



John Berne School

Annual Report

to the Community

2008

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

The 2008 school year was an historic one with the appointment of the second Principal to the school after ten years of providing an education for young people with special needs.

As the new Principal I was immediately impressed with the level of family spirit and hospitality that exists in the school. At the heart of this is a dedicated and caring staff that is prepared to go the extra mile for the young people in their care. It is a safe environment for young people who have struggled with the requirements of school in various ways. The warm environment and the welcome extended to these troubled young people lay a solid foundation for the transformation that occurs for them at this school. As one of the graduating students said about the school, "I felt like I was at home, loved and cared for". Another young man said, "After coming to Berne, I realised that I could change".

Berne does aim to care for and empower the student in all facets of their life. The integration of the outstanding counselling services with the teaching staff provides a support to the young person as they confront the challenges of daily life. It enables the school to respond quickly and effectively when a crisis develops.

The ***journey to the Kokoda Track*** by a small number of staff and students was a rare opportunity in September 2008. Four students, three staff and an ex-student participated in this once in a lifetime event. The whole community felt involved in the lead up to the event and the reports on their return broadened everybody's knowledge and understanding of Australia's relationship with Papua New Guinea and World War Two. This adventure would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the St George Foundation.

The ***Parenting in Practice*** book written by two of our counsellors, Joe Degeling and Chris Langridge, which was launched in 2007, sold at a surprisingly rapid rate resulting in a second edition. This book, along with the numerous workshops that are conducted by our counsellors, is a significant contribution that we make to parents as they grapple with the complexities of living with and managing teenagers.

The ***jobready! Program*** grew out of the strong work related education program that has been in existence here for many years. These activities have been sharpened and broadened in an effort to have our students skilled in gaining and maintaining their employment. It was pleasing to note that by the end of February this year 84 per cent of our graduates from 2008 had either secured a job, an apprenticeship or further education. The ***jobready! Program*** has a significant role to play in this success.

The ***canteen was the focus of a review in the latter part of 2008*** the results of which were implemented on day one of 2009. A professional dietician conducted the review with a view to establishing healthier eating options in the canteen. The aim was to remove unhealthy products and replace them with attractive alternatives. The changes have been well accepted by the student body as they have gained a new range of tasty options. Likewise, the ***Breakfast Program*** has been adapted to reflect the healthier approach.

In May of 2008 the inaugural meeting of the ***Finance Advisory Committee*** took place. The committee is comprised of the Principal, Finance Secretary, a representative of the Sydney Province of the Marist Brothers and members from business and accounting backgrounds. This committee oversees the financial development of the school.

The school has implemented another tool in its ***anti-bullying policy and procedures***. A simple questionnaire was developed by the counselling team in consultation with the teaching staff to provide the students with an opportunity to feedback on issues related to bullying and harassment. This survey is completed during counselling each term.

My special thanks go to the many volunteers who faithfully attend the school to provide the extra individual support that some of our students need. We also deeply appreciate the contribution of the various donors, whether individuals or groups, who generously gave to our school in 2008. We could not do much of our work without this practical support.

Br Darren Burge
Principal

MESSAGE FROM PARENT REPRESENTATIVE

The John Berne Community is made up of students, staff, parents, guardians and a large group of supporters. Each member plays an important role in the life of this special school. The John Berne School helps to enable students reach their full potential and achieve their school certificate. It prepares them for life after their school certificate and offers many opportunities to experience work and life outside school. Parents are also given chances to learn and grow in their role as care givers of sometimes troubled teens.

The John Berne School depends on its supporters. Fundraising is an on going activity and any support given by past parents, students is always very welcome. In 2009 there were many opportunities just to get together to celebrate school life and each other.

Our sincere thanks to Br Darren and the wonderful staff at John Berne for their amazing commitment to their students and parents. The John Berne School is unique, and all community members are encouraged to support and give back to the school that has given them so much.

Kathy Schofield
Parent

SCHOOL FEATURES

The John Berne School is an Independent Catholic School owned and operated by the Marist Brothers offering a positive option for students (Years 7, 8, 9, 10) whose education is at risk. The students are enrolled on the basis of diagnosed disability and/or inability to cope in mainstream schools. The John Berne School is a coeducational day school. The school's motto, Hope Always, reflects the fundamental belief that intervention in the lives of troubled people – especially when they are young – is always worthwhile and is very often successful.

