



The John Berne School

Annual School Report to the Community

2009

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MISSION STATEMENT

At the heart of Berne there is a relationship between Jesus and Mary, lived out through the example of Marcellin Champagnat.

In this spirit, we welcome those students who have struggled to find their place in main-stream schooling.

Within our inclusive community, and with a sense of connectedness, we live out this relationship with these students, enabling them to see beyond their troubles and daring them to dream. In this way, we encourage them to adopt in their lives the motto: *“Hope Always”*.

This journey at Berne will allow them to open new doors, building foundations and opportunities for the future.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The John Berne School, Lewisham, is registered by the Board of Studies (NSW) and managed by the Trustees of the Marist Brothers', the 'approved authority' for the Registration System formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act 1990.

The *Annual Report to the School Community* for this year provides the school community with fair, reliable and objective information about school performance measures and policies, as determined by the Minister for Education.

The *Report* also outlines information about initiatives and developments of major interest and importance to the school community during the year and the achievements arising from the implementation of the school's Strategic Plan.

This *Report* complements and is supplementary to school newsletters and other regular communications. The *Report* will be available on the school's website by 30 June 2010 following its submission to the Board of Studies.

Further information about the school or this *Report* may be obtained by contacting the school on 02 9560 9260 or by visiting the website at www.johnberneschool.org.

PRINCIPAL: BR DARREN BURGE

DATE: 29th June, 2010

MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

Principal's Message

The 2009 school year at The John Berne School was dominated by the building project made possible by the federal government's BER package. This enabled us to complete work on a multipurpose space used as our assembly area into which we added two extra learning areas. Refurbishment to other classrooms, the front office / reception area and the staff preparation room has given us greater pride in our environment creating a more inviting space.

The technology provided by the stimulus package has put more computers into classrooms, connected new areas of the school to the internet and generally upgraded our infrastructure. The teaching staff are excited about the new possibilities that this creates in their classroom practise. The better hardware, software and increased connectivity has already initiated more inservicing on computer technology and pedagogy and has sparked motivation to use these resources more creatively. In this special school context where students with learning needs and/or disabilities struggle to access the curriculum, the new technology can serve as a bridge to learning.

In the latter part of the year, the staff began a strategic planning process. The many steps from October 2009 to January 2010 began with the staff articulating and crafting a Mission Statement which reflects who we are and what we do at this point in our history. The strategic plan has set out our focus for the next three years and clearly established our priorities for 2010. The plan has been developed around the following five areas:

- 1, Spirituality and Religious Education
2. Pastoral Care / Student Management
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Professional Learning / Leadership
5. Partnerships

Following the Board of Studies Review the school was again granted registration and accreditation for another five years. In the lead up to this, further review of policies and practices took place. A curriculum review also facilitated greater discussion and collaboration amongst staff as we honestly examined our strengths and weaknesses. Many hours of new programming has already taken place laying the foundation for greater reflection on our practices and has enthused the staff. The new digitised reporting system is one immediate benefit that will be felt early in 2010.

Our new bonus point system, built on the theory of a “token” economy, also evolved in the latter part of 2009 and is operational from the beginning of 2010. This is a school wide approach which attempts to put even greater emphasis on student achievement and growth within and without the classroom.

The 2009 school year was one of enormous growth and development. It has laid a solid foundation for the coming years.

The staff is to be congratulated for their hard work, passion and enthusiasm for making a difference in the lives of troubled young people.

Br Darren Burge
Principal

Parent Representative's Message

Most parents would agree that today's young people face a more complex and confusing path to maturity than any previous generation. The appalling behaviour and moral standards of some sporting heroes, politicians and even high court judges makes it ever harder to find role models to aspire to. Questioning and challenging is a normal and healthy part of adolescence but has to be done appropriately and with respect. Young people who are unable or unwilling to do this find there are limits to the tolerance of them in mainstream education. Those who do not learn by their mistakes risk being excluded from the opportunity to learn and of leaving school marginalised and ill-equipped to realise their potential to become valued and productive members of the community. Mainstream schools do not have the resources or special skills to persevere with pupils who are consistently non-compliant to the school's requirements of acceptable behaviour. Ultimately they expel such students rather than have the other pupils' education compromised by classroom disruptions.

