2010 Annual School Report
Vacy Public School

NSW Public Schools – Leading the way
Our school at a glance

Students
At Vacy Public School our values focus is on respect, responsibility, tolerance, service and community. In our students, our success is measured by the ways in which these values epitomize our school. When visitors come to Vacy Public School, they see these values in action through our students.

Our students enjoy an outstanding learning climate. Rather than staff dealing with behavioural issues that disrupt learning, through their actions and enthusiasm, our students enhance learning. In this way, a very high percentage of time in class is spent on the business of learning rather than management and it has brought great benefits.

In 2010, 86 students were enrolled at Vacy Public. Each of them adds value to our school and contributes to our school climate and culture in their own way. Our leadership program increases the opportunities students have to make a concrete and lasting contribution and each year students step up to ‘fill the gap’ left by our graduating students.

Staff
The school community of Vacy Public is fortunate to have a committed, professional staff whose enthusiasm for their craft and for the students they teach is of the highest order. In 2010, our staff was challenged by some severe health issues, leaving the school at some stages with no permanent staff in attendance. These challenges brought the staff together in support of each other and it was with great satisfaction that we finished the school year with everyone healthy and well.

Even through these challenges, our staff again performed at a very high level. We received great support from casual staff Belinda Turner and Jenny Freeman whose efforts in keeping things running smoothly was terrific under much duress.

As can been seen through the results gained again this year, the organization and expertise of our permanent teachers in Karen Fonti, Maree Greaves and Alicia Fay, along with their teaching colleagues Sally Rogers, Peter Lascelles and Pam Shiplee, through the turmoil and the trauma, is testament to their quality as teachers and a staff together. They deserve the results gained and we look forward to working together again next year.

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

Significant programs and initiatives
Over the past three years, changes have been made in our delivery structures in all Key Learning Areas that have seen greater alignment in school programs and strategies. As a small school, our staff is constantly involved in professional discussion regarding programs and learning activities that are aligned closely between classes. Staff awareness of what goes on in other classrooms is high and interaction and collaboration between staff and students is constant. Our realignment of our timetable to include a literacy session, a maths session and a sciences/arts session has promoted the development of new programs. The learning sequence undertaken by students is explicit but also allows for autonomy of staff in adding variety to the curriculum. In this way a varied and interesting curriculum is presented that keeps the interest of our students.

Our major focus continues to be in capacity building within our student body. Expectations are high at Vacy Public for student involvement and service to the school and each other. Our leadership program develops some terrific contributors to our school and the everyday school climate is evidence of the success of this program. Our senior students lead the school in every respect and their graduation leaves a hole in our school fabric every year, a hole filled, though, by the next group of leaders coming through.

Student achievement in 2010
Student achievement in NAPLAN 2010 was very pleasing with the most notable feature being the value-added data for students progressing from Year 3 to Year 5. Vacy Public led the district in almost every aspect of value-added data in 2010 and, whilst this trend has been evident in previous years, the performance of our students in the senior years was outstanding.

Our good school performance is the result of the strong start provided through our infants’ grades and the quality of the teaching and program in the primary years. In 2010, every student who applied for the high school enrichment class gained admission, illustrating the preparedness for high school of our senior students.

Again this year, our NAPLAN results are strongest in Numeracy across both grades with some strong individual performances coming through. In Writing, our students showed the need for greater attention but were still performing at very close to state and region average. Overall, our results in such a disrupted year were very, very pleasing.
Messages

Principal’s message

When I came to Vacy Public School in 1998, I had a vision of what I wanted the school to be. In the intervening years, with the assistance of staff, students, parents and community members, this vision has been altered, broken down, re-established and every-changing but when I talk about Vacy Public with ‘outsiders’ I always describe it as ‘paradise’. It has its challenges and in many ways is a ‘tough’ school but I have been blessed with a terrific staff, enthusiastic students and a supportive school community who have ridden the hills and valleys along with me to produce the school we have today.

For me, our school is outstanding. There are always things we can do better but I think that many things we do bring great benefits to our students and local community and I can say with the utmost confidence that the education provided at Vacy Public School is a very, very good one.

In 2010 we have continued to grow. Our new buildings have been completed and the playground re-development continues but we can boast an outstanding education environment. The new classroom/library will be used as a double classroom in 2011 due to the small Kindergarten intake and will provide greater flexibility for instruction in the early years of school. The refurbishment of our permanent classrooms has been completed and the changes now begin outside with an EcoGrant of $2500, along with support from the P&C with seating, to provide for a new eating/environmental studies area. An additional $30000 has been received through the Premier’s Sporting Challenge Grants that will see the establishment of a multi-purpose court using artificial grass in 2011. All in all, we will see what amounts to a whole new school by year’s end. This will be a terrific resource for our school community and will provide a great educational experience for our local students.

It is a privilege to be the principal of Vacy Public School, an outstanding public school, and I thank everyone for their support through what has been a difficult, but ultimately, satisfying year.

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.

Kevin Greaves (principal)

P & C message

2010 has been a very exciting year for Vacy Public School P&C which saw the construction of a new girls’ toilet block for which the P&C had lobbied hard to achieve.

Along with the toilet block the completion of the new class rooms, provided for by the BER program, has delivered the school a much more pleasant learning environment that the school community can be proud to showcase to visitors.

The P&C also provided 3 aluminium picnic tables (for students to eat their meals), a Smart Board, subsidized the Year 5-6 camp and provided numerous other learning aids.

During 2010 the P&C also obtained a Sustainable Schools grant of $2500 to plant a bush tucker garden. This will be completed during 2011 and will be the start of a beautification program of the school grounds damaged by the BER works.

The P&C also continues to provide a successful Before & After School Care (BASC) facility along with providing a canteen 2 days a week.

Providing these valuable resources for the children has involved a number of fund raising events. Thanks must go to the parents, teachers, staff, grandparents, pupils and community members who have manned, conducted or purchased from, Mothers/Fathers Day stalls, the Cutting Day, the Vacy Country Carnival, Bunnings BBQ, the canteen and a chocolate drive.

The only disappointing note has been the poor parent attendance at P&C meetings. The P&C is much more than fundraising and it is at these meeting that valuable and constructive input can be made into the learning environment of students. The Vacy P&C has a very good working relationship with teachers & staff & it would be a shame to lose this along with our canteen & BASC.

In 2011 the P&C looks forward to completing the bush tucker area as well as resourcing the library to create a modern learning facility.

I have enjoyed my year as president of the P&C and it gives me much pride in what our school community has achieved in the last 12 months.

David Williams (P&C president 2010)
Student representative’s message

At Vacy Public School we are part of a close, friendly environment where academic, sporting and community experience is an integral part of our education.

Vacy School is a wonderful place for all of us to learn. We are lucky enough to have great teachers that help us to strive to achieve the best we can in all that we do. They provide us with specialized programs such as our Leadership Program, which enables us to gain the life skills we need for the future as well as developing our self-confidence. We think that the best thing about our school is that it is big enough so that everyone gets a go, yet small enough that nobody misses out and we are all lucky enough to be able to be involved in many activities that most other schools are unable to experience.

Jarrod Hughes and Taylor Hack (captains 2011)

School context

Student information

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all students must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Student enrolment profile

Our enrolment profile continues to grow in small increments. In 2010 we started the year with 94 students, our biggest initial enrolment ever, but had some families move away from Vacy through the year and enrolments for 2011 are expected to be slightly lower.

The new developments within a kilometre of the school have the potential to add significantly to our student enrolments over the next few years and have already added new enrolments for the 2012 school year.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>92.1</td>
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</table>
Management of non-attendance

In 2011, Vacy Public School will implement the full Sentral software suite including ‘WebAttend’, an attendance management tool that will provide greater monitoring of student attendance and follow-up of absences.

Class sizes

In March 2003 the Government announced its commitment to publish primary class sizes in annual school reports in order to provide parents with as much local information as possible.

The following table shows our class sizes as reported at the 2010 class size audit conducted on Wednesday 17 March 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roll Class</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total per Year</th>
<th>Total in Class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KINDER</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/3/4</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/3/4</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>2/3/4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>4/5/6</td>
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<td>4/5/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/5/6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
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</table>

Structure of classes

Classes in 2010 include two multi-grade classes due to the distribution of students in Years 2 to 6. With the construction of the new classrooms forcing the closing of another, it was decided to house a small Kinder class in the old library area for 2010. This class of 14 students forced numbers in the upper grades higher but within manageable limits. It continued the 2-3-4 and 4-5-6 structure of last year and again results showed the students adapted well to the class placements and, although conditions were cramped for the year, the school climate was again very positive and the students enjoyed their classes very much.

Staff information

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all staff must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Our staffing levels remained at the same as they have for the previous few years with the major change being the long-term illnesses that afflicted Mr. Lascelles and Mrs. Fonti and the absences for surgery for Mr. Greaves. This necessitated the addition of Mrs. Belinda Turner and Mrs. Jenny Freeman for various times through the year. The professionalism of the entire staff and the support they showed each other through some extremely difficult times was a credit to them and allowed our students the chance to progress through the year almost as normal.

Staff establishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Principal(s)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal(s)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teachers</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher of Emotional Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher of Mild Intellectual Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher of Reading Recovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support Teacher Learning Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Librarian</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of ESL</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>16 days</td>
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</table>

The National Education Agreement requires schools to report on Indigenous composition of their workforce. Vacy Public School has no staff members who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Staff retention

The school retained 100% of staff from 2009. Two teachers were required through the year to address long-term absence through illness and we welcomed back Ms. Fay from maternity leave on a part-time basis.

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>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>50</td>
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</table>
Financial summary

This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of financial summary</th>
<th>30/11/2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
<td>27219.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
<td>73960.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>77992.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust receipts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total income</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching &amp; learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key learning areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excursions</td>
<td>14641.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extracurricular dissections</td>
<td>4514.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>552.15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Training &amp; development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
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<td>Casual relief teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; office</td>
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<tr>
<td>School-operated canteen</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Utilities</strong></td>
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<td>Maintenance</td>
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<td><strong>Total expenditure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Balance carried forward</strong></td>
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</table>

Our balance carried forward into the 2011 school year is much greater than usual due to a high amount of money retained in tied funds as well as a P&C contribution of over $6000 towards a new interactive whiteboard. The tied funds of $50236.90, as well as the P&C donation, will be expended fully in the first semester of the 2011 school year on salaries, the whiteboard and the redevelopment of the multi-purpose court. The balance of funds actually available is approximately $15000 for the 2011 school year.

A full copy of the school’s 2010 financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the School Council and/or the parent body. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

School performance 2010

At Vacy Public School, our priority is to provide for our students a total educational experience incorporating excellent learning programs, a strong support and social structure, opportunities for pursuit of interests and a wide range of extracurricular activities. As a small school, our great advantage is that every student has the opportunity to be involved in every activity. This brings great benefits to our students and great opportunities for involvement, in turn promoting a great sense of belonging and ownership. We are proud of our school and of the achievements of our students, only some of which are highlighted below.

Achievements

Arts

The Arts have been a focus of program and opportunity development over the past two years and, in addition to the restructure of our classroom learning programs, highlights in 2010 have been:

- The exhibition of student work at Gresford Show and the ensuing success of a small number of students in their categories;
- The start of music lessons through the tutelage of Mr. Kevin Dangel who now offers guitar every Monday. Negotiations were also completed with Mr. Col Hatchman for the establishment of a drum performance group starting in 2011;
- The interschool visit by the Lane Cove Public School orchestra who performed for our students during the day and then our community that night the music of ‘Peter And The Wolf’; and
- The attendance of more than twenty students at the Gresford Arts Camp in Term 3.

Sport

Students have the opportunity, being a small school, to represent the school in a number of ways in the sporting arena. We have a proud tradition of achievement in this area and this was demonstrated in 2010 by:

- The continuation and great patronage of our Active After-school Communities Program with tennis, archery, AFL and futsal being the targeted sports in 2010;
- The success again of our small schools’ soccer knockout team who were just beaten in the
semi-final of this statewide competition, another great effort;

- Representation at regional level by individual students such as Connor McQuilliam in swimming and Emmy-Lee Warr in cross-country as well as Lleyton Lloyd representing at the state swimming carnival in events for children with disabilities, a terrific effort; and

- Many outstanding individual performances outside of school such as Egan Mastin winning the state stadium motocross series, Shelby-Lee Wintle's placing at the regional Little Athletics championships in Tamworth, Alex Rogers’ selection in the Northern NSW Football squad and subsequent selection as a ball boy at the Newcastle Jets v LA Galaxy match at Energy Australia Stadium and Brett Eyb’s selection in the zone rugby league team.

Other

We have also had many highlights in other areas, which was tremendous in a very difficult year.

We unfortunately saw the passing of ex-school captains Sam and Luke Willis as well as our oldest ex-pupil Mrs. Dorrie Brooker. All three were outstanding ambassadors and friends of our school and we were very saddened at their passing.

We also suffered many staff changes due to illness and it is terrific to see Mr. Lascelles and Mrs. Fonti healthy and happy again and it is a bonus that Mr. Greaves can see it too after his lens transplants during the year.

Through it all we also saw:

- The opening of our new canteen and COLA facility, built through the “Investing In Our Schools’ program at a cost of $70000. It is a magnificent resource for our school and provides us with a facility second-to-none in the state, especially for a school our size;

- The installation of our connected classroom and an additional interactive whiteboard sponsored by the P&C, opening up a whole new learning experience for our senior students;

- The completion of the refurbishment works in the two permanent classrooms with new storage areas, pinboards and a brand-new paint job having the classrooms looking fantastic;

- Education Week honours being presented to Dean Hallinan (student), David Williams (parent) and Kevin Greaves (staff) during the district Education Week awards;

- The holding of a successful trivia night, organized by Ms. Fay, that raised more than $1200 for the purchase of interactive software supporting infants’ reading programs;

- Our students’ participation in activities such as a school disco, a cricket and rugby league clinic, Dungog Shire’s Biggest Reading Day, the Weather Channel’s world record weather report day, the Premier’s Reading Challenge (completed by all infants’ students), the Premier’s Spelling Bee and excursions to the Young Leaders’ Conference, the Gosford Reptile Park and Canberra.

Academic

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 3: from Band 1 (lowest) to Band 6 (highest for Year 3)

Year 5: from Band 3 (lowest) to Band 8 (highest for Year 5)

Literacy – NAPLAN Year 3

![Percentage of students in bands: Year 3 reading](image-url)
Literacy results in Year 3 were slightly below the state and region average but well within the standard deviation. A small improvement in some areas will lead to dramatic improvement overall, especially when looking at areas such as spelling and grammar in which we can move large numbers of students from Bands 3 and 4 with a greater awareness of the expectations of the assessment. Writing and spelling identify as our areas of weakness this year with reading and grammar/punctuation being significantly stronger.

Numeracy – NAPLAN Year 3

Our numeracy results were quite similar to literacy with the majority of children being placed in Bands 3 and 4. Again, a small improvement will dramatically advance the results. Staff are analyzing the Year 3 results so as to address areas of learning that will most impact students’ understanding.

Literacy – NAPLAN Year 5
The Year 5 results reflect those in Year 3 although the overall performance is at a higher level. Again school strengths are in reading and grammar/punctuation whilst spelling and writing provide the challenges. In writing especially there is a large cohort of students who can move forward quickly with a better understanding of what the assessment is asking. In many cases there is not a pattern to errors, rather there seems to be a misreading or misunderstanding of the question leading to a simple mistake. That said, a greater emphasis on the structure and features of persuasive writing would bring great improvement.

Numeracy – NAPLAN Year 5

The Year 5 numeracy results are again our strongest as a school. Performance is significantly above state and region and, if the level of understanding is raised slightly at the top end of the scale, there is the opportunity for our performance to measure around Band 7 and 8 for the majority of the cohort.

Progress in literacy
It has been pleasing to see the strength of our improvement in literacy. Several years ago, grammar and punctuation was our weakest area and we have seen very solid improvement since then. Our students receive a great base for their progress in the work done in the infants' grades. It is expected that this will improve further with the new class structures opening up greater scope for advancement and improvement. Performance in spelling is still a concern and will be a focus for the 2011 school year in our planning. That said, the improvement made by our students has been outstanding and has ranked highly within our district again. In 2010 we have demonstrated the greatest improvements in many areas within our district.

**Progress in numeracy**

Progress in numeracy has been tremendous over the past few years, always placing above state and region, and showing the benefits from the explicitness of the learning programs developed by our staff.

**Minimum standards**

The Commonwealth Government sets minimum standards for reading, writing, grammar and punctuation, spelling and numeracy for years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

The performance of the students in our school in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy is compared to these minimum standards. The percentages of our students achieving at or above these standards are reported below.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Year 5 students achieving at or above minimum standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Spelling</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Punctuation and grammar</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Numeracy</strong></td>
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**Significant programs and initiatives**

Vacy Public School serves a student population almost entirely Anglo-Saxon in heritage with a small minority of students identifying as being of Aboriginal or other descent. For this reason, it is a focus at Vacy Public School to provide our students with as many multicultural experiences as possible.

We also focus very strongly on capacity building within our entire student body in leadership, service and teamwork.

**Aboriginal education**

Aboriginal perspectives are embedded within our curriculum structures through the key learning areas. We provide opportunities for all students to increase their awareness of Aboriginal culture.

To this end, we hold an annual Aboriginal cultural experience to promote aspects of Aboriginal heritage and culture our students may not be aware of. In 2011, we will be extending this through the redevelopment of our bush tucker area and investigations of natural foods and bush remedies.

**Multicultural education**

Multicultural perspectives are embedded in the key learning areas. Studies of specific countries and cultures are undertaken in the senior years and other cultural aspects, such as beliefs and celebrations, are investigated in the early years.

Additional cultural activities have also been undertaken including:

- The Year 6 Young Leaders’ Conference experience including a teppanyaki dinner and visiting Chinatown in central Sydney;
- The in-depth study of a country as part of the Country Women’s Association program; and
- The cross-cultural exchange between the students of the predominantly Asian background Lane Cove Public School on their visit to Vacy in Term 3.

**Respect and responsibility**

Our main aim as a school is to guide each student in achieving the potential they have to achieve. We focus on the idea of service – service to self in doing the things that best place each student to achieve, service to school in building together a better school for each and every student and service to community. We promote this through our leadership programs and student parliament.

**Connected learning**

In 2010 we finally had our connected classroom installed and it proved a revelation. Offering opportunities for inter-school interaction and staff professional development, it has been utilized for activities such ‘visits’ by other schools such as Epping North and also to provide face-to-face communication for staff to network with other schools. The purchase of a second interactive whiteboard enhanced services through the primary division.

A review of technology resources has identified the need for greater resources supporting literacy and over the next year we will see the establishment of a technology centre in the new library, two new interactive whiteboards for the infants’ rooms and the purchase of new technologies such as AlphaSmart computers to assist with word processing.

**Progress on 2010 targets**

**Target 1**

To facilitate a greater awareness by students of local Aboriginal history and increased opportunities to support understandings of cultural development and growth.

Achievement of this target was made more difficult through the year with changes to classes and teachers meaning some programs were in hiatus. We did make some progress though and will continue through the 2011 school year to ensure we provide a balanced, interesting and informative program promoting cultural awareness.

Our achievements include:

- Full implementation of the 2008 Aboriginal Education Policy with a review planned for 2011 to inform planning for the 2012-2014 school plan;
- A continuation of contact with Aboriginal culture through school-based and external activities for students, both of Aboriginal and other cultural descents; and
• The purchase of new teaching resources supporting the development of a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture.

**Target 2**

*To develop and implement an assessment structure that accompanies a whole school scope and sequence in literacy and to communicate this structure in full to parents.*

New technologies have ensured that we have made some good advances in this area. The new whiteboards open up new teaching methodologies and the closer working relationship between the infants’ grades has seen communication and common programs increase significantly.

Our achievements include:

• A change to the new Sentral student management and reporting system, allowing for a common framework for recording assessment data and student record keeping. This system allows for all school-based data for individual students to be retained in and retrieved from the same place by all staff;

• The development of a literacy scope and sequence across all grades, focusing specifically on writing, and the establishment of a common spelling program. This has allowed for greater movement of students in addressing their needs;

• The development of a K-6 assessment cycle and the decision to benchmark all students through the Sails assessment kit, providing a common framework for staff. Internal and external assessments are listed and known by all staff and records are now extracted quickly and kept centrally; and

• The establishment of home reading as the basis for homework across the school.

**Key evaluations**

It is a requirement for all NSW public schools to conduct at least two annual evaluations – one related to educational and management practice and the other related to curriculum. In 2010 our school carried out evaluations of our school culture (through SchoolMap) and a broader curriculum analysis with a view to development towards the 2012-2014 school plan.

**Educational and management practice**

An evaluation was undertaken to examine the area of ‘School Culture’. Through a year in which there was significant disruption, some of which happened through key external assessments such as NAPLAN and much of which impacted directly on students and staff, it was thought important that we review this area to ascertain the underlying strength of the school.

**Background**

Our school climate is a source of pride for our school as we have great facilities and staff, happy students and supportive parents. It is set up for students to achieve their potential and to support the well being of all. Our school culture is more difficult to measure. Do students, staff and community feel heard and part of the planning cycle? Is there a collaborative vision for the school? Are we working towards the same ends? The graphs below give a picture of our findings with a summary below each.

**Findings and conclusions**

It was interesting in a year of disruption and change that the only ‘rarely’ marks come through the people most affected – our students. Whilst the majority stated that they were mostly positive about the way things are travelling, there were concerns raised as to the lack of fundamental change and the school’s knowledge of student background and needs. Whether this was in response to a lot of the disruption is harder to ascertain but the two most negative responses do relate to each other and will be investigated in 2011.

On the positive side, students thought the school leaders were a positive influence on the school and were very supportive of school policies and
programs, indicating satisfaction with the experiences they gain at Vacy Public.

Staff were emphatic in their responses to five statements in particular:

- That meeting the needs of the students is their highest priority;
- That they support what is happening at the school;
- That they are proud of their school;
- That students are encouraged to achieve their best; and
- That everyone is encouraged to be a continuing learner.

The last is probably the most important aspect as it focuses on the learning of not only the students but staff and parents as well. A well-informed school community is an educated community and the staff was very positive about the communication and interaction between students, staff and parents.

Parents were quite positive too. They are supportive of what happens at the school, think the staff is professional and good at what they do and feel involved in school life, even with many unable to get to the school regularly.

Future directions

Vacy Public School is lucky in having happy, enthusiastic students, a professional and committed staff and supportive parents. Satisfaction seems high although, with the new school plan coming up in 2011, people have indicated they would like some changes. The surveys indicated that the school culture is such that suggestions would be welcomed and acted upon. The surveys also indicated a positive view of the school in the community, especially with the new facilities and structures.

Communication is the key though. It is becoming very important to have a suite of communication options, especially for parents in staying in touch with the school. 2011 will be a year to open our ears to new ideas from students, staff and parents, to take on board praise and criticisms, and to plan a future for our school that will enhance the opportunities for our students.

Curriculum

This year a broader survey was undertaken with a view to the new planning cycle. The survey was for parents only and gave the opportunity to criticize where needed, to offer new ideas and to reinforce elements of what they see as being special about our school.

Background

The three-year planning cycle drives our school improvement. It is informed by input from a variety
of sources with parents being a very important factor. In opening up the planning cycle to take advantage of these ideas, we get the opportunity to make firm good plans for our future. The survey basically asked three questions – what to STOP, START and KEEP.

Findings and conclusions

The first part of the survey invited criticism – an evaluation of things not seen as a priority. There were some surprising results:

- Homework was the most talked about topic but in almost every instance it was negative – too much and not enough time. Parents thought the home reading was valuable but basically said ‘seven hours schooling in a day is enough’;
- ‘The basics’ was next with parents wishing for stable classroom environments and learning. A focus on schoolwork and a lessening of changes and interruptions, especially from outside programs and activities, were noted as being important;
- Student welfare was also a priority, having a consistent student welfare policy that is clearly defined and sets expectations for our students; but
- It was very encouraging though to have approximately a quarter of the surveys come back to say ‘keep it up’ and expressing great satisfaction with the balance of activities provided for students.

The second question invited ideas for future development. Many focused on curriculum and programs but the majority targeted student welfare. Programs in anti-bullying, encouraging service and promoting resilience were the most popular topics.

By far the most voluminous list though was that of what people found valuable about the school. It was a terrific reinforcement of our school direction and complimented programs and policies such as tremendous facilities, a professional staff, the support throughout the school community, the caring and inclusive nature of the school, the small classes, the friendly community atmosphere and the range of programs and activities that are available within our school community.

Future directions

As a result of the findings and conclusions:

- A review of our student welfare policies will be undertaken with staff, students and parents with a view to formulating a set of policies that drives positive outcomes for our students;
- A suite of program options will be presented to staff to look at for inclusion in the 2012-2014 school plan and implementation in the years to follow; and
- Our achievements and strengths as a school will be celebrated and built upon in the next school plan.

Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction

In 2010 the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school.

Their responses are presented below.
The graphs above are a result of our annual ‘Quality Of School Life’ survey. The surveys ask a series of questions about how students feel about school – very direct, very simple. It is overwhelming how positive the surveys came out. The final graph above shows positive the responses were. It is a terrific endorsement for our school community to see how satisfied our students are with their school experience.

Professional learning
In 2010 our staff have undertaken a variety of professional development activities to improve their teaching practice and understanding and to meet school needs in various areas.

Funding for professional development comes from two areas – tied funds allocated by the Department specifically towards training for beginning teachers, the use of technology for teaching and learning, literacy and numeracy, quality teaching, syllabus implementation and career development as well as school funds. In 2010 $4245.20 was allocated to professional development through tied funds and $1750.29 through school funds. This represents $1293.25 spent on professional learning for each teacher. This funding includes course fees, salaries for replacement staff, travel where necessary and other incidentals.

In 2010 staff participated in five staff development days which included focuses on school planning, technology, literacy, community sports training, child protection training, occupational health and safety, asthma training and school organization. Additional professional development activities included leadership, curriculum development, support for students with special needs, finance and technology.

School development 2009 – 2011
In 2011 we are finalizing aspects of our 2009-2011 school plan and entering the new cycle for our 2012-2014 school plan. With a disrupted 2010, our 2011 management plan includes some activities held over and also includes some new focuses that have resulted from the new buildings and structures that are now in place.

Targets for 2011
Target 1
To establish a ‘lower primary education strategy’ to take advantage of new facilities and structures.

With the completion of building for the new classroom/library (which will operate as two classrooms), our lower primary students are now housed within one building with the flexibility to combine programs and work collaboratively in meeting student needs.

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Co-coordinating class programs in lower primary to enable flexibility of presentation and class structures, along with the opportunity to move children between classes to better meet individual needs; and

- The development of a lower primary literacy strategy and program, supported by additional resources in literacy and the arts.

Our success will be measured by:

- Increased movement between classes by students in lower primary as they work within targeted programs suitable to their stage of development;

- Elements of class programs will be produced collaboratively, addressing the individual needs of students; and

- Increased interaction between the classes in a variety of programs and activities.

Target 2
To develop an environmental program K-6 that promotes care of the environment and sustainability.

The completion of building works has opened up new areas of the school for development as educational resources. The area to the rear of the
toilets/ COLA will be redeveloped as an eating area and will have an environmental education focus.

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Establishing a compost and recycling area to the rear of the toilets including the use of the shade house for propagation of new plants;
- Identification of and planting new bush tucker plants in a purpose built facility using the $2500 EcoGrant received in early 2011;
- Development of environmental education programs in consultation with Noel Jupp (plants), Karen Newby (organic produce) and regional environmental contacts to make use of the new facilities; and
- The construction of a hen house for the recycling of food scraps and reduction of rubbish.

Our success will be measured by:

- The development of a range of new facilities; but
- All elements can only be judged successful when use is established of the new resources in established and sustainable environmental education programs.

Target 3

To include new technologies, especially interactive whiteboards, in regular classroom activities.

Over the past two years, Vacy Public has undergone many changes that have brought some new resources to the school, specifically new interactive whiteboards, a technology centre and a connected classroom.

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- All staff receiving training in the use of interactive whiteboards;
- The purchase of new resources to support use of the whiteboards in the classroom, especially in literacy resources for lower primary;
- The purchase of ten AlphaSmart keyboards to support desktop publishing and to free up technology resources for the new technology centre; and
- The establishment of a technology centre in the library, funded by $5000 from the P&C, and replacing the bulk of non-fiction resources in the school.

Our success will be measured by:

- The full inclusion of various technologies as tools for learning and not ‘special events’ within classrooms;
- The use of the AlphaSmart keyboards in enabling publishing within classrooms; and
- The establishment and full use of the technology centre by all classes K-6.

About this report

In preparing this report, the self-evaluation committee has gathered information from evaluations conducted during the year and analyzed 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.

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Jarrod Hughes (school captain 2011)

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