The school caters to around 50 students and employs 25 professional staff. This high student to staff ratio is essential to the success of the school which provides, in addition to a complete curriculum, a number of special programs for our students and their families including:

Family and Student Counselling

Counselling is a central part of our work at Berne. Each student is assigned a Counsellor who meets with him/her each week to assist with their behavioural needs. The Counselling team also conducts Parenting Programs and other practical support to families.

Parenting in Practice Program

The Berne Parenting in Practice Program addresses specific skills to help parents in the day-to-day parenting of their teenagers. Parents get a chance to discover that they're not the only ones going through hard times with their teens and to learn skills and practices from each other. Two programs were conducted this year.

Breakfast Program

Our full Breakfast Program not only meets the nutritional needs of students, but in sharing this meal together each day, with adult care and supervision, students have the opportunity to settle before classes begin and improve their social skills.

Job Ready Program

The Job Ready Program helps students access meaningful employment and/or training options after graduation. Berne has in place a range of vocational preparation courses to prepare its students for the workplace. Teaching skills like writing a job application, interview techniques and telephone protocol, the program also instructs students on appropriate workplace behaviour and communication in its work experience placement course. Students in Years 9 and 10 undertake one week of practical work experience with a variety of employers each term.

Suspension Withdrawal Assistance Program

SWAP offers a supervised environment for students who have been suspended from their mainstream school. It allows them the opportunity to continue their schoolwork with the support of Berne staff.

Buddies and Friends Program

This is a mentoring program helping young people through friendship. Responsible young adults are connected with students for social activities which provide support and good role modelling.

Learning Advancement Centre

The LAC supports students in their educational engagements and pursuits on a one-on-one level. This enables us to target their specific needs.

Outdoor Education Program

Demanding outdoor challenges helps our students to develop their personal attitudes and values of self-esteem, motivation, confidence, team work and responsibility.

Changing Lanes Program

Changing Lanes is for ex-Berne students who need help with the next stage of their lives. The Coordinator of this program offers extra help in finding a job or starting an apprenticeship or other course.

A more detailed description of all of these school programs can be found on our website at www.johnberneschool.org.

CATHOLIC LIFE AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The unique nature of the John Berne School requires a unique approach to Religious Education. First and foremost it is through the compassion and care of the staff, through their actions and empathy with our students, that true Gospel values are witnessed at Berne.

Catholic life is ever present as the John Berne School embraces its Marist tradition. That “the school is named after a street kid who was taken in by Marcellin Champagnat”, is a regular and concrete reminder to the students that this school is for them. The school motto of “*Hope Always*” is significant to the school and wider community as it encapsulates the ethos and mission that The John Berne School aspires to.

The Marian tradition at Berne is strong; school assemblies commence with prayers, often concluding with the Hail Mary. Each morning the staff gathers for a briefing and this meeting commences with prayer. Berne has adopted a School Prayer which is recited weekly at these meetings.

During the year, we have staff days and time devoted to prayer and reflection. This has often been run by the CEO Spirituality team and special guests.

We celebrate special days throughout the year with a school Mass to which we invite parents, volunteers and supporters of Berne. Ash Wednesday, Champagnat Day, All Souls Day and the Year 10 Graduation are examples of these occasions.

We continue our spiritual journey with the Marists by travelling to the Marist Centre in Mittagong during Holy Week and experiencing the Stations of the Cross. We conclude this gathering with a BBQ and game of touch football; this experience connects us with each other as a school community, to our Marists tradition, and to our Catholic faith.

Considerable time has been spent on staff spirituality as this forms the foundation for our communication of this to our students. The majority of the staff members have completed the *Sharing Our Call* program of the Marist Brothers. This program aims to help staff to identify and articulate their own calling to their profession (within a spiritual framework) and develop an appreciation of Marist values, history and pedagogy. The shared Marist Spirituality and pedagogical approach, assisted by this program, and reinforced by other staff inservices and the regular morning prayer brings a united approach to the staff.

Towards the latter part of 2008 we formed a staff committee to look at the spiritual and religious development of our students. This group prepared a theme for the year in regard to our liturgical celebrations. The rituals and celebrations are based on the dual theme of family and heart. The group is also looking at other ways we can respond to the spiritual needs of our staff and students.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The John Berne School delivers curriculum based upon expectations set-out by the Board of Studies to cater for various learning abilities. Each key area is directly linked to the syllabus provided for that subject. During 2008 the following courses were offered: Geography, History, Science, Mathematics, English, Visual Arts, Industrial Technology, PD/H/PE and LOTE. Other courses are Board endorsed. These are Personal Development and Social Development.