John Berne School is quite different. The resources, teacher pupil ratio and most crucially the high level of skill in addressing demanding behaviours has meant that our son was not (as he was in imminent danger of) written off by the education system but instead was able, in time, to turn things around to the point that he left having achieved higher scores in his school certificate than he ever believed possible. Rather than leaving school angry and embittered and with few prospects he is now well settled into an apprenticeship where he is highly regarded, with optimism and ambition for his future. Thank you Brother Darren and all the staff at John Berne for what you gave to our son and to our family.

Volunteer's Message

The John Berne School has a small group of dedicated volunteers who attend the school each week to assist the staff in the care and teaching of the students. Most of us are not experienced teachers but we do bring with us experience of life from many different occupations and working environments. Each of us appreciates the very special role which the teachers at the school are undertaking with the young people in their care. We marvel at the enthusiasm and dedication of all the staff. We feel privileged to assist as the students work towards the School Certificate examination and having as many opportunities as possible available to them in the workforce. Some volunteers also provide very valuable assistance with administrative duties in the school office and in the canteen. During the School Certificate examination and trial examinations

volunteers act as personal supervisors / readers / writers for students who have been granted this assistance. The volunteers endeavour to ensure that the students keep focussed on the task and encourage the best possible effort from them.

During 2009, some of us worked in class with students in Years 7 and 8 for the first time. While we were able to assist in the usual way in class, hopefully we have gained extra knowledge about these students which will enable us to assist them in class more effectively as they progress through Years 9 and 10. Some of us became involved also with special assistance programs in reading and spelling with individual students. For the students involved, these programs proved very successful in improving literacy capabilities.

Besides the general assistance we are able to provide in the classroom. We are conscious that we can be good role models as mature, responsible and committed adults for the young people. We can sometimes bring a different perspective in discussions, both in class and during recess periods. Often we learn from the young people too as they deal with particular difficulties and succeed in spite of these challenges.

Personally, I have been involved with the school since 2003. I had just retired and answered a request for volunteers although I had not been in a classroom for more than 40 years and wondered if I would be able to assist at all. The teachers were very gentle with their 'new boy' and I realised immediately that these special teachers were involved in an area of great need. When you have been witnessing the dedication of the staff and the struggles during the year, to have most students remain at school and sit for the School Certificate presents as a remarkable achievement. The Year 10 Graduation Ceremony which celebrates this achievement, often against the odds despite much love and support at home and tireless efforts from the staff, is for me and all the volunteers, an awe-inspiring event.

John Cowen
Volunteer

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. Students attending this school come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. In May 2009 there were 93% male students and 7% female students and approximately 5% of students identified as indigenous.

The 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 fortnight to assist with their behavioural needs. The Counselling team also conducts Parenting Programs and other practical support to families.

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. At the end of the long journey to school from all parts of Sydney, students need a good breakfast. Research shows that student performance is enhanced by about 50% as a result of breakfast.

job ready! Program

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 nine week work experience placement course in Years 9 and 10. The Work Education unit for the School Certificate is completed within the context of this program.

Student Withdrawal Assistance Program

SWAP offers a supervised environment in the short term for students who have been suspended from their mainstream school. It provides a forum for thorough assessment of a student's cognitive and academic strengths and weaknesses as well as disturbances in mood and behaviour. This program aims to provide other schools with an affordable service which allows them to respond more appropriately to the special needs of students who are struggling.

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 individual needs.

Cracking the Code Literacy Program

The students participate in a program that addresses their literacy needs. This is a direct instruction program that takes place four times per week for thirty minutes.

Outdoor Education Program

Demanding outdoor challenges helps students to develop their personal attitudes and values of self-esteem, motivation, confidence, team work and responsibility. It aims to enable students to access the curriculum more effectively. Students with even greater need are identified and further weekly instruction addresses their specific needs.

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

Catholic Life and Religious Education opportunities continue to flourish at the John Berne School.

The Marist Tradition is embraced. Champagnat Day (June 6) and John Berne Day (Oct 10) are two of our special Religious Education days where direct links are forged to this tradition. The presence of our Marist Brothers, Brothers Darren, Michael and Chris, gives great witness to the special connection that Marists have with the education of young people.

The Faith Formation Committee, which was formed in 2008, continues to discuss ways to further enhance the religious experience of the Berne community. During the strategic planning workshops, a program was developed implementing a Religious Education lesson for each year group. Staff retreats were planned, staff involvement with Provincial programs such as "Sharing Our Call" and "Schools of the Spirit" continued.

