School context
Birrong Girls High School is a single sex comprehensive high school located in Sydney’s South West. Culturally diverse (98% LBOTE), the 810 students are from a range of cultural backgrounds which represent 45 language groups. The majority of families are from Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese and Turkish backgrounds. 67% of total enrolments are from within the local area; 6% of students have refugee status and less than 1% of students are from an Aboriginal background.

The school’s motto, ‘Ad Astra’ (reaching for the stars), emphasises our high expectations for teaching and learning. The school has worked hard to maintain its high academic performance and particular emphasis has been placed on citizenship, leadership and community involvement.

Since 2005 the school’s two key focus areas have been improved student outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and the implementation of the NSW Quality Teaching Framework. The success of this focus was acknowledged when the school received the 2012 Director-General’s School Achievement Award for Quality Teaching, and in 2008 when the school received a Highly Commended for Excellence in School Improvement in the National Awards for Quality Schooling. In addition, the school has participated in the Priority Schools Funding Program 2009-2013, the Low SES School Communities National Partnership from 2010-2013 and the Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership since 2013.

The school values are personal excellence (Ad Astra); respect; responsibility; cooperation; understanding, tolerance and inclusion; and integrity. These values are firmly embedded in school culture, policies and practices and underpin the school’s Statement of Purpose: to achieve personal excellence and success in a safe learning environment. They reflect the school’s Code of Behaviour and provide a strong foundation for our positive school culture.

There is a strong demand for enrolment and the school attracts students from many surrounding suburbs because it is single sex, because of its history of outstanding HSC results and because of its reputation as a safe, caring and happy school.

Principal’s message
The Annual School Report is an opportunity for our school community to celebrate the considerable achievements of 2013, review our programs and describe our plans for the future. At Birrong Girls High School we encourage students to strive to achieve personal excellence academically, physically, and socially. Our success is reflected in the achievements described in this report.

In 2013 our school completed the fourth and final year of its involvement in the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership. The partnership aims to improve student engagement and attainment, and to start to overcome disadvantage in our community. Through the injection of significant additional funding from the Commonwealth Government, this Partnership supported a range of in and out of school reforms.

The partnership funding was used to support student learning by building on successful strategies from 2010-2012 that included: providing supplementary professional learning for teachers; employing additional specialist teachers; expanding the school’s ICT capacity; and promoting greater community involvement in the school.

Financial resources provided by the Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership (ILNNP) in Semester 2 2013 were used to provide additional teacher professional learning and employ additional teaching and support staff to implement the QuickSmart numeracy program to lift the numeracy performance of targeted students.

I would like to acknowledge the strong commitment and support from parents, staff, students and community groups that have greatly contributed to the school’s successes and achievements throughout 2013.

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.

Jenni Wilkins
Principal
**P & C message**

The Parent and Citizens (P & C) group is a small but active part of Birrong Girls High School. It has been rewarding to provide additional opportunities which have enriched the experiences of the students.

In 2013 the P & C:
- Organised the school starter book packs.
- Contributed to scholastic awards at the School Presentation Day.
- Provided advice and supported the implementation of a number of school programs.
- Supported the allocation of funding from the National Partnership programs.
- Successfully campaigned to improve the traffic congestion around the school; new traffic signs have ensured greater safety for students.
- Monitored the local Potts Hill housing development; more opportunities should arise from this development.
- Raised awareness about the need for security fencing around the school; this remains an ongoing issue.

Congratulations to the junior and senior students who were the recipients of the P & C awards at Presentation Day. Thank you to the school’s administration staff for their extremely valuable help with the sale and distribution of the school book packs.

Finally, thank you to all members of the P & C and teachers who attended our informal meetings for their ongoing efforts and time. I ask all parents who are able to provide an hour of their time to become active members of the P & C. As parents we play a vital role in our girls’ life and education. You can show your support for a strong home-school partnership by participating in our meetings held twice a term in week 3 and week 8.

**Melinda Araujo**

On behalf of the P & C

**Student representative’s message**

2013 was a very rewarding and successful year for the Student Representative Council (SRC).

The areas of focus for 2013 were student leadership, community interaction and the ongoing support of various charity organisations.

The SRC played an active role in encouraging students to participate in a variety of activities and charity initiatives such as the 40 Hour Famine, Stewart House Day and White Ribbon Day. The SRC also raised money to support those affected by the bushfires in Victoria and the Blue Mountains. In coordinating the sale of the school’s STELLAR magazine, the SRC not only played an active role promoting the importance of literacy but raised funds for UNICEF to support those affected by the floods in the Philippines.

The SRC continued to sponsor Sabina, a student from Tanzania, by running chocolate drives. The SRC have supported Sabina since 2005 and is delighted with her ongoing excellent academic progress.

Members of the SRC were given the opportunity to represent the school and develop leadership skills at a variety of conferences throughout the year. They participated in regular inter-school meetings where they were inspired by motivational guest speakers and had the opportunity to exchange ideas with other student leaders in the south western Sydney region. They also represented the school at various Bankstown Youth Leadership Summits, the Global Leadership Convention and the International Women’s Day Breakfast. In initiating a ‘Resilience’ campaign to encourage positivity, the SRC made a strong stand against bullying.

Within the school, the SRC has acted on suggestions put forward by the student body to improve the school environment and assisted with and catered for Parent/Teacher Evenings.

Throughout 2013 students continued to maintain the SRC’s tradition of being excellent ambassadors for Birrong Girls High School.
Student information
Student enrolment profile

Retention to Year 12

Student attendance profile

Post-school destinations

Management of non-attendance
Attendance is above state and regional rates because of the highly effective attendance monitoring system that incorporates regular and consistent contact with parents or guardians through the text messaging system, acknowledgment of students with outstanding attendance records and early intervention and support from regional Home School Liaison Officers.

