well

**What are your thoughts about the staff, their expertise and approach?**

1. They’re amazing, they know ................. and are very attentive to her needs. They are very welcoming. I feel ............... is safe and that should an emergency occur .................is in safe hands

2. Excellent

3. Very good, ............... is in good hands

4. Very happy

5. the staff are doing a really good job

6. Excellent, feel we as parents are informed

7. Very confident in the expertise of staff and their approach

8. The staff are ‘fantastic,’ are skilled and getting to know ............... very well. How they work confirms our approach and thinking about .................’s learning

**Do you feel as though you have voice in your child’s education?**

1. Yes, very much so, the IEP goals are good, the discussion has been good and I was very happy with .................’s first report and what it told me

2. Yes, the discussions has been good particularly around the IEP goals

3. Very much so, the IEP discussions were good, good communication throughout the week etc

4. Feel as though the staff listen. An example of this was when we made one suggestion about ................. toileting which was heard and implemented

5. Yes, we felt the IEP process & discussions were good

6. Very much so

7. Very much so

8. Very much so – feel included

**Do you feel a part of the parent community?**

1. I’ve had coffee with one other mother, but haven’t had a lot to do with the others. Enjoyed the welcome BBQ, the morning tea, Buzz book is good

2. Yes to a certain extent although it’s hard to meet many parents. We enjoyed the welcome BBQ and the morning tea. We certainly don’t feel they have to explain ourselves regarding.......... to anyone. Everyone is on the same track and so there no need to apologise

3. Yes – getting to know people, the BBQ and International days were good, parents who have older children here have introduced themselves and been very friendly

4. Yes– the buddy system is good

5. Yes – live very near another family with a child enrolled here. ................. is getting to know a few parents outside the gate in the afternoons

6. As much as we can – meeting a few people and know some families from life outside of school but we are both very busy

7. As much as I can at this stage, knows a few parents from previous settings. Everyone is friendly

8. As much as we can. The BBQs & new parent morning tea were good, everyone is very friendly, the other parents understand what you are going through. Our family commitments with our other child’s
sport and …………..’s enjoyment of time in the park with his father during the weekends prevent much
outside interaction with others

In thinking about the new parents next year, any suggestions about how we can do things better re
transition?
1. Continue above, class mother and father’s get-togethers
2. Class mother and father’s get-togethers (with no children) perhaps with the new parents or even the
primary classes
3. None
4. None
5. Do the same
6. Continue with what occurred this year
7. Keep doing the same. Doesn’t feel like a special school in the sense of being an institution but rather
people who are committed and enjoy their work together with the students, feels like we take joy in
students and celebrate them.
8. Continue with current processes

Other suggestions for improvement?
2. While I understand why it’s not really possible, more “hang around’ time in the early days to see what
is happening and how …………… is coping

Anything else
1. There is a strong consistency between what we say and do. It is a very welcoming place
2. I love the Masses. The children are being themselves, it’s happy and relaxed and it’s good to see and
meet other families there
   The fact that you have these discussions with all new parents is a wonderful initiative in itself
7. It’s hard to put into words just how wonderful I feel absolutely every aspect of this school.