School Masses are held every term celebrating the opening of the school year, Champagnat Day, John Berne Day and All Souls. At some of these Masses, rituals have been established that encourage the community to reflect at a deeper level, one of these rituals is lighting a candle for a special intention.

Our annual pilgrimage to The Hermitage in Mittagong on Holy Thursday is a moving experience for many of those present. During this time the school community wanders through the grounds following the Way of the Cross. Students and staff participate by reading a scripture passage at each station and responding accordingly. The journey concludes in the Chapel where end of term awards are presented.

It is however, through the compassion and care of the staff, through their actions and empathy with our students, that true Gospel values are witnessed at Berne. 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.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The John Berne School is an Independent Catholic school, owned and operated by the Marist Brothers. This school adheres to the Board of Studies syllabus for each of the courses offered. During 2009, the school obtained registration for five years.

In 2009, subject coordinators ensured that aims, outcomes and teaching and learning activities were delivered in a meaningful way. The teachers and their respective subject areas attempted to utilise cross-curricula and I.C.T. tasks to assist with such a delivery.

The John Berne School offers the five mandatory courses of: Science, Mathematics, Geography, History and English. Other courses offered include: PDHPE, Visual Arts and Industrial Technology – Wood. In our Years 7 and 8 extra subjects such as Technology (mandatory) and Music were offered. As a continuation, the Skills-Based Program was offered with varying degrees of success. It is anticipated that Religion will be offered as an essential part of the curriculum during 2010.

During 2009 our teaching facilities were refurbished which included a new staff area, computer room and a new tutorial-style classroom. A Smartboard was included in the tutorial room to assist with the curriculum delivery.

Our Learning Advancement Centre continued to be utilised effectively for some students requiring a more one-to-one delivery and break-down of the curriculum.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN TESTS

National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

In 2009 students in Year 7 and Year 9 sat the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). An analysis of these results assists the school assessment and planning and is used to support teaching and learning programs.

In 2009 at the time of the NAPLAN testing, the school did not have any students enrolled in Year 7.

The table provided below 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. The John Berne School's population is small and highly variable from year to year. Many students enter the school only months before the testing. The school also has a commitment to sit as many students as possible for the testing, despite the fact that some students may meet criteria for exclusion from testing. The school values the testing data as an adjunct to the school's assessment and teaching practice, but the school does not see this data as a complete or sometimes valid measurement of school outcomes for all students.

The Year 9 student bands reflect both the school's effort to increase the literacy competencies of students and to include the total student population in the assessment. School programs which address spelling and reading skills are showing good school results in Reading, Writing and Spelling. The areas of Grammar and Punctuation still need more emphasis in teaching and learning areas. Spelling scores are consistently higher in all areas and this could be a result of a whole school research based program that has been in place for two years.

It is difficult to assess the school's performance using the NAPLAN results due to variation in student population and entrance performance. A more meaningful assessment would be to look at entrance assessment and individual results in relation to the time at the school.

NAPLAN % in bands		Overall Literacy						Numeracy					
		Top band		Top 3 bands		Minimum Standards		Top band		Top 3 bands		Minimum Standards	
		School ¹	National ²	School ¹	National ²	School ¹	National ²	School ¹	National ²	School ¹	National ²	School ¹	National ²
Year 7	2009	-	9%	-	55%	-	94%	-	10%	-	55%	-	96%
	2008	0%	8%	100%	53%	100%	94%	0%	12%	100%	55%	100%	95%
Year 9	2009	0%	6%	27%	46%	63%	91%	0%	8%	27%	52%	90%	95%
	2008	0%	6%	0%	45%	57%	91%	0%	8%	0%	47%	72%	94%
NAPLAN % of students performing at or above minimum standards		Components of Literacy								Notes: Year 7: Highest band = band 9; Lowest band = band 4; Bands 5-9 represent the % of students at or above minimum standards Year 9: Highest band = band 10; Lowest band = band 5; Bands 6-10 represent the % of students at or above minimum standards ¹ Source: SMART data analysis package ² Source: NAPLAN Summary Report 2009 (www.naplan.edu.au). The figure for <i>Overall Literacy</i> is calculated by taking the average of the Literacy components.			
		Reading		Writing		Spelling		Grammar and Punctuation					
		School ¹	National ²	School ¹	National ²	School ¹	National ²	School ¹	National ²				
Year 7	2009	-	94%	-	93%	-	93%	-	92%				
	2008	100%	94%	100%	92%	100%	92%	100%	92%				
Year 9	2009	67%	92%	54%	88%	81%	90%	63%	90%				
	2008	72%	93%	34%	87%	53%	90%	53%	90%				

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.

School Certificate: % of students in bands 4, 5, 6						
	2007		2008		2009	
	School	State	School	State	School	State
English Literacy	81%	73%	70%	76%	82%	77%
Mathematics	31%	46%	25%	49%	18%	70%
Science	63%	67%	45%	65%	70%	73%
Australian History	62%	61%	45%	51%	53%	71%
Australian Geography	76%	72%	55%	66%	64%	72%

The students attending 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 82% of our cohort attaining bands 4, 5 or 6 in English literacy in 2009 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.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER STANDARDS

Professional learning

It was our aim this year to ensure that all teachers, especially those at Professional Competence level, were targeted for continued development. As well as those staff presentations held within the school, many external presentations relating to specific subject areas were on offer. It should be noted that one major thrust this year was to offer staff the opportunity to learn and use the Interactive White Board. Two Interactive White Boards were placed in two rooms on site. Staff members have been inserviced with the operational wherewithal to get this technology started and to become familiar with its intricate uses. As an add-on to this, the Association of Independent Schools offered in-house in-services on how to operate the Interactive White Boards at The John Berne School.

One other very important priority during 2009 was to ensure New Scheme Teachers or those at Professional Competence maintained their accreditation. This required such teachers to actively seek Professional

Development which was Institute of Teaching Accredited, so as to maintain peak levels of professionalism for their five year accreditation. This will continue into 2010.

In 2009 the following Professional Development opportunities were undertaken:

Tough Teens / Challenging Children; The Challenge of Special Education in Catholic Schools; Cybersafety Outreach Workshop; Sport and Spirituality Symposium; Boy Oh Boy – Dr Tim Hawkes; TAFE Careers Information Day; Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders;. All staff undertook the following training: Anaphylaxis Training; Trauma and Compassion Trauma and Listening; CPR Training; Restorative Justice Training.

Teacher Standards

The following table sets out the number of teachers on the school 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

TEACHER ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

John Berne School maintained a quota of 15 full time and 1 part time teachers in 2009. The average teacher attendance rate during 2009 was 98%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave. The teacher retention rate from 2008 to 2009 was 100%.

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

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for the school during 2009 was 84%. School attendance rates disaggregated by year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance rates by Year group	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
	100%	89%	88%	78%

Students attending Berne are enrolled on the basis of diagnosed disability and/or inability to cope in mainstream schools. Attendance rates fluctuate annually reflecting the personal situations of the student cohort at the time.

A number of our student population are school refusers or have had poor attendance records at previous schools. If a student is not at school by 9.30 am then the office staff make a telephone call to the parents or caregivers. This serves to make parents accountable for the whereabouts of their son/daughter. The students are aware of this policy and our adherence to it. Consequently, truancy is rarely an issue.

Our preparedness to work with parents, including through our *Parenting in Practice* course, helps parents to deal with students who are refusing to come to school and establishes a good relationship with the school. The alternative education program we have in place here and the individual planning reduces the incidence of non-attendance as students find the program more appropriately tailored to their needs than a mainstream school can achieve. However, in more extreme cases the Principal or member of the leadership team, accompanied by a counsellor, will visit the family home to address the issues and bring the student to school.

POST SCHOOL DESTINATIONS

Each year the school collects destination data relating to the Year 10 student cohort.

Eighteen students successfully completed their School Certificates in 2009 and graduated from Year 10 at the John Berne School.

The school maintains two programs, the job ready! and Changing Lanes Programs, aimed at the development of employability skills through participation in a range of activities, including Careers Day workshops and work experience placements each term in Years 9 & 10.

During 2009:

- More than 120 employers provided work experience opportunities students in Years 9 & 10.
- Careers Days workshops each term were designed around mentoring experiences for students.
- Parents attended events at school that were specifically designed to help them help their children make decisions about what do to when they left Berne.
- A Careers Expo was held for Year 10 students and their parents and carers, and was attