

Kotara School Annual Report



2017



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Introduction

The Annual Report for **2017** is provided to the community of **Kotara School** as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self–assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

Brendan Rodd

Principal

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Message from the Principal

The positive culture at Kotara School is partly a result of setting high expectations and then recognising, acknowledging, celebrating and promoting student and staff achievements. This report is a part of that process and is a testament to the effectiveness, diversification and relevance of programs at Kotara School.

Kotara School services the needs of primary aged students and also runs an outreach class in the Nexus Unit at John Hunter Hospital.

The primary purpose of enrolment at Kotara School is the assistance of students to develop greater academic and social skills as well as the development of emotional literacy. This last area is a key component of the Kotara program and comprises the domains of self–awareness, self–regulation, empathy, social skills and motivation.

Kotara School has an extensive network of partnerships with other service providers and agencies in Newcastle and its surrounding areas. We have developed quality relationships with partner schools and provided a range of professional learning opportunities to support them although the core stakeholders in the program remain our students, parents, home schools, AECG and Kotara School staff. In addition to this we receive invaluable support from Hunter Institute of Mental Health (HIMH), Health, Housing, Police, FACS, Impact and Allambi.

Kotara School endeavors to provide a therapeutic environment with a multi–disciplinary approach to special education and individual student needs. The school, where possible, emulates mainstream school policies and practices to facilitate a smooth transition process back to a mainstream setting as well as to increase student self–esteem and expectations.

Brendan Rodd

Principal

School background

School vision statement

We believe education is a pathway to success for all students. At Kotara School we provide a quality teaching framework, quality environment and a quality wellbeing program. This is obtained through our Positive Behaviour Learning systems based practices. Our Kotara School motto is:–“Courage to Learn, Courage to Change”

Believing that no matter what you have done in the past everyone has the chance to change. We at Kotara School help provide strategies for students to learn new skills to be used in situations, and build the courage to change their future and it's direction. This vision is closely aligned to Melbourne Declaration with a view to 2015 to 2017. Our school plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual, aesthetic development and well-being of young Australians.

Kotara School will share this responsibility with students, parents, carers, families, the community and other education providers. Our vision is further underpinned by our core Positive Behaviour for Learning values;

- * Safe
- * True
- * Respectful

School context

Kotara School aims to provide the opportunity for every student to achieve success in all aspects of their life. To provide an environment that supports students to find the 'courage to learn' and the 'courage to change. Kotara School is a school for specific purposes on two sites. The school has an enrolment of 35 and are placed by a regional panel of psychologists, principals and consultants. At any time Kotara School Aboriginal population can be up to 60%, therefore Kotara school embed Aboriginal Education across all aspects of the school plan.

It aims to create behavioural change in order for them to return to mainstream settings. It draws students from Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens area. Kotara School is staffed with a school Principal, two Assistant Principals, three Classroom Teachers, five Student Learning and Support Officers and a School Administration Manager.

On the main site Kotara School educates students in Years 3 to 6 with emotional disturbance and behaviour disorders. Kotara School also operates an outreach class in the Nexus Unit at John Hunter Hospital. Nexus is a specialist 14 bed inpatient unit accepting both voluntary and involuntary patients. It provides services for children and young people aged 5 to 18 years who present with mental health disorders that are conducive to inpatient observation and/or treatment.

Kotara School has extensive partnerships with other service providers and agencies in Newcastle and its surrounds. It has developed quality relationships with partner schools and provides a range of professional learning opportunities to support them.

Self-assessment and school achievement

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

This section of the Annual Report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework and participated in an external validation. The framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading. During the external validation process, an independent panel of peer principals considered our evidence and assessment of the school's progress, aligned with the standards articulated in the School Excellence Framework.

The results of this process indicated

The strong performance of the school in creating a positive and productive learning culture amongst staff and students has been a feature of our progress. The fundamental importance of the Wellbeing area is demonstrated in providing an supportive system to build a culture of trust, respect and valuing of each other. Kotara School also maintains a strong ethos around support for both staff and students social and emotional wellbeing incorporating this into professional

learning opportunities throughout the year. These results were evident in the way that students related to each other and importantly, in the increased engagement of students in learning. This is always a striving goal for Kotara School with a transient population.

Staff continue to deliver high quality teaching and learning programs. Staff receive ongoing Professional Learning in the effective implementation of Count Me In Too, Accelerated Literacy, Neurosequential Model of Education, Jolly Phonics and Universal Design for Learning. Attention to individual learning needs has been another component of our progress throughout the year through use of IEP's or PLP's. These processes have been a collaborative approach in our semester review meetings with all key stakeholders including Census Schools, agencies, and parents/ carers.

The school utilises the NSW Department of Education and Training Curriculum Planning, Assessing and Reporting policy to the community effectively through the use of A to E reporting in SENTRAL twice a year. Student progress is assessed and evidence gathered through a variety of sources. Ongoing, regular communication with parent/ carers has built a relationship where parents are confident to ask questions surrounding the learning of their child.

Classroom practice has been further strengthened through the adoption of hands on learning tasks through the use of Science Technology and Maths programs with its strong focus on problem based learning. This continues to increase engagement throughout the school and a love of learning for students who were previously extremely disengaged.

The school has developed new systems and practices to ensure student performance is tracked and measured. This data is also shared with each student's census school. Students are tracked daily, weekly and each Term through their behaviour, and academically students are tracked each semester. This data is also utilised to assist with transition planning for students. Ongoing data collation will enable a continued collaborative approach to learning for our unique setting.

Classrooms at Kotara School are effective and designated as delivering on the key performance indicators in the School Excellence Framework. Teachers regularly revise and review their teaching and learning programs, ensuring they continue to meet the individual needs of their students. Professional collaboration time is planned strategically. The key focus for teachers during these sessions is to ensure that the learning they are planning to lead with their students is going to meet the needs as identified by system and school data. All classrooms are well managed with supervisors regularly monitoring teaching and learning programs to ensure that any planning in classrooms is reflected upon by the teachers delivering the lessons.

Kotara School uses pre and post data of student to assist in the differentiation of student learning needs. All teachers have been provided with professional learning to enable them to accurately plot students along the Literacy or Numeracy Continuums. Whilst there have been some initial concerns around the consistency of judgements teachers are making on the same stage, the leadership team has strategically addressed these with further professional learning, modelling of how teachers evaluate student performance and learning including the development of learning plans to ensure students are being taught the skills and knowledge they need to move forward along the continuum. The use of this data enables Kotara School to make evidence informed decisions.

Decisions made about which areas to target explicit lessons in PBL are made using SENTRAL data. Individual Education Plans include information about where students are achieving and the skills and knowledge they need to move forward. In addition to this, the school is responsive to the advice of clinical psychologists, occupational therapists and similar professionals in developing these plans as the judgements they have made in order to determine their recommendations to the school are based on evidence they have collected through their evaluation of the student.

Induction for all staff is a strategic process. All new staff participate in professional learning to fulfil all mandatory requirements under child protection legislation, the NSW DoE Code of Conduct and Work Health and Safety Legislation. All teachers participate in annual training relating to the Personalised Development Plan (PDP) process including coaching conversations with their supervisors, supported by the Principal, for those who are interested in further career development. Part of the PDP process is for teachers to participate in lesson reviews of other teachers and then to collaborate on how the lesson or teaching could be improved. All reflective practices at the school are structured around three very simple questions; What went well? What did we miss? and Next time lets look at.

This structure is positive in the tone of language used and allows for teachers to be constructive in their feedback to their colleagues.

Kotara School's school plan is a collaborative working document which will assist all key stakeholders to seek quality feedback regarding strategic directions and milestones. The Principal, in consultation with the school executive writes the plan. The current plan contains three strategic directions with each executive member responsible for a direction and its milestones. This process is highly collaborative across the whole Kotara School staff.

Kotara School continues to provide opportunities for community engagement and feedback through events, parent workshops, social media, online surveys and traditional communication methods such as Newsletters. Our school, like many SSP's draws students from across numerous catchment areas with many travelling considerable distance to attend. This occasionally provides an obstacle to creating a sense of community in the local sense and can discourage

parents from attending events based at the school. This situation reinforces our commitment to creating a community presence online.

2016 has seen Kotara School acknowledged for its continued work in the area of external service provision occurring within the school environment. The school has developed guidelines to build consistency and provide clarity around external service provision and actively sought open communication and a collaborative approach with providers. As with all other school activities, our administrative practices are continuously improving.

The school uses newsletters, Skoolbag App, website and Open Days to engage with the community effectively. As a school mode of communication that allow interaction are preferred and allow the school to provide affirmation and support.

Our self-assessment and the external validation process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability/sef-evidence-guide>

Strategic Direction 1

Quality teaching and learning programs.

Purpose

To promote, build and sustain the professional learning of all staff members, by creating systems for all teachers and leaders to learn from each other which allows for the alignment of policies and practices and provides feedback on current performance in order to enhance student outcomes

Overall summary of progress

Kotara School sustained improved assessment systems and the maintenance of baseline data for 100% of students. School based procedures were developed to provide staff with a timeline for data collection and recording of student progress against baseline data. All staff are fluent in procedures for assessment in literacy and numeracy. 100% of assessment results were analysed and the data utilized to program for individualized student learning needs. All students are currently mapped on a data wall in the school. Students have been plotted on the literacy and numeracy continuums and data is updated regularly to monitor the impact of Teaching and Learning.

All staff participated in professional learning in Schedule for Early Number Assessment (SENA) assessment to accurately assess the students numeracy skills. 100% of teaching staff are trained in SENA and are engaging with the framework to design and deliver teaching and learning programs across the school.

Collaborative planning opportunities have been provided to teachers to support the implementation of whole school literacy and numeracy programs.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased Literacy and Numeracy outcomes for students corresponding with the time spent at Kotara School100% of staff engages with the new Performance and Development Framework.	Teaching resources – \$18000 Professional Learning – \$4200	Literacy and Numeracy outcomes have been evidenced by pre and post testing for all students corresponding with the time spent at Kotara School. Staff have engaged with the Performance and Development frame work and meeting the requirements of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards.

Next Steps

As Kotara School moves into a new school plan, we will continue the growth we have made in quality teaching and learning programs. These outcomes are systematically embedded in the culture of Kotara School and are revised to continue improvement in this area.

Strategic Direction 2

Development of social, emotional and somatic literacy.

Purpose

To actively engage all students in meaningful and challenging learning experiences through personalised and differentiated learning opportunities.

Overall summary of progress

Kotara School is a Positive Behaviour for Learning School which helped with the structure of our school rules and discipline & welfare policy.

Kotara School have embarked on The Neurosequential Model in Education (NME) draws upon the NMT (a neurodevelopmental–informed, biologically respectful perspective on human development and functioning) to help educators understand student behaviour and performance. The goals of NME are to educate faculty and students in basic concepts of neurosequential development and then teach them how to apply this knowledge to the teaching and learning process. NME is not a specific "intervention"; it is a way to educate school staff about brain development and developmental trauma and then to further teach them how to apply that knowledge to their work with students in and outside the classroom, particularly those students with adverse childhood experiences.

Growth coaching training for all classroom teaches has led to staff being more focused and skill development for students. The staff are more confident talking and coaching students through different situations. This has led to students feeling more comfortable talking to Kotara School staff.

The school programed and delivered the You Can Do It program. This has assisted the students with Getting Along, Organisation, Persistence, Confidence, and Resilience. Educating and helping build strategies for all students to use. Staff have reframed the program to assist its efficacy when delivering it to Kotara School students.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
<ul style="list-style-type: none">75% of students improve behaviour evidenced by the behaviour continuum	Professional Learning – \$21,000 Teaching Resources – \$3200	Although Kotara School has enhanced improvement in students behaviour we have been unable to create a behaviour continuum. Evident for improvement at Kotara School has been shown through a increase in engagement within the classroom and a decrease of incidents across the school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff report improved student engagement for 75% of individual students.		Staff engaged with professional learning opportunities which are then reflected in the creation of resources to enhance teaching practice and improve engagement levels of students.

Next Steps

As Kotara School moves into a new school plan, we will continue the growth we have made in development of social, emotional and somatic literacy. Continued increased engagement and the building of trust relationships are the cornerstone of Kotara School. These improvements are systematically embedded in the culture of Kotara School and are revised to continue improvement in this area.

Strategic Direction 3

Quality systems.

Purpose

To develop and maintain quality systems and practices around opportunities for student engagement and participation; and increased social and academic success in both the mainstream and Kotara School context.

Overall summary of progress

Procedures and policies were reviewed and upgraded in a number of areas across the school. Administrative procedures were created and implemented across Kotara School. All staff are using these procedures to align embedding system practices to assist with a streamlined approach. This was part of professional learning afternoons and are now embedded practice.. Further processes will be designed and implemented.

Assessment has continued move across to Sentral and Seesaw, these continuums are being used to record student progress. A whole school Scope & sequence and templates have been created, tested and implemented and collaborative programming implemented. This was implemented across all classes however pre and post implementation has been produced and continues to assist teachers to program and differentiate appropriately.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
<ul style="list-style-type: none">100% of students have quality constructed and evaluated IEP's or PLP's	Teaching Resources – \$5100 Professional Learning – \$16200 PBL – \$2100	All students have an authentic IEP or PLP in line with formal review processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">100% of all students have a semester Formal Review Process with key stakeholders including intake and transition		All students have had a formal review in 2017 both semester 1 & 2. We have seen an increase of key stakeholder participation to 85%.

Next Steps

As Kotara School moves into a new school plan, we will continue the growth we have made in quality systems programs. These outcomes are systematically embedded in the culture of Kotara School and are revised to continue improvement in this area.

Key Initiatives	Resources (annual)	Impact achieved this year
Aboriginal background loading	Employment of Aboriginal Elder – \$15, 979	Kotara School has increased the engagement and participation of ATSI students and to develop cultural awareness school wide. 100% of the students were engaged throughout these lessons.
Quality Teaching, Successful Students (QTSS)	Staff Release \$5520	Kotara School has been able to release staff to overview whole school literacy and numeracy programs. Whole school programing and whole school focus has been able to occur.
Socio-economic background	Teach Resources – \$27,000 Information technology – \$5,000 Professional Development – 10,200 Employment – \$10,100	<p>Kotara School has enhanced access to educational resources, enrichment of the curriculum and the development of student engagement and participation. Kotara School has seen an increase in engagement in the classroom.</p> <p>Training, design and implementation of programs across the whole school has increase engagement. This has enabled staff to deliver more engaging and relevant content to the students.</p> <p>Focus on upskilling of staff toward assisting students with complex trauma and also student wellbeing, gaining an enhanced level of engagement within the classroom.</p>

Student information

Student enrolment profile

Students	Enrolments			
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Boys	17	23	26	21
Girls	3	3	2	6

Students are placed at Kotara School through a placement panel process where student are discussed then selected by the panel. The panel consists of representatives from the Learning and Wellbeing team and principals from the surrounding areas. Students at Kotara School are shared enrolled with their home school. Students attend Kotara School for 5 days per week for their first term. The student continues at Kotara School 4 days per week and attends their census school 1 day per week in the initial stages of their individualised program. Continued transition is decided on an individualised progress.

Management of non-attendance

At Kotara School student attendance reports are printed off weekly and communicated with their census school and home. If there is a concern surrounding non-attendance, Kotara School will make contact with the family to see if we can assist. A plan is then devised, if continued non-attendance occurs a HSLO is informed and DoE policy is followed.

Structure of classes

All classes at Kotara School are provided with 1 classroom teacher, 1 SLSO and 7 students. We have 4 classes situated on site with 1 class located on the grounds of the John Hunter Hospital.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal	1
Deputy Principal(s)	0
Assistant Principal(s)	2
Head Teacher(s)	0
Classroom Teacher(s)	3.65
Teacher of Reading Recovery	0
Learning & Support Teacher(s)	0
Teacher Librarian	0.2
Teacher of ESL	0
School Counsellor	0
School Administration & Support Staff	6.18
Other Positions	0

*Full Time Equivalent

An Aboriginal Elder is employed to assist staff and student with cultural awareness and knowledge.

Teacher qualifications

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

Teacher qualifications

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	100
Postgraduate degree	60

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Some of the professional Learning completed by Kotara School Staff in 2017 :

- Emotional Intelligence
- Positive Behaviour Management
- Stronger Smarter strategies
- Crisis Communication
- Audio Visual
- Universal Design Intervention
- High Order Thinking Strategies
- Mind Your Brain
- You Can Do it
- SENA
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Functional Behaviour Assessment

Financial information (for schools fully deployed to SAP/SALM)

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.

	2017 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	129,362
Revenue	1,435,014
Appropriation	1,418,864
Sale of Goods and Services	-720
Grants and Contributions	9,315
Gain and Loss	0
Other Revenue	5,494
Investment Income	2,062
Expenses	-1,422,044
Recurrent Expenses	-1,422,044
Employee Related	-1,293,553
Operating Expenses	-128,492
Capital Expenses	0
Employee Related	0
Operating Expenses	0
SURPLUS / DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR	12,970
Balance Carried Forward	142,331

The finance committee at Kotara School meet in week 6 every term to discuss the finances of Kotara School.

This enables the committee to reflect on the budget and the direction of the school adhering to staff spending requests and school structures. Kotara School is currently looking into and has saved for automated gates and a cola. Both of these items will increase safety and provide student an area out of the rain and extreme heat.

Financial summary equity funding

The equity funding data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' section of the financial summary above.

	2017 Actual (\$)
Base Total	333,221
Base Per Capita	10,224
Base Location	647
Other Base	322,350
Equity Total	62,048
Equity Aboriginal	7,752
Equity Socio economic	54,296
Equity Language	0
Equity Disability	0
Targeted Total	949,118
Other Total	8,758
Grand Total	1,353,145

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

A full copy of the school's financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the parent and/or community groups. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

In 2017, the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school.

Their responses are presented below. Data from surveys, focus groups and document analysis indicate that:

- 100% of parents/ carers found the Kotara school staff very approachable and easy to communicate with.
- The overall results from both the focus group and survey were positive. Parents appreciated the enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of staff and also the way staff encouraged students to do their best. Learning (literacy and numeracy) seemed to be very important to parents.
- 95% of parents/ carers who attended the NAIDOC Day assembly and focus group session truly believe that Kotara School is helping their child with and education and future.
- Most parents/carers commented that they found it hard to complete the survey as their child had only attended Kotara School for a short while but enjoyed talking with other parents and were happy to be involved in the focus group.
- The area that parents were most satisfied with was class activities that were interesting and engaged students in learning (85%). The lowest results were from the question about whether Kotara School communicate well with parent and

key stakeholders. 50% disagreed with this question.

- 100% of parent wanted to know 'why' their child's behaviour is the way it is and are frustrated trying to find the reasons that cause this behaviour.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Kotara School can have a ranging percentage of student with an aboriginal background. These percentages range from 15 to 40% depending on the current intake. Kotara School sees Aboriginal culture and culture identity as a very important area of student learning.

Uncle Perry Fuller is employed at Kotara School to assistant staff in delivering Aboriginal Education and cultural identity. He has taught Yidaki (didgeridoo) to staff and students, and has also performed at school ceremonies such as NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week and school assembly's. Students have also enjoyed performing with him. He continues to teach Kotara School about traditional knowledge and art both contemporary and traditional.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

Kotara School programs provide the framework within which multicultural education is implemented. The principles recognise and value differing religious and ethnic backgrounds of the students promoting equal rights and responsibilities of all within a cohesive school society where diversity is valued, thus allowing the school community to develop its social and cultural potential.

School programs, policies and practices are designed to counter racism, tolerance and develop understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious differences. Differences such as ethnicity, language and culture, socio-economic circumstances, sex and geographical location are taken into account when designing educational programs to promote an open and tolerant attitude towards all.

Students are participate in a variety activities within subjects such as Accelerated Literacy which focus on cultural diversity and knowledge enabling students to identify as Australians within a multicultural society and a diverse world. Events and programs such as NAIDOC celebrations and class excursions are also an integral element of the school multicultural education program.