Structure of classes
In Years 7 and 8 (Stage 4) classes were organised to provide a targeted support class for less able students and a targeted extension class for more able students with the remaining classes as mixed ability. This provided greater strategic and systematic learning support for students.

The 2013 post-school destination data showed that a total of 77% of students gained entry to tertiary studies; 67% of students were offered university placements.

40 students were offered a place at the University of Western Sydney, 15 at the University of Sydney, 14 at the University of Technology Sydney, 6 at Macquarie University, 3 at University of NSW and 1 each at Southern Cross University, University of Newcastle, University of New England, University of Notre Dame and the Australian Catholic University.

“Other” includes students who are travelling, on a gap year or were unable to be contacted.
Year 12 students undertaking vocational or trade training

In 2013 37% of Year 12 students studied at least one Vocational Education Training (VET) course delivered at the school; 8% of the Year 12 cohort studied Business Services, 9% Retail, 17% Hospitality, 3% Sports Coaching and 3% studied Human Services.

Year 12 students attaining HSC or equivalent Vocational educational qualification

100% of the 124 students in Year 12 attained an HSC in 2013. Students achieved additional vocational educational qualifications in:

- Business Services - 11 students achieved a Certificate II and 2 students achieved a Statement of Attainment
- Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) - 22 students achieved a Statement of Attainment
- Retail Services - 6 students achieved a Certificate II and 4 students achieved a Statement of Attainment
- Human Services - 4 students achieved Certificate III
- Sport (Coaching) - 5 students achieved Certificate II.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Principal(s)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teachers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher(s)</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Support Teacher(s)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Librarian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of ESL</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counsellor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers adviser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative &amp; Support Staff</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2013 additional staffing supplementation through the Priority Schools Funding (Equity) Program (PSFP) and the Low Socioeconomic National Partnership Program allowed the appointment of 8.1 additional support teachers and 2 additional Head Teachers (included in the table above).

Under the Digital Education Revolution (DER) program a full-time Technology Support Officer was employed to support the school’s laptop program.

No members of the teaching or support staff are from an indigenous Australian background.

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>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Institute of Teachers Accreditation</td>
<td>22</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>$2511860.02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
<td>794980.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
<td>435442.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>934469.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
<td>259394.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>31250.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust receipts</td>
<td>56322.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income</td>
<td>2511860.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key learning areas</td>
<td>125042.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursions</td>
<td>61710.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular dissections</td>
<td>41802.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>10377.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; development</td>
<td>6276.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>557791.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual relief teachers</td>
<td>97444.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; office</td>
<td>196413.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-operated canteen</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>111374.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>43197.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust accounts</td>
<td>51357.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital programs</td>
<td>13120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure</td>
<td>1316087.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance carried forward</td>
<td>1195773.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A full copy of the school’s 2013 financial statement is tabled at the annual general meeting of the parent body. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.
School performance 2013

Academic achievements

NAPLAN

In the National Assessment Program, the results across the Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy assessments are reported on a scale from Band 1 to Band 10.

The achievement scale represents increasing levels of skills and understandings demonstrated in these assessments.

- Year 7: from Band 4 (lowest) to Band 9 (highest for Year 7)
- Year 9: from Band 5 (lowest) to Band 10 (highest for Year 9)

The My School website provides detailed information and data for national literacy and numeracy testing (NAPLAN).

Click on the link http://www.myschool.edu.au
and enter the school name in the Find a school and select GO to access the school data.

NAPLAN Year 7 - Literacy

The best area of Year 7’s literacy performance was writing where the students’ average score was well above the state average (518.0 compared with state average 502.1); all other components were well below state averages.

The area of greatest weakness for Year 7 was reading where the average score was 503.5 (compared with 534 for the state).
The average spelling score in Year 7 was 537.3, significantly below 548.2 for the state.

Year 7 achievement levels in reading and grammar and punctuation are of concern and are addressed in the school plan.

**NAPLAN Year 7 - Numeracy**

The 2 components of numeracy tested are: number, patterns and algebra; and, measurement, data, space and geometry.

The average numeracy score in Year 7 was 502.2, well below the state average of 540.9.

Year 7 numeracy achievement levels are of concern and are addressed in the school plan.

**NAPLAN Year 9 - Literacy**

The best area of Year 9’s literacy performance was writing where the school average exceeded state average.

Grammar and punctuation was an area of great weakness for Year 9 (the average score was 537.6 compared with 565.8 for the state).
The average reading score in Year 9 was 554.7 significantly below 585.6 for the state.

Year 9 reading achievement levels are of concern and are addressed in the school plan.

The school’s Year 9 average score for spelling was 576.7, slightly below the state average of 584.

**NAPLAN Year 9 - Numeracy**

The average numeracy score in Year 9 was 547.9.4, well below the state average of 584.4.

Year 9 numeracy achievement levels are of concern and are addressed in the school plan.
Higher School Certificate (HSC)

In the Higher School Certificate, the performance of students is reported in performance bands ranging from Performance Band 1 (lowest) to Performance Band 6 (highest).

In 2013, 124 students sat for the Higher School Certificate examinations in 31 courses. The results for these students were very pleasing. Students’ average results were above state average in 13 HSC courses. The average scores for each HSC course in 2013 for the school and the state are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HSC Course</th>
<th>School 2013</th>
<th>School Average 2009-13</th>
<th>SSG 2013</th>
<th>State DEC 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancient History</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Studies</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community &amp; Family Studies</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (Std)</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (Adv)</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>78.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>69.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Technology</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Studies</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Mathematics</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics Extension 1</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern History</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music 1</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDHPE</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society and Culture</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies of Religion II</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Examination</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HSC relative performance is a measure of the progress the student has made compared with students who performed at a similar level in the School Certificate (SC). Relative performance is often referred to as value-added performance.

The average relative performance shown in the graph above is for all students in the school in all their HSC courses. It has been calculated separately for students in the lower, middle and upper School Certificate (SC) performance bands in 2011. By definition, state average value-added is zero. The relative performance for our HSC students in 2013 was well above the average for the state and our Similar School Group (SSG) for students in all performance bands.

When the Year 12 HSC results of 2013 are compared with those achieved by the same students in the 2011 SC, the average growth or value-added achieved by Birrong Girls was 5.9 points higher than the state level for similar ability students. This excellent performance continues a positive trend that has been evident at the school since 2001.

The strength of the 2013 HSC cohort was demonstrated by the school Dux, Najwa Halwani, who earned a place on the Board of Studies’ All Round Achievers List, and the 20 students named on the Board of Studies’ Distinguished Achievers’ List for 39 credits (band 6 or above 90 in a course) in the following 19 courses: Biology, Business Studies, Community and Family Studies, Drama, English (Advanced), English (Standard), English (Extension 1), Food Technology, General Mathematics, Legal Studies, Modern History, Society & Culture, Studies of Religion 1 and Studies of Religion 11, Visual Arts, Retail Services and Hospitality, Chinese Background Speakers and Heritage Chinese Mandarin.

67% of our 2013 HSC class were offered places at university for 2014 and the school’s highest
Australian Tertiary Achievement Ranks (ATAR) was 96.6.

Record of School Achievement (RoSA)

The % of A-E grades awarded in each Year 10 course for the Record of School Achievement (RoSA) in 2013 is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 10 Course</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Geography</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian History</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Technology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>IST</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDHPE</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographic &amp; Digital Media</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles Technology</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Achievements in the Arts, sport and other school programs

Arts

Students in the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) maintained a strong level of participation across all years. School assembly performances continued to showcase individual and group performances in Music.

Highlights included the Year 7 visit to the ‘Sydney Moderns’ at the Art Gallery of NSW and the Year 9, 10 and 11 Visual Arts camp at Bundanon. Year 11 Visual Arts students also attended a study day at the Art Gallery of NSW in preparation for the HSC. Of particular note was the Year 8 excursion where students emulated the works of well-known artists Fredrick McCubbin and Arthur Streeton, drawing en plein air in settings that have changed little since these artists made their works over 100 years ago.

Year 9 Photographic Digital Media (PDM) students produced high quality images as a result of their walking tour of Circular Quay and the Rocks. In Term 4, selected PDM students attended an inspirational animation workshop run by the Academy of Interactive Entertainment where they used a program called ‘Sculptris’ to make exciting 3D digital images.

The annual CAPA Extravaganza, opened by The Hon. Jason Clare, member for Blaxland, and Mr Jim Birkett, education officer for the Bundanon Trust, once again provided an opportunity for students to showcase their skill and talent in the creative and performing arts. Family and friends enjoyed the hospitality of the TAS students and listened to the diverse musical talents that featured soloists and band performances. The junior students delighted the audience with a range of vocal performances and the senior vocalists performed various repertoires. This year saw band performances dominating the event which generated some great positive sounds and showcased the creative versatility of our students. Art works in painting, photography, multimedia, mixed media and pottery covered every wall and table. The winners for the 2013 Extravaganza were Jenna Nguyen (Yr7), all of 8VA2 for their group painting, Nina Chen (Yr9), Kimberley Pastor (Yr10), Zhi-Qing Huang (Yr11), Anke-Thy Nguyen (Yr12) and the ‘People’s Choice’ award was won by Lisa Qiu (Yr12).

Talented Music students Moala Laiafi (Yr8), Sabina Siddiq (Yr8), Alana Leha (Yr10) and Yvonne Nguyen (Yr10) were nominated for the Bankstown Arts Centre Talent Advancement Program (TAP). These girls will receive expert tuition in their music discipline and valuable experience in performing.
Birrong Girls High School continues to grow and evolve in the creative and performing arts as students continue to provide insightful, intuitive works and performances that offer fresh and challenging interpretations of our environment and lives.

**Creative Writing**

Laurine Croasdale was engaged as our Writer-in-Residence to work with groups of students from Years 7-10 and develop their skills in creative writing. Gifted and talented students attended the Writers’ Festival held at the Sydney Theatre Company where they were inspired by the power of story.

Students entered all three UNSW ICAS Competitions, English, Spelling and Writing, and received a record number of awards. Congratulations to Vivian Pham (Yr 7) who achieved Distinctions for Spelling and Writing and Natasha Luu (Yr 8) who achieved a Distinction in Writing. A total of 15 Credits were awarded to: Vivian Pham (Yr7) English; Sabina Siddiq (Yr8) Writing; Hafsa Abbasi (Yr8) English and Writing; Tina Ta (Yr8) Writing; Hawa Beg (Yr8) English; Linda Tran (Yr8) Writing; Jasmine Wong (Yr8) English and Writing; Natasha Luu (Yr8) English; Jacqueline Huynh (Yr8) Writing; Hayley Brisenden (Yr9) Writing; Vyvy Nham (Yr8) English and Writing; and Trang Dao (Yr11) Writing.

The theme of the English Faculty’s Annual Writing Competition was ‘Little Treasures’. This stimulus attracted a record number of quality prose and poetry entries from junior and senior students. First places were awarded to Aiesha Fahda (Junior Poetry), Natasha Luu (Junior Prose), Eseta Latu (Senior poetry) and Aleyna Celik (Senior Prose).

8B students participated in a Spoken Word Festival held in The Rocks. Two of our students, Salma Althifairy and Sabina Siddiq, performed their self-devised performance pieces with confidence and skill.

**Public Speaking**

Years 7-10 competed in the school’s annual Henrietta Wooster Public Speaking Competition. The topic for this year was “The One Thing That Will Make the World a Better Place”. The senior winner for this year was Belinda Jovanovska of Year 10. The junior winner from Years 7-9 was Hayley Brisenden of Year 9.

Hayley Brisenden and Abir Al Hassnawi reprised their school performances in the Legacy Junior Public Speaking Competition at Fairfield High School against Years 7-9 students from local schools.

**Debating**

In 2013 we fielded two quality debating teams which had the opportunity to hone their skills in manner, method and rebuttal. Debaters learned not only to structure their arguments, listen carefully to the opposition, think conceptually and deliver fluently, but also to read widely and keep up to date with current affairs.

The Year 10 team advanced to the Zone Quarter finals, whilst our Year 8 team was narrowly defeated in a Zone Semi-final. The Year 8 team comprised Jacqueline Huynh, Linda Tran, Salma Althifairy and Hawa Beg. Congratulations to both teams who were great ambassadors for our school.

**Drama**

2013 was a very productive year for Drama classes. Students were extended in their acting, improvising and playbuilding skills by performing in a variety of contexts, including assemblies and evening performances in the Little Theatre. Often these performances involved associated skills such as promotion and poster design. Year 12 students provided compelling performances of Brechtian scenes and individual monologues at the Drama Showcase. We were very proud to receive a nomination for OnStage for one of our HSC students, Melodie Bonorchis, for her Individual Performance.
The Year 11 Drama class commemorated International Women’s Day with a realist performance called “The Touch of Silk” by Betty Roland. They also enjoyed absurdist theatre and produced “The Insect Play” by Josef Capek, which was a great performance, marked by creativity, enthusiasm and teamwork.

Year 10 student, Nour Salama, took to the assembly stage and wowed everyone with her extraordinary monologue skills and, in a playbuilt piece group, Year 10 students created a funny, airplane crash drama.

Aleyna Celik and Helay Zarmati of Year 9 also took part in an enriching project with the Performing Arts Unit called the Multicultural Playwrights’ Program which was successfully performed at the Casula Powerhouse.

**Sport**

The school’s swimming, athletics and cross country carnivals were huge successes in 2013. High attendance rates and enthusiastic participation demonstrated students’ team spirit and willingness to be involved in a variety of sporting disciplines. A number of students went on to represent our school at zone, regional and state levels.

![Athletics Carnival](image)

In PDHPE classes, Years 7 – 10 participated in an integrated sport program to develop student skills and confidence. Lessons focused on students learning fundamental coordination and game skills. Swim School ensured that Year 7 and 8 students attained essential water safety skills. Both groups competed in Field Day events and Years 9 and 10 PASS students gained valuable leadership experience in their roles as leaders, referees and coaches, assisting local primary schools in carnivals and field events.

The Year 8 Jump Rope for Heart program raised over $1,050 for the National Heart Foundation and helped students improve their own fitness and coordination.

![Year 8 Jump Rope for Heart](image)

In Term 2, the PDHPE Dance Display demonstrated to the wider community student skills in choreography and dance. The Dance Display culminated in two full day performances for feeder primary schools and junior students. Students came from Birrong, Berala, Regents Park, Lidcombe and Yagoona primary schools. They were entertained by a range of dance styles which reflected the themes of animation and Disney.

Students of all ages participated in inter-school competitions in touch football, basketball, softball, netball and volleyball.

Monique Steel (Yr 7) was junior sports woman of the year for her achievement as 12 years age champion in the school’s swimming, cross country and athletics carnivals.

Nadine Johnston Araujo (Yr 8) was state champion for the International Development Program (IDP) in gymnastics and competed for NSW at the National Gymnastics Championships coming 5th overall. Nadine also participated at the Melbourne National Clubs Championships where her team was 2nd overall and she was 2nd in the individual vault.

Isabella Johnston Araujo (Yr 10) was the regional champion for gymnastics and was also the 15 years Zone Cross Country age champion. Isabella achieved 6th place at Regional Swimming and Cross Country carnivals and competed in the State Cross Country Carnival.
At the state gymnastics competition Isabella was awarded 3rd on the vault. In addition, she made the zone soccer team and was a State Super League finalist in soccer with the Bankstown City Football Club.

Jeanette Kepu (Yr 11) broke the Sydney South West record and was the 16 years shot put champion at Zone, Sydney South West Athletics and CHS carnivals.

Monalisa Sankoh (Yr 12) was successful in several athletics events and was the 17 years age champion for both athletics and cross country at zone level.

Mele Latu (Yr 12) was a member of the South West Regional Volleyball team which won the Combined High Schools (CHS) championship. Mele was also awarded the Pierre de Coubertin Award for her overall outstanding performance in sport, particularly volleyball at the state level. She received the award for exhibiting the spirit of the Olympics, sportsmanship, a fierce determination to win and outstanding leadership and performance in a variety of sports.

At the Pierre de Coubertin presentation ceremony, Birrong Girls High School was recognised as one of only two high schools in NSW to have participated in the Pierre de Coubertin Award for the past 21 years.

Significant programs and initiatives

Aboriginal education

Seven students of indigenous background (Years 7, 8, 10 and 11) were enrolled in 2013. An individual learning plan to identify strengths, target areas for improvement, and to set academic and personal goals was evaluated and revised for each student in Year 8, 10 and 11. A learning plan to support the transition to high school was negotiated with a student in Year 7 and her family. Regular interviews to monitor progress were held with the early intervention teacher and a mentor teacher throughout the year.

NAIDOC Week Assembly

Particular highlights in 2013 were the NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week special assemblies where speakers and indigenous performers celebrated our indigenous legacy by sharing ideas about Aboriginal culture and history. The performers used dance to showcase aspects of their Aboriginal heritage and shared inspiring stories with students and staff.
Another highlight for the students was the chance to spend time with Aunty May Robinson, an aboriginal elder and member of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. Aunty May explained how history and culture remain important for young aboriginal students in the 21st century.

All indigenous students participated in the after school homework group to seek help from Ms Sirris with assignments, homework and goal setting.

Throughout 2013 staff continued to consolidate the teaching of Aboriginal culture and history as well as contemporary indigenous issues across all Key Learning Areas.

Multicultural education

97% of students were from a range of cultural backgrounds representing 45 language groups, the majority of families being from Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese and Turkish backgrounds. Given the rich diversity of our student population, the value of understanding, tolerance and inclusion underpins all aspects of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning programs integrate multicultural perspectives to develop the knowledge, skills and understandings required for a culturally diverse society. Two ESL teachers supported students from language backgrounds other than English through team teaching and targeted programs.

National Partnerships and significant Commonwealth initiatives

The school participated in two significant national partnership initiatives in 2013:

- Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership, and
- Low SES School Communities National Partnership.

Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership (ILNNP)

Following a situational analysis additional strategies were included in the school plan in Semester 2 to strengthen the numeracy aspect of the school’s identified priority areas and to assist in meeting school targets in numeracy.

The school used the financial resources ($330,000 over 2013 and 2014) provided by ILNNP to provide additional teacher professional learning and employ additional teaching and support staff to implement the QuickSmart numeracy program to lift the numeracy performance of targeted students.

Pre-testing identified 85% of Year 7 and 71% of Year 8 students performing below expectation on the school-based assessment that focused on the numeracy dimensions of counting as a problem solving approach and place value. Following the implementation of the program, numeracy results were significantly improved; only 8% of Year 7 and 16% of Year 8 continued to perform below expectation.

Low SES School Communities National Partnership

In 2013 the school completed its fourth and final year of involvement in the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership. Through significant additional funding, the Partnership supported a range of in and out of school reforms that were aimed at transforming the way schooling takes place in disadvantaged school communities. The Partnership aimed to improve student engagement and attainment, and to start to overcome disadvantage in our community. The key reform areas in the Partnership required schools to focus on teacher quality, improvement in student outcomes and strengthened community engagement.

A rigorous evaluation was conducted of those strategies and programs that had been implemented throughout 2012. This evaluation identified a number of highly successful strategies and some areas in need of further improvement within the reform areas. Following the evaluation, the school devised and implemented a 2013 School Plan which included a number of successful existing strategies, improved programs and new initiatives. The most significant of these included:
the employment of additional staff including: two additional Head Teachers (Technology and CAPA); support teachers for team teaching with targeted classes; part-time early intervention teacher to assist at risk students; full-time ICT technical support officer; and, full-time School Learning Support Officers to support students undertaking Life Skills program

the provision of additional targeted Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) by: embedding TPL in teacher allocation; establishing Quality Teaching Mentors in seven KLAs; using the Learn, Apply, Tell and Embed (LATE) after hours model, to develop teacher capacity in quality teaching, ICT and data analysis for improved student achievement

the expansion of an academic partnership established in 2010 with the Faculty of Education at the University of Newcastle to provide additional support for the broad and sustained application by teachers of the NSW Quality Teaching Framework, and

the expansion of sustainable technology based infra-structure including cabling, wireless connectivity, remote access, interactive whiteboards and laptops.

Long-term and sustainable outcomes of the partnership’s focus on professional learning include:

- the willingness of teachers to work collaboratively and collegially and observe and reflect on classroom practice and student assessment
- a shift in teacher perception from an emphasis on external workshops to one which places high value on collegial learning opportunities
- school-based professional learning that focuses on student learning and builds teachers’ pedagogical skills, and
- improved teacher capacity to undertake action research to evaluate and improve programs and strategies.

The Final Evaluation Report, completed late in 2013 following reviews of the initiatives, indicated that they were successful at improving student outcomes, teacher quality and community engagement. This report informed the development of the revised 2012-2014 School Plan.

Transitional Equity Funding

The Equity staffing supplementation (2.2 FTE) was used to employ a learning support teacher focusing on student literacy and numeracy development. This teacher provided intensive support for targeted Year 7 and 8 students requiring remediation. The support was offered through team teaching and individual learning programs. The key areas targeted were reading, comprehension, measurement and data.

The remaining 1.2 staffing supplementation was allocated to reduced class sizes in Year 9. This continued to support the facilitation of two smaller targeted classes for students whose performance in national testing was generally under national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy.

Equity funding supported the implementation of programs and initiatives to improve literacy, numeracy and student engagement. This was achieved in the following ways:

- The employment of a speech therapist two days per week to develop language processing, listening and auditory awareness skills
- Implementation of Individual Learning Programs (ILPS) for targeted students at or below national minimum standards as identified through national testing in Years 7, 8 and 9
- Facilitation of a homework centre staffed by two teachers four times a week from 3pm-5pm
- Access to Mathletics which uses e-learning to engage students in numeracy activities
- After school tuition programs for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 at or below minimum standard as identified through national testing
- Author in Residence, Laurine Croasdale, conducted writing workshops for Year 7 – 9 students to develop writing skills and nurture creativity
- Implementation of a Rewards Day to celebrate excellent attendance and punctuality, and
- The promotion and celebration of student achievements through inter-school competitions and in house writing publications.
Vocational Education (VET) and School to Work

Five VET frameworks, Hospitality, Business Services, Sports Coaching, Retail and Health Services were delivered to Stage 6 students. During 2013, the school successfully participated in a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) internal audit. This ensured that the delivery of VET subjects met the national standards and requirements of the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

Nine qualified teachers delivered VET frameworks and of those 7 teachers taught Stage 6 VET courses in 2013.

VET teachers attended mandatory training and development sessions for compliance with RTO and new framework requirements. In addition, teachers maintained their industry currency via further training in workplaces.

All students in Year 11 VET courses completed a Work Ready Induction Day, to prepare them for their mandatory work placement.

In the HSC, 42% of Hospitality students performed well by achieving Bands 5 or 6. In Retail, 43% of students attained a Band 5 or 6 in the HSC and in Business Services, 45% of students achieved Bands 4 or 5. Sport Coaching students, who do not sit for an HSC examination, maintained their links with our local primary schools and once again this year impressed primary school staff with their efficient organisation skills whilst assisting with the running of carnivals, as part of their workplace hours.

School to Work programs provided career information, an understanding of employment related skills, subject selection guidance and transition planning for students from Years 7 to 12. All senior students in Years 11 and 12 attended Study Skills days subsidised by School to Work funds.

Students from Years 7 to 12 maintained a folio of careers information using an online log book and a variety of other resources. Interviews were conducted with all Year 10 and Year 12 students by the Careers Adviser. In addition, visits to Universities and career expos and access to guest speakers assisted senior students in their career path planning.

All students in Year 10 completed two weeks of work experience; one week in April and another in November. Representatives from the University of Western Sydney (UWS), the University of Technology and Science (UTS), and TAFE attended our parent - teacher nights and provided valuable information for students and parents on post-school pathways.
Eleven Year 10 students attended the UTS Summer School during the January school holidays where they spent two enriching weeks completing short courses in nursing, film making, engineering, and design.

The annual Term 3 Business Afternoon Tea provided the opportunity to acknowledge the important role of our local business community in providing work experience and placements throughout the year. Students proudly catered for the event, entertained guests and formally expressed their appreciation of the opportunities provided by the relationship with the business community.

**Student Welfare**

The Benevolent Society and the Centre for Positive Psychology and Education, University of Western Sydney completed a three year research study with our students to measure a range of variables that contribute to social capital outcomes of students as well as education, health, and wellbeing outcomes.

The findings showed that social capital is a multidimensional and measurable factor that has many positive associations with student well-being. The results of the study suggest that social capital may indeed be a protective factor for student well-being. The study found that at this school families, friendship, neighbour and community social capital were positively and significantly related to the students’ sense of belonging to the school and community. Stronger connections were found with belonging to school than community and, therefore, the notion of belonging to school should continue to be fostered among students for their well-being. Additionally, these findings show that social capital at the community level can exert a strong influence on desired student outcomes despite the prevalent belief that family and peer relations are the most influential at this developmental stage.

Trained Peer Mediators have continued to support younger peers resolve conflict and have gained skills in communication, mediation and conflict resolution.

Year 10 student volunteers participated in TAFE training to become Peer Tutor Reading mentors. The trained mentors worked very successfully with selected Year 7 students to enhance their reading and comprehension skills.

**Year 10 Peer Reading Tutors**

The school accessed and coordinated a number of additional programs designed to support students, enhance their self-esteem and engage them positively in their learning. Thirteen students were involved in the Youth Connections Program which provided one-on-one mentoring and an action plan to address identified barriers to success at school including: stress management; positive behaviours; goal setting; self-esteem building; positive body image; anger management; study skills; resume writing and job seeking skills; self-care strategies and time management.

The Ronald McDonald Learning program provided 40 hours of one-on-one tutoring for numeracy and literacy catch up for 2 students who had experienced long absences due to hospitalisation. A number of students participated in The Stewart House Program which provided enrichment and self-esteem building activities.

New health care programs were introduced in 2013 to benefit the wellbeing of our students. The Eye Care Program involved consultations and screenings by an optometrist for 465 students, of which 121 students required vision follow up including glasses or upgrade of current prescriptions. The Dental Care Program involved free consultations and dental assessments for 224 students.

All Year 11 and 12 students attended Study Skills workshops to develop strategies for improved...
exam performance, time management, effective revision and goal setting.

Several students were awarded Bankstown City Council Youth Awards for their commitment to and contribution to their local community.

Recipients of Bankstown City Council Youth Awards

School planning and evaluation 2012—2014

School evaluation processes
Birrong Girls High School conducts regular evaluations to support the effective implementation of the school plan. The processes used include:

- Analysis of student performance data in HSC, NAPLAN and attendance
- Analysis of data collated from staff, student and parent surveys
- Analysis of teacher professional learning records
- Regular faculty reviews and program evaluations

School planning 2012—2014: progress in 2013

School priority 1

Literacy and numeracy

Outcomes from 2012–2014

- Strong growth in literacy and numeracy achievement from Year 7 to 9 for every student in NAPLAN

- Reduced gap in mean literacy and numeracy achievement between school’s students and state cohorts

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:

- Year 9 2013 are 21 scale scores above the state growth in reading and 70.2% showed greater than or equal to expected growth in reading. Year 9 students have improved by average of 15 scale score points in reading from Year 9 2012
- 53.7% of Year 9 students showed greater than or equal to expected growth in grammar and punctuation
- 65% of Year 9 students showed greater than or equal to expected growth in numeracy
- The gap in mean literacy and numeracy achievement between our Year 7 students in 2011 and their state cohorts was reduced in all components of numeracy and literacy (except grammar and punctuation) by Year 9 in 2013

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014

- Targeted TPL, using flexible arrangements and structures including:
  - university partnerships; and
  - the school-based Learn, Apply, Tell and Embed (LATE) after-hours TPL model, for faculty and team groups to enhance student achievement in literacy and numeracy by building capacity in: SMART2; literacy strategies; numeracy strategies; ICT skills; QT framework etc.
- Targeted TPL, using regional and state opportunities, that focus on literacy and numeracy
- Targeted class structures to support intervention for identified students in Stages 4and5 (FTE 0.8)
- Employment of L&S Teacher (numeraly specialist) to support identified students in Stages 4and5
- Employment of L&S Teacher (literacy specialist) to support identified students in Stages 4and5
- Whole-school reading strategy implemented to support improved literacy outcomes in Years 7-10
- Whole-school numeracy strategy implemented to support improved numeracy outcomes in Years 7-10
School priority 2

Student Engagement and Attainment

Outcomes from 2012–2014

- Increased proportion of students completing Year 12 or recognised vocational training pathway
- Enhanced student achievement in HSC
- Improved learning outcomes of Aboriginal students

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:

- Year 11 - 74.5% of students achieved preliminary course outcomes; 9% transitioned to TAFE; 4% transitioned to work
- 100% Year 12 2013 candidates achieved HSC course outcomes; 5% transitioned to recognised vocational pathway
- Attendance plans in place for students at risk
- Individual transition plans in place for students at risk
- 74.5% of students retained from Year 10 2011 to Year 12 2013 and 6.5% of students from Year 10 2011 enrolled in Stage 6 in other schools
- When the Year 12 HSC results of 2013 are compared with those achieved by the same students in the 2011 SC, the average growth or value-added achieved by Birrong Girls was 5.9 points higher than the state level for similar ability students

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

- Employment of an early intervention teacher (FTE .5) to provide personalised support for at risk and under-performing students by liaising with students, parents, staff, counsellor and outside agencies and monitor N award warning letters, interviews and counselling
- Coordinated strategic plan implemented that incorporates ‘catch up’ tuition to support students at risk of under achieving in Stage 5 and students at risk of not meeting Stages 5-6 outcomes and/or achieving Band 1 in HSC examinations

School priority 3

Leadership and Management

Outcomes from 2012–2014

- Expanded school leadership capacity for school improvement
- Strengthened teacher capacity to improve student learning outcomes
- Enhanced community engagement to improve student learning outcomes.

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:

- 86% of staff described their dedicated Teacher professional learning period as a highly effective means of supporting their development
- 90% of teachers used the school-based Learn, Apply, Tell and Embed (LATE) after-hours model of Teacher Professional Learning to support improvement in teaching practices and leadership capacity
- 38% improvement in parent participation rate at P and C meetings in Terms 1-3 in 2013 compared with the same time 2012 and 12% improvement in parent participation in Terms 1 and 2 2013 parent/teacher evening compared with the same time 2012

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

- A continuation of our established academic partnership with the Faculty of Education at Newcastle University
- Involvement of the University’s Quality Teaching Team in planning and providing TPL in the QT Framework
- Expansion of teacher post-graduate scholarship initiatives to enhance quality classroom practice, deep curriculum knowledge and leadership capacity
- Encouragement of greater community and business involvement through ABCN, Bankstown City Council, AECG, school’s
Business Brunch and establishment of other initiatives
• Development of improved forms of feedback on school performance from the school community through parent forums, surveys, P and C meetings, parent/teacher interaction etc.

School priority 4

Curriculum and Assessment

Outcomes for 2012–2014
• Enhanced teacher preparedness for implementation of Australian Curriculum
• Enhanced access to digital educational resources for teaching, learning and for professional learning
• Improved curriculum delivery through regular review and evaluation

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:
• English, Mathematics, Science, History KLAs prepared for implementation of Australian Curriculum
• History and PE faculty evaluations conducted and included parent, staff and student participation through surveys and focus groups
• KLAs implement quality teaching and learning programs and assessment practices
• Staff and student surveys indicated students are satisfied with ICT access and utilise ICT effectively for learning

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:
• Undertake Mathematics, Science and ESL evaluations as part of school’s faculty evaluation cycle
• Review and evaluate teaching and learning programs and assessment practices
• Enhance student access to ICT for learning
• Expand sustainable technology based infrastructure – cabling, data projectors, laptops, interactive whiteboards, wireless connectivity and remote access
• Develop teacher capacity in the use of ICT, especially IWBs, DER laptops and remote access, for teaching and learning through enhanced TPL and access to resources

Professional learning

Teacher professional learning priorities are aligned to the school plan and improving student performance and well-being. Teacher professional learning included school based professional learning workshops and training and development courses operated by DEC, universities, approved providers and private companies.

The main priorities for professional learning were: improved student achievement in literacy, numeracy, HSC results; student engagement and retention; teacher quality and connected learning. All staff participated in professional learning activities, the average expenditure being $1500 per teacher.

An additional 10% of staff completed the course ‘Teaching English Language Learners’ to support teachers in providing innovative and tailored learning opportunities for students with Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE). As a result, 75% of staff now have gained an accreditation in this course.

Eight quality teaching mentors were appointed to support teacher professional learning at the faculty level and developed their leadership capacity in this process. Results from a staff survey conducted in June identified strong support for the program with 73% staff rating the program positively.

English, Mathematics, Science and History faculties used the knowledge and understandings gained from workshops and forums run by DEC, BOS and professional associations to develop stage four and five teaching and learning programs in preparation for the implementation of the Australian curriculum in 2014.

The successful academic partnership with the Faculty of Education at Newcastle University, in its fourth year, focused on lesson evaluation with staff working in cross-curricular teams to code lessons using the Quality Teaching Framework. As a result of the work with a university academic, teachers reported that they had gained a deeper understanding of the
application of the QT framework for effective classroom practice. 85% of staff have now been part of the university partnership. All staff involved positively evaluated the opportunity to work with university partners throughout the year.

Early career teachers participated in regional and school based induction programs which prepared them well to meet the demands of the Institute of Teachers as well as respond to school based issues. Three early career teachers were accredited at the proficient level with the Institute of Teachers.

Parent/caregiver, student, and teacher satisfaction

In 2013, the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school. Their responses are presented below.

Year 12 students, using an online survey, described their satisfaction with the school and the programs offered and indicated that the following aspects of quality teaching in rank order were demonstrated highly by their teachers:

a. enthusiastic teachers who create a climate whereby learning is purposeful and relevant;

b. teachers who establish positive relationships with students and know, respect and understand students

c. teachers who keep interruptions and distractions to a minimum

d. teachers who encourage active involvement of students in decisions and choices about their own learning and assessment activities

e. teachers with a clear focus on learning and the provision of constructive feedback that provides accurate information on progress

These results provide a direct correlation with the results of the 2012 Year 12 cohort, indicating that the school has maintained its strong focus on quality teaching and learning and that teachers continue to provide relevant learning experiences in a dynamic, positive learning environment which is underpinned by high expectations and high support.

Exit surveys taken by graduating Year 12 students and all students who ‘sign out’ of the school to relocate to other areas/schools, enrol in TAFE or take up employment opportunities, overwhelmingly endorse the school’s supportive environment, the focus on literacy, the opportunities provided, the positive relationships between teachers and students and the willingness of teachers to assist students with their learning.

Responses to the School Effectiveness Survey, undertaken by all teachers in March 2013 indicated strong support for the school’s shared vision and goals with 94% of respondents endorsing the school’s firm and purposeful leadership. All respondents rated the focus on teaching and learning highly, particularly in terms of the maximisation of learning time, academic emphasis and focus on achievement. Teachers also affirmed the value the school placed on high expectations: 93% of respondents indicating that high expectations provided intellectual challenge for students and that these expectations were effectively communicated across the school.

Teacher evaluations of the University of Newcastle program that focused on quality teaching were extremely positive. Teachers valued the opportunity to work with a university academic to evaluate classroom practice and strengthen quality teaching practices. There was great support for the partnership with staff recommending that it continue in 2014.

Parents are invited to provide their opinions about the school by participating in discussions at the regular P and C meetings and via anonymous surveys, conducted at the parent-teacher evenings held in March and June each year.
These surveys demonstrated the need to communicate with parents using a variety of means including the school’s website, the SMS text messaging system and the Birrong Bulletin. 98% of parents indicated that they were well-informed about school activities. Overwhelmingly, the parent responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the quality, dedication, caring attitude and focus on achievement of the teachers and the safe and supportive learning environment.

The Quality of School Life (QSL) survey in June indicated a very high level of parent satisfaction with most dimensions of school community engagement; 100% of parents surveyed indicated that they felt very welcome in the school and believed that the school provides helpful information about their daughters’ progress. 98% of parents indicated that teachers cared for their daughters and provided a stimulating and challenging learning environment and noted that the school was always looking for ways to improve its practices. 96% endorsed the school’s aim of improving the quality of learning and teaching and supporting all students in fulfilling their potential. The vast majority of respondents (95%) indicated that the school takes their concerns seriously, and 91% recognised the school’s efforts to encourage parents to participate in school decision making processes.

Program evaluations

NSW public schools conduct evaluations to support the effective implementation of the school plan. In 2013 our school carried out evaluation of:

- the teaching of numeracy in PDHPE, and
- the teaching of writing in History.

The Teaching of Numeracy in PDHPE

Background

Numeracy is the ability to use effectively the mathematics required to meet the general demands of life at home, at school and at work, and for participation in the community. To be successful in PDHPE students need subject specific numeracy skills. PDHPE teachers recognised the need to identify the specific numeracy skills required for Year 8 students to achieve syllabus outcomes and to teach these skills explicitly.

Findings and Conclusions

SMART data item analysis for Year 7 students in the numeracy component of the 2012 NAPLAN showed that there was a large gap between the school average and the state average in questions based on fractions, decimals and percentages.

A parent survey showed strong support for number strategies to be taught in PDHPE.

PDHPE teachers worked collegially with their faculty based Quality Teaching Mentor and collaborated with mathematics teacher colleagues to develop innovative numeracy strategies during structured professional learning sessions. These strategies were taught during both theoretical and practical classes to Year 8 students.

Findings and conclusions

Year 8 PDHPE students showed a significant improvement in numeracy test scores following the implementation of the numeracy strategies into classroom practice; there was a 24% improvement in the number of students scoring above 70% in the post-test and a 9% reduction in the number of students who scored below 50%.

In the students’ survey 72% of students commented positively about their learning experiences and their improved ability to solve number problems in PDHPE.

The teacher survey indicated that all staff were very positive about the project; they reported increased confidence in their ability to understand and use number strategies themselves and to teach these strategies to their Year 8 students.
Future Directions

The PDHPE faculty will continue to develop and implement numeracy strategies relevant to their planned units of work. They will focus on those strategies that are best suited to the practical context of games and outdoor activities. There is a keen interest amongst the PDHPE staff to continue to collaborate with mathematics teachers to develop greater knowledge and skills to deliver relevant numeracy skills in PDHPE.

The Teaching of Writing in History

Background

Improvement in literacy from Year 7 to 9 is a key target in the School Plan. Analysis of NAPLAN data from 2012 indicated that many students were below standard in writing skills. Teachers from the History faculty used action research to evaluate the efficacy of explicit teaching strategies implemented to improve the writing skills of Year 9 students. The research incorporated teacher professional learning of explicit strategies to teach writing, including verbal and written feedback, use of scaffolds and explicit marking criteria, student self-reflection and task repetition. Pre and post testing of the Year 9 students’ writing skills and parent, student and teacher surveys were used to assess the efficacy of these strategies.

Findings and conclusions

Post testing showed improvement in Year 9 students’ average writing scores on a History assessment task with 68% improving their individual scores following verbal and written teacher feedback, scaffolding, marking criteria and the opportunity to repeat the task.

Survey results indicated that students and parents, while acknowledging the value and importance of writing for historical purposes, recognised a need for ongoing use of explicit marking criteria and increased teacher feedback to improve extended responses written by students.

Teachers indicated that student performance on writing extended responses was enhanced following the provision of model responses, effective feedback, explicit marking criteria and the opportunity for task repetition.

Future directions

The major recommendations from the evaluation are for History teachers to:

- increase their use of model responses and verbal feedback on extended response tasks
- provide opportunities for students to reflect on their performance and act on teacher feedback by repeating the task
- trial marking criteria that incorporate performance bands and essential item checklists.

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.

- Margaret Fletcher, Deputy Principal
- Sandra Crossan, Deputy Principal
- Melinda Feld, Head Teacher History/LOTE
- Kelly Andrews, Head Teacher English
- Chris Lord, Head Teacher PDHPE
- Iman Sayed Mahmoud, Captain
- Christina Le, Vice-Captain
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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: