Annual Report – 2013
MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

Principal

St. Gabriel’s has undergone significant growth over the past 4 years. Student enrolment numbers have increased from 19 in 2009 to 69 commencing in 2013. Obviously there has also been a growth in staff numbers to accommodate such change. With the change from Hearing Impairment to a wider range of disabilities and enrolment demand much has had to change. Most staff members are new, programs have had to be developed, school management systems have had to be established. While the school boasts 90 years of operation in many respects it is a new establishment. The changes also demand that energy be put into bedding down and deepening the culture.

St. Gabriel’s as it is today is gaining a reputation as a school that is educationally sound, with extremely strong pastoral care and a committed, enthusiastic community. Such a transformation that St. Gabriel’s has experienced has been both challenging and extremely rewarding. Rarely as Principals are we given the opportunity to “start fresh”! For all of us who have been part of the journey it has been a privilege. Combining today’s exciting creative energy with the strongest of foundations, laid by the very first Christian Brothers, St. Gabriel’s future is assured.

Board of ERSES (Edmund Rice Special Education Services)

The ERSES Board has responsibility for both St. Gabriel’s and St. Edmund’s in Wahroonga. Its role is to support the Principal who also has responsibility for both schools and is accountable to Edmund Rice Education Australia, EREA. The membership of the Board draws on expertise across education, legal and business professions. The major work of the board is primarily to do with School Strategic planning, mission and finance. Over the past five years much consideration has been given to shaping up St. Gabriel’s as it is today. Again for the Board the 90th Anniversary in 2012 marked a turning point where the past and present came together ensuring a cohesive, dynamic future. Much appreciation must be extended to Board members who voluntarily and most generously give of their time and wisdom.

SCHOOL PROFILE

St. Gabriel’s is a K-6 school providing educational programs for children with hearing impairment and other special needs. It has operated on the Castle Hill site since 1922 and is an independent Catholic school in the tradition of Edmund Rice. St. Gabriel’s is a member of Edmund Rice Special Education Services.

St. Gabriel’s School for Students with Hearing Impairment and other Special Needs is registered and accredited by the Board of Studies (New South Wales) as an independent primary school and as a Special School conducted by Edmund Rice Education Australia. In the course of 2007, the Christian Brothers of Oceania Province established Edmund Rice
Education Australia (EREA) which administers all Christian Brothers schools throughout Australia. We endeavour to provide our students with the opportunity to access and participate in the full range of educational opportunities available to their typically developing peers. In addition we offer intensive programs to develop the communication, literacy and social skills of our students.

Five years ago St. Gabriel’s underwent significant changes which saw the closure of programs and services primarily concerned with Hearing Impairment. The widening of the enrolment criteria to include students with a wide range of disabilities has required that programs and strategies be redeveloped with the employment of additional staff with special education qualifications. Community response to the changes has been very positive with a significant demand for enrolment and a higher local school profile and reputation. Parent satisfaction is extremely high. Projected maximum enrolment will be nearing 80 students by the start of 2015. Numbers for the start of 2013 were 59 with a projected enrolment of 70 for 2014. This has been an exciting journey for those involved and there is much satisfaction in how the school is developing.

**NAPLAN TEST RESULTS**

In 2013, one Year 3 student participated in the NAPLAN testing and 2 Year 5 students participated. Year 3 results were below the national benchmarks in all tests while in Year 5 one student achieved scores in Band 4 for Numeracy and Reading and the other student achieved between Band 3 and Band 6 for all tests. Exemption on the basis of disability was granted for 9 of our primary students.

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER STANDARDS**

Three staff members participated in EREA formation programs throughout the year and 2 attended the EREA Women in Leadership Conference in Melbourne. The leadership team attended the Principal’s, Deputy’s and Business Manager’s National Conferences and the school celebrated its accreditation as a school in the Edmund Rice Tradition with a formal Assembly.

Two teachers were awarded Professional Competence from the NSW Institute of Teachers.

Professional Learning foci for the 2013 year were on developing deeper curriculum knowledge amongst staff, especially in understanding and piloting aspects of the new national curriculum in English. Professional Learning also focussed on first aid (anaphylaxis, epilepsy and asthma), elaboration of the KidsMatter framework across the school in Social Emotional Learning programs, development of a PDH program under the Live Life Well at School framework and understanding the needs of specific populations of the school (children with ASD and with Down Syndrome).
Workforce Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Full time Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Support Staff</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR/Fundraising</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21.9</td>
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Teacher Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduates in Teaching or Special Education</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate Diploma in Education/Teaching</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate Certificate in Special Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate Certificate in Gifted Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree in Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree in Special Education</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

All learning support staff (7) hold a Teacher’s Aide Special Certificate 3 qualification.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Student attendance data is collected daily and recorded manually by each classroom teacher and kept in office files at the end of each school year. For the DEEWR Student Attendance Data Collection period, recorded February to June 2013, an attendance figure of 92.08% was recorded.

POST SCHOOL DESTINATIONS

In 2013, one student left the school in April for home schooling, two went to other specialist educational settings, three into mainstream (Years 1, 2 and 5) at the end of the year and three graduated from Year 6 at the end of the year, when a graduation ceremony was held.

ENROLMENT POLICIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT BODY

St. Gabriel’s is a Catholic, primary, co-educational, independent, special school. It caters for students who have a diagnosed disability which meets the requirement for Government Funding. The programs are designed to cater for students with intellectual disability in the mild to moderate range, hearing impairment and autism also in the mild to moderate range. Many students present with more than one disability.
The program offered has a strong social basis as opposed to therapy type intervention. Where possible some students will spend one to two years at St. Gabriel’s prior to transitioning into a mainstream school.

School Student Enrolments

Range of Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairment only</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairment and physical/intellectual disability</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairment and autism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and intellectual disability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism and/or intellectual disability</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down Syndrome</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age in years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCHOOL POLICIES: STUDENT WELFARE, DISCIPLINE AND COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

Student wellbeing at St. Gabriel’s is considered to be of the highest priority; it is our belief that positive self-esteem and confidence contribute to a student’s ability to develop and maintain appropriate behaviour. If our students are to live satisfying, purposeful lives in which they are able to sustain authentic relationships, behaviours that prevent this happening must be addressed. Such behaviours include those which: prevent the student or others from learning, are physically or emotionally destructive to self or others and/or are not conducive to good relationships and social acceptance. Written copies of the school policies for student management, welfare and discipline are available from the school office on request.

In keeping with our belief that parents and the school are in partnership, the staff encourage open and ongoing communication between home and school. Procedures are in place for parents to communicate their concerns or complaints. Parents have ready access to staff and are encouraged to contribute to the development and modification of their child’s individual education plan and to meet with teachers and or the principal should matters of concern arise. A written copy of school policies is available from the school office on request.
SCHOOL DETERMINED IMPROVEMENT TARGETS

- **Mission and Identity:** to provide a curriculum and structure, within which students and staff feel valued, supported in their relationships with one another and God.
  1. Establish a formal structure around Mission through the creation of a co-ordinator role.
  2. Develop further the relationship between the local Parish and the school

- **Leadership and Innovation:** to develop effective and creative management and organisational structures and opportunities that ensure that dynamic, best practice initiatives around education, social and community relationships and personal achievement are possible.
  1. Establish an executive structure to better support the Head of Principal.

- **Teaching and Learning:** to provide best practice teaching and learning, across all areas of school life including individualised intervention as well as a differentiated Board of Studies/National Curriculum.
  1. Use a consistent program proforma for programming across all classes e.g. Program Builder
  2. Establish an implementation timeline for implementing the National English curriculum

- **Pastoral Care and Wellbeing:** for students, families and staff to feel confident that school systems and approaches support them in their feelings of well-being and confidence and which will enhance their sense of belonging and success.
  1. Review and implement student wellbeing program eg Kids Safe/KidsMatter and Live Life Well at School.

INITIATIVES PROMOTING RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

In 2013, St. Gabriel's continued to be involved in national/state training in the KidsMatter Primary framework supporting social-emotional learning for staff, students and families. Positive Behaviour Support, Peer Support, Parent evenings and celebrations throughout the year have fit beautifully under the KidsMatter Framework.

Design 2 Shine is a program run on site at St. Gabriel's with a Year 4 class from St. Bernadette's School and 20 Year 9 students from Gilroy College. The focus for 2013 was on PDPHE projects over 2 days. Children with and without disability worked side by side and presented their final projects to the whole community at a presentation day in Terms 2, 3 & 4.

Access All Areas Film Festival was held at St. Gabriel's, in celebration of the National Day for people with Disability.

A Senior class participated in the Country Women’s Association Country Projects, with a study of Morocco and presentation of posters to the community group later in the year.

Many students from 9 separate high schools and 7 universities were welcomed into the school in 2013, to participate in practicum sessions, community service and other service learning programmes. Each of these students was taken through an induction about disability and had the opportunity to work closely with our students.

**PARENT, STUDENT AND TEACHER SATISFACTION**

Parents are intimately involved in their child’s learning from the time they are enrolled at St. Gabriel’s. Parents are valued as true partners in their child’s education. A team approach is continued throughout the school programs through bi-annual meetings with families to identify each student’s achievements and to set learning goals for the following semester. Parents are kept informed of happenings in the classroom via a communication book which goes home with each student daily. Meetings with teaching staff can be scheduled at any time throughout the school year. Any concerns can be dealt with in a timely, personal manner with either the Head of Campus or Principal.

Parents seek opportunities to be involved in the school across educational, social and fundraising initiatives. The parent group though informal is active in its attempts to ensure the community is supportive and inclusive. A parent joined the ERSES Board this year and there was the establishment of an informal but active Parent Group.

The Parent Group organised a second ‘Sunday Spin’ and 2 parents and 2 staff members participated in a new fundraiser, the Coleman and Greig Executive Challenge.

Many families attended the major fundraiser, Gift of the Gab and bought Entertainment Books.

Due to the relatively small number of staff – high levels of collaboration, shared problem solving and celebration of successes ensure staff feel empowered and deeply connected to the school. One member of staff resigned for family reasons in 2013 however St. Gabriel’s is becoming an employer of choice. The school has extremely high staff retention rates. Other than retirement it is rare that a staff member leaves.

Staff are extremely supportive of the fundraising program, they are involved in many student activities outside school hours and programs. They have access to the Principal should they have concerns. Staff are able to access counselling paid for by the school should the need arise. The school works with the Catholic Commission for Employment Relations on addressing staff issues. Relationship between the Teachers’ Union and the School and EREA are positive.
SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
2013 School Year – Statement of Comprehensive Income & Expenditure

- Tuition: 6%
- C'wealth Grants - per capita: 17%
- C'wealth Grants - other: 20%
- State Grants - per capita: 6%
- State Grants - other: 26%
- Donations: 2%
- Interest Received: 15%
- Fundraising & Sundry: 8%

Expenses:
- Salaries & Wages: 82%
- Subject Expenses: 2%
- Admin Expenses: 4%
- Insurance & Workcover: 1%
- Levies: 2%
- Maintenance: 5%
- Depreciation: 3%
- Sundry Expenses: 1%