In 2008 the skills-based literacy program commenced with all staff involved. This was an attempt to assist all students to access the curriculum.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN STATEWIDE TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS

National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy

NAPLAN 2008: % in bands		Year 7 ^A			Year 9 ^B		
		Band 9	Bands 7, 8, 9	Bands 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	Band 10	Bands 8, 9, 10	Bands 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Reading	School ¹	100%	0%	0%	0%	14%	77%
	National ²	8%	53%	94%	6%	46%	93%
Writing	School ¹	0%	100%	0%	0%	20%	34%
	National ²	9%	52%	92%	8%	43%	87%
Spelling	School ¹	0%	100%	0%	0%	20%	53%
	National ²	8%	56%	92%	6%	48%	90%
Grammar & Punctuation	School ¹	0%	0%	100%	0%	47%	53%
	National ²	7%	49%	92%	5%	42%	90%
Numeracy	School ¹	0%	100%	0%	0%	28%	72%
	National ²	12%	55%	95%	8%	47%	94%

Notes:

^A Year 7: Highest band = band 9; Lowest band = band 4; Bands 5-9 represent the % of students at or above minimum standards

^B Year 9: Highest band = band 10; Lowest band = band 5; Bands 6-10 represent the % of students at or above the minimum standards

¹ Source: SMART data analysis package

² Source: NAPLAN Summary Report 2008 (www.naplan.edu.au)

Traditionally the John Berne School has not officially sat the state – based secondary Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Program (SNAP) and the English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA). This was due to the fact that the timing of the exams meant that many of our students had not been at the school for a significant amount of time to effect change in their achievement bands. Other considerations to exempt the students were the behavioural nature of our student population and its inherent instability, the cost and the availability of extensive internal assessment data. However in 2007 some students unofficially sat the Year 9 State exams to help assess the effectiveness of school programs.

In 2008 students in Year 7 and Year 9 sat the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for the first time in May. An analysis of these results assists school planning and is used to support teaching and learning programs.

The table provided shows the percentages of students who achieved in particular skill bands and who achieved at or above minimum standards. Student results are reported in six skill bands. Year 7 results are reported across bands 4 to 9 and Year 9 results are reported across bands 5 to 10. Literacy is reported in four content strands: Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation. Numeracy is reported as a single content strand.

The school results shown are compared to students nationally. Our Year 7 student population is small, so that the percentages in the bands reflect the competencies of a very small number of students. The achievement in Year 7 was particularly good however this population will vary considerably from year to year.

The Year 9 student bands reflect the school's effort to increase the literacy competencies of students and to include the total student population in the assessment, regardless of disability. School programs that address spelling and reading skills are showing good school results in Reading, Writing and Spelling. The areas of Grammar and Punctuation need more emphasis in

teaching and learning areas. As many students enter the school in Year 9, some of these results are an assessment of student's achievement bands upon school entry.

In the light of the above, and the fact that our school only has students for a relatively short period of time (in many cases six months to a year), it is difficult to assess the value that is added to their literacy and numeracy on the basis of these national indicators. However, the school does take this seriously and we are working towards gaining a clearer indication of the impact of the school program on students. In 2009, a researcher will begin a process to develop to assist the school to assess its impact on the lives of our students, including academic performance. Hopefully this will provide the staff with empirical data upon which to make these assessments.

School Certificate

Students in Year 10 sat for the School Certificate examination in November this year. The table provided shows the percentage of students who achieved in the top three bands and shows comparison with results from previous years.

	% of students in bands 4, 5, 6									
	English Literacy		Mathematics		Science		Australian History		Australian Geography	
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State
2008	70	76	25	49	45	65	45	51	55	66
2007	81	72	31	45	63	66	62	60	76	71
2006	74	71	11	41	37	62	53	52	63	66

Band 6 = 90 – 100 marks
Band 5 = 80 – 89 marks
Band 4 = 70 – 79 marks
Band 3 = 60 – 69 marks
Band 2 = 50 – 59 marks
Band 1 = 0 – 49 marks

The students that attend this school are all at risk of not completing the School Certificate because of their behavioural and emotional disorders. Some are school refusers and have not succeeded in a mainstream setting. This is the lens through which these results should be viewed. The completion of the School Certificate is in itself an achievement. As a result, the achievement of 70% of our cohort attaining bands 4, 5 or 6 in English literacy in 2008 is an outstanding achievement. The significant difference between the three years represented in each subject is an indication of the many variables that impact on the lives of our students. The 2007 cohort was regarded by the staff as displaying more natural talent in all areas.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER STANDARDS

Professional Learning

All teachers and counsellors have been in professional activities during the year. These activities are designed to develop the skills and understandings of staff to improve student educational and personal outcomes. Professional development takes many forms at the John Berne School including whole school staff days (4 this year), subject specific inservices, meetings and conferences.

The entire Berne staff meets every morning to review the previous day and share information and strategies relevant to the day. Each afternoon the School Management Team meets to develop strategic planning and review procedures to ensure optimum outcomes. Additionally, a general information meeting was held in Term 1 between the Senior Coordinator and all Subject Coordinators to give direction for the year. During Term 2 each Subject Coordinator met individually with the Senior Coordinator to discuss direction, successes, needs, tracking of students, resources and other areas relating to Curriculum matters. In Terms 3 and 4 Subject Meetings were held between the Subject Coordinators and their respective departments. At these meetings, issues relating to subject specific matters are discussed. Student Assessment and Evaluation are also discussed at these meetings which all have educative value.

In 2008 an external review was conducted of the counselling services with a particular focus on the services that the counsellors offer to the school and how this is working to achieve the aims of the school. A good working relationship already exists between the counsellors and the teaching staff but we are working to develop a common language between the counsellors and other members of staff in regard to behaviour management planning.

A whole staff inservice of one day was conducted by Marist Youth Care in behaviour management with particular attention being given to the therapeutic model of operation. The aim was to develop practices and approaches that lead to empowerment of the student in dealing with their own behaviour with the aim of providing change which will have implications in the long term.

Professional development for staff included attended in one or more of the following external programs: Sharing Our Call; Succeeding with Difficult Students; DET School Link Training; Teach More Manage Less; Boys, Engagement, Bullying/Cyber Bullying and Learning; Learning with the Brain in Mind; National Curriculum in English – Perspectives, Principles, Possibilities; Responsible Use of Digital Material Forum; Schools of the Spirit; Unlocking Childhood Grief; BOS Curriculum and Year Advisers Inservice; Dealing with Boys; Managing Anaphylaxis in Schools; Leadership – New Times, New Challenges; The Five Top Challenges for Parents Today by Michael Carr Gregg; Science Teachers' Forum.

Teacher Standards

The following table sets out the number of teachers on this staff who fall into each of the three categories determined by the Board of Studies:

Teacher Qualifications	Number of Teachers
1. Those having formal qualifications from a recognised higher education institution or equivalent	16
2. Those having graduate qualifications but not a formal teaching qualification from a recognised higher education institution or equivalent.	0
3. Those not having qualifications described in 1 or 2 above but having relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate relevant knowledge.	0

STAFF 2008

Teacher Attendance and Retention

John Berne School maintained a quota of 15 full time and 1 part time teachers in 2008. A total of 34 days leave were taken by teachers throughout the year – an attendance rate of 93.3%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave.

The teacher retention rate from 2007 to 2008 was 93.75%.

Other specialist positions at Berne included two full-time and one part-time Counsellor, Chaplain, Careers Adviser, Teachers Aide and administration support staff. Berne operates a school canteen employing a Canteen Manager and a Breakfast Program Co-ordinator.

Practicum students

A psychologist on placement from the Australian College of Applied Psychology worked at Berne throughout 2008.

Education students from the University of Sydney, Australian Catholic University, and the University of New England completed observations or teaching placements throughout the year.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The average student attendance rate during 2008 was 88%. Students attending Berne are enrolled on the basis of diagnosed disability and/or inability to cope in mainstream schools. Many have a history of school refusal and behavioural or emotional difficulties. Attendance rates fluctuate annually reflecting the personal situations of the student cohort at the time.

POST SCHOOL DESTINATIONS

Sixteen students successfully completed their School Certificates in 2008 and graduated from Year 10 at the John Berne School.

In 2008 the John Berne School formalised its approach to preparation of students for post school employment options by introducing the **job ready! Program** for students in Years 9 & 10. The **job ready! Program** brings together a range of work preparation activities (including up to nine work experience placements) and has two main aims:

- To prepare students for the work, training or schooling they undertake “Beyond Berne”; and
- To assist them in securing a place at work, on a training course, or at another school for Year 11/12 studies “Beyond Berne”.

The program takes in a large number of activities, which includes:

- Preparation of, and agreement to, individual transition plans.
- Participation in up to nine weeks of work experience.
- Attendance by parents and/or students in external events (career information evening, career expos etc).
- Development of partnerships with local businesses.
- Participation in Careers Days workshops, scheduled for the Friday before each work experience week.
- Attendance at the school’s Careers Expo for students and families in Year 10.

- Assistance with tax file numbers and opening of bank accounts.
- Assistance with job seeking for part time or casual work while still at school.

After leaving the John Berne School, support is available to ex students who require further assistance, through our **Changing Lanes Program**. In order to maintain an accurate, quantitative approach to statistics to assess the level of success of both the job ready! and Changing Lanes Programs, concerted efforts are made at least four times per year to follow up on ex students and their families.

As at April 2009, graduating Year 10 students from 2008 are represented as follows:

33% engaged in full time study of Year 11 courses
 40% engaged in full time employment (either as an apprentice, or general employee)
 11% engaged in part time study at TAFE
 11% unable to be contacted
 5% looking for work, attempting to enrol in courses

To summarise, 84% of Year 10 graduates, six months after graduation, are engaged in full time employment, full time study or part time study.

SCHOOL POLICIES

In 2008, attention was given to reviewing the policy framework of the school. Special focus was placed on the child protection policy in order to review and update it in line with changes to legislation. The Catholic Commission for Employment Relations was consulted in the review process. This resulted in an updated policy for the beginning of 2009.

The Code of Conduct for the staff was reviewed and discussed in preparation for its rewriting in early 2009. In light of this policy review, grievance procedures and the Complaints Policy was also revisited and updated in 2008.

We adapted a new risk assessment procedure for our camps and outdoor education activities. A couple of key staff were trained with Marist Youth Care in a camp site situation in the effective adoption of this system.

In 2009, we will focus our attention on reviewing Critical Incident Protocols, Evacuation and Lockdown Procedures..

We have policies for:

Enrolment
 Pastoral Care, Behaviour Management and Discipline
 Complaints and Grievance
 Child Protection
 School Fees
 Evacuation and Lockdown procedures
 Medication Administration procedures
 Email Internet

School policies can be obtained from the school office.

Enrolment Process

The essential factor in offering a position at the school is whether the environment and service we offer can contribute to the child's development, assisting them to address the behavioural

challenges they face. There must be a hope that we can make a difference in this child's life. If not, we are at risk of contributing to another failure that will further erode the young person's esteem.

The Enrolment Counsellor gathers data from the previous school and family. A psychological assessment may also be required before making a decision about the child's appropriateness for Berne. This data is presented to the Principal for consideration.

Pastoral Care Team

The Pastoral Care teacher (PCT) provides special care and attention to a small group of students in a particular year group. The aim is for this teacher to have a close relationship with the child and monitor the child's progress with the school and more broadly. The focus is on the development and progress of the whole person.

The PCT strives to develop a connection with the family through parent-teacher interviews, telephone calls and formal reporting.

The PCT meets with his / her students at roll call each morning and afternoon. At the beginning of the week s/he, establishes the student's goal on his / her Behaviour Management Record, and monitors the child's progress via this card each day.

The PCT and Year Co-ordinator work closely to oversee the development of the child.

Behaviour Management

The Behaviour Management code supports the Pastoral Care policy by providing clear guidelines, defined expectations, consequences and support structures to acknowledge appropriate behaviours and address inappropriate behaviours.

Code of Behaviour

The School expects students to respect themselves, others and property

Respect for Self refers to students' commitment to their:

- school work
- appearance
- being in the right place at the right time

Respect for others refers to the fact that students should

- support, rather than denigrate others, or the John Berne School.
- complete work without disturbing others
- follow staffs instructions
- refrain from inappropriately touching others.

Respect for property refers to respect for:

- property belonging to Berne and/as well as property belonging to other members of the school community.

The Behaviour Management Plan

The Behaviour Management Plan has three main components. These are strategies to:

- promote appropriate behaviour
- reward student achievement
- deal with unacceptable behaviour

Strategies to Reward student achievement

Rewards are a fundamental aspect of the Behaviour Management Program at Berne. Students are reinforced for their efforts at behaviour and schoolwork. Two main systems exist for students to be rewarded. One system draws on the Behaviour Management Record, and the other pertains to the End of Term Awards.

Behaviour Management Record (BMR) reward system

For any one week in the school year:

- A score of one hundred or more Bonus points entitles the student to a Canteen Award (food and drink)
- A maximum score for Behaviour and Task (a score of 2 for every subject) entitles the student to a Canteen Award (food and drink)
- A score of 85% or more on the Behaviour and Task categories entitles the student to a Canteen Award on the following Monday (free drink)

End of Term Awards

- The student with the highest number of bonus points for the term receives a Gift Voucher
- Assembly awards:
 - a student may receive a Principal's Gold Award or a Award for Excellence in all areas of class performance.
 - a student may receive a Principal's Gold Award or Certificate of Recognition in one or more subject areas. The award is based on the student's test scores and may include a gift voucher/movie pass.
 - a student may receive a Principal's Gold Award or Subject Award. The Award is based on a student's general behaviour and attitude in class.
 - a student may receive a Principal's Award or Certificate of Recognition for improvement on his/her BMR card.

Teachers and Counsellors – a co-operative partnership

The Management Meetings and staff briefings are opportunities to facilitate this partnership.

Counsellors regularly liaise closely with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Co-ordinators and Pastoral Care teachers in order to meet the social, emotional and personal needs of the students. Likewise, all staff regularly communicate with Counsellors about students and families.

This communication is essential for the establishment and maintenance of individual plans for each student.

Year Co-ordinators and Counsellors communicate regularly about student progress. This relationship is the cornerstone of the Pastoral Care system at Berne.

Counselling Services

Apart from family counselling and support of parents, the primary role of the counsellor at Berne is to provide support to the young people in our care.

Each child has a counsellor assigned to them at the commencement of their enrolment. The counsellor makes contact with the child on a regular basis. The regularity is dependent on the student's circumstances and the approach of the counsellor is influenced by other professional

services the student accesses outside of the school. We aim to establish a complementary approach which integrates the various services that are supporting the child.

The counsellors are involved in every facet of the program at Berne. This includes participation and organisation of the Friday programs, camps, excursions, religious days and work experience. At no time are counsellors expected to be involved in the direct discipline of a student. However, in the absence of a teacher, the counsellor would need to take the appropriate duty of care.

Case Conferences and Management

At the commencement of the student's enrolment a case conference is conducted with the Principal, Enrolment Counsellor, the Year Co-ordinator and where possible the pastoral care teacher. The parent also contributes to this through the enrolment process.

The aim of the conference is to develop an individual plan for this child. A summary of this plan is presented to the entire staff to enable a consistent approach in dealing with the child's behaviour. Regular reviews of these plans are conducted throughout the year, including consultation with parents.

SCHOOL DETERMINED IMPROVEMENT TARGETS

Policy Framework

The review of our policy framework resulted in a number of policies and procedures being updated. This involved broad consultation and was also aimed at educating staff about essential areas. Further reference can be found in the policy section of this document.

Behaviour Management

One of the target areas for staff inservice was in behaviour management. Some younger staff were given the opportunities to participate in professional development days conducted by professional bodies about behaviour management. The whole staff participated in an inservice conducted by Marist Youth Care entitled *Therapeutic Crisis Interventions* which was focussed on working with young people who have experienced traumas in their life.

A good deal of staff discussion at meetings and our inservice days was focussed on the behaviour management system we have and how to improve it. This continues to be a key theme for 2009.

The review of our counselling services in the latter part of 2008, conducted by an external psychologist, was focussed on new directions and approaches to the children in our care. It affirmed our movement to the case management approach more common in welfare contexts. This is our attempt to develop a more comprehensive and holistic management of each student's needs. In time, it ensures that staff have a clearer set of goals for each child and a mechanism of our evaluation of these goals. The counsellors are taking this approach forward.

This continues to be a central aim for 2009 as it has a fundamental impact on the provision of our service to each child and family. It is also the bridge that draws together the pastoral and educational aims of the school. In short, we are developing a therapeutic model of operation.

Canteen

By the conclusion of the year we had reviewed the canteen in order to examine the nutritional value of what we were providing the students. By the conclusion of 2008, we had established a new range of food on the advice of a nutritionist. Healthy and attractive options have replaced less healthy alternatives. This will be finally implemented at the start of 2009.

The establishment of the Finance Advisory Committee in May 2008 which includes professionals from the business and accounting fields, provides a forum to monitor and develop our financial structures and accountabilities. This committee has already begun to explore new areas of fundraising in order to expand our financial base. This group meets five times per year.

Work Experience

2008 also saw a development in our work experience program. It was badged as the Job Ready Program and has attempted to draw together in a more cohesive manner the various aspects of our programs as they prepare students for their working lives. In 2009 we will be exploring new partnerships with organisations that can provide support for our students when they enter further study, apprenticeships or the workforce. These partnerships are aimed at increasing our student's success in the early years after completing school and making a smoother transition to the workplace.

Literacy

The staff continued its education in improving our student's literacy. This is a key plank in our operation as it provides the staff with skills to administer and develop the literacy skills to administer and develop the literacy skills program. There is ample anecdotal evidence of improvements in the students' literacy since the introduction of the specialised program introduced two years ago. Students are now telling us that they can see a change in their abilities. This is deeply satisfying.

Research Project

In 2009 we will continue to develop this specialised program to tackle this key obstacle to student success in the future. Particular attention will also be given to refining our practice in all our classrooms and subject areas in regard to literacy.

During 2009 we will begin to develop processes, procedures and instruments to better assess the success of our school. Special attention will be given to further development of entrance and exit surveys for both students and parents.

We are aiming to locate professionals from outside of the school to conduct educational research. We hope to achieve a clearer set of indicators / guidelines / benchmarks in which to evaluate our success in terms of student outcomes. This will be a major project for the coming two years.

In 2008, the regular school assemblies (every second week) were focussed on issues related to social justice and spirituality. There has been an attempt to broaden our students' understanding and view of the world. Naturally, these issues were explored through a Christian lens. A number of guests were co-opted to speak at these assemblies, including refugees, a representative from the United Nations in Geneva, people who work with members of the community on the margins of our society and so forth.

INITIATIVES PROMOTING RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Berne provides for its student population academic, personal and family services aiming to assist them to become contributing members of society and happy, mature adults.

One of our cornerstone initiatives promoting respect and responsibility is Berne's Outdoor Education Program. Seven camps, each of three or four days duration were held during 2008. All students participated in three or four camps throughout the year. The Outdoor Education Program engages students with demanding outdoor challenges, with support, to help them develop their personal attitudes and values of self esteem, confidence, team work, respect for the needs and abilities of others and responsibility. Established beliefs and behaviour patterns are challenged through exposure to different environmental demands and provision of models of appropriate

behaviour. Students acquire valuable life skills; improve parent, teacher and peer inter-relationships; and understand themselves and others better.

Ken Marslew, Enough is Enough founder, visited the school to speak to students about keeping a focus on personal responsibility and the importance of self control and being aware of inappropriate behaviour. Students were inspired by his personal story of loss and commitment to preventing community violence. His presentation attuned the students in developing a sense of empathy for victims of crime.

A presenter from the Youthsafe Program helped students to recognise and manage dangerous risk-taking in a variety of context and make safer, responsible choices.

A significant part of the program provided at Berne is the counselling services offered to all students on a regular and ongoing basis. One of the aims of the counselling program focuses on building the student's personal sense of self awareness and responsibility for their actions. A significant part of this is developing empathy within each student towards other people and the wider community.

Berne adopts a restorative justice approach to conflict between members of the school community. This can happen informally on a regular basis as staff works with the students to take responsibility for their actions. There is also a more formal restorative justice approach for situations where there are more significant breaches in relationships. This involves interviews with counsellors for both parties to enable them to reflect on their behaviour, what triggered the situation, what happened and alternative options for behaviour in the situation. Following the reflective process and interviews the two parties are involved in a facilitated session where they discuss the impact of what occurred and look to the future. The restorative process allows people to make amends for their behaviour and to move forward in a positive manner. The likelihood of repetition is reduced.

During the October school holidays this year a group of students and teachers from the John Berne School travelled to Papua New Guinea to walk the Kokoda track. This was a life changing experience for the students involved and broadened their understanding and appreciation of Australian armed forces and also, another culture very different from their own.

PARENT, STUDENT AND TEACHER SATISFACTION

Parents, students and staff are very satisfied with Berne. We see this by high staff retention and attendance rates, good student performance and progress, and the comments made about the school gathered throughout the year.

Parent satisfaction is indicated by the constant communication with them in regard to the child's development. It is a characteristic of this school that we keep constant communication with parents in dealing with their children's difficult behaviour. We work alongside the parent to deal with the child's behaviour, including support of parents through our Parenting Program throughout the year.

Parents' attendance at various school functions such as Information Evenings, school masses and the Year 10 Graduation ceremony is testament to the satisfaction they have with the school and the holistic approach we take. The views held by their children, reflected in the comments at the end of this section also reflect their parent's views.

The unique aspect of the John Berne School staff is that they have to make a conscious choice to change from a mainstream setting into this special school environment. The retention rate suggests that despite the difficulties of teaching the students in this special environment, the staff are satisfied that they are making a difference in the lives of young people.

An inservice conducted by an external facilitator at the end of the year quizzed staff about their levels of satisfaction. The staff highlighted their satisfaction at working with children with difficulties,

the team approach amongst staff, the family spirit that exists within the school and their appreciation of the Marist principles of education.

This sample of student comments about Berne were written by Year 10 students before their graduation and reflect the sentiments expressed, without exception, by Year 10 students this year:

“Basically, Berne was my second home”

“I feel like I have grown up and matured. I would like to say thank-you to the teachers for putting up with me in my bad times and listening to me when I was feeling down.”

“I have had so many good times here I can’t really name them all, but I did Kokoda with four teachers and three other students, an experience which I will never forget throughout my whole life. I will miss the way that everyone else around me has serious problems as well, and the way that Berne cares.”

“Thank you to everyone at Berne who helped me get my School Certificate and gave me another chance to get an education.”

“I came to Berne because I was an angry, depressed young teen. I didn’t want to listen to anyone.” ... “I think that this school has shaped me to be a young man.” ... “My favourite thing at this school was how all the students and teachers were so supportive because the students have come from the same background and the teachers would not judge you for who you were so thanks for everything. Thanks the John Berne School”.

“I came to Berne in Term 3 2008 from another high school. At that school I was getting involved in many fights with other students and had many suspensions. I was close to being expelled. Since coming to Berne I have calmed down a lot and am more relaxed. We students get on well together. I have found the schoolwork and the exams very challenging but have got through it all with the help of Ed and all the staff.”

“Since coming to Berne my behaviour has improved quite tremendously: I’m a lot calmer than I was before.”

“Love ya Berne, and thanks for everything – you will always be in my heart.”

“This school helps people in many ways: people’s behaviour, disabilities, anger issues and anything you can think of and don’t even realise until the end. But then, you know, all the help you got was worth it. That’s why I don’t want to leave this school: they have helped me with my work, my behaviour and even stuff outside school. I’d like to thank all my teachers, all the staff and all the volunteers that have helped me get the best education possible.”

“My behaviour has changed and is still changing as I go on. The John Berne School has taught me to not just respect myself, but to also respect others.”

“My behaviour changed when I came to Berne as the staff and students understood me and my situation a little better.”

BERNE SUPPORTERS

The John Berne School would like to express thanks for the support it receives from organisations and individuals in the wider community including:

Belmore Returned Services & Community Club; Canterbury Bulldogs; City Tattersalls Club; Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club; Dooleys Lidcombe Catholic Club; Ex-Marist Mothers’ Association; Illawarra Catholic Club; Mortdale RSL Club; St George Foundation; Wests Ashfield.

We are also very grateful for the constant support of our many volunteers. It would not be possible to achieve everything we do at this school if it wasn't for the valued assistance of our generous volunteers who provide support to us in so many ways including day-to-day classroom assistance; Special Examination Provisions; Careers Days and Motivational Speakers; grounds and equipment maintenance; support on camps and excursions; fundraising; and help in the Canteen.

Thanks also to all those people who provided financial support and who wanted to remain anonymous. Your financial and moral support is appreciated by staff, students and families.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The financial position of the Berne Education Centre has been audited by VJ Ryan Chartered Accountants.

Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 31 December 2008

REVENUE	\$
Fees – Tuition	122,894
Fees – Others	28,589
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	151,483
Interest	7,379
State Govt Grants – General Recurrent	215,595
Commonwealth Govt Grants – General Recurrent	874,848
Special Education & Special Disabilities	2,000
Province	336,785
Tuckshop Gross Profit/(Deficit)	(6,504)
Donations	110,785
Fundraising	54,085
Gain on Sale of Assets	2,689
Refunds	-
Other Income	1,984
<u>TOTAL REVENUE</u>	1,751,129
<u>LESS EXPENDITURE</u>	
Tuition Expenses and Materials	1,593,149
Administration and General Running Costs	170,438
	<hr/>
<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>	1,763,587
<u>SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR THE PERIOD</u>	<u>(12,458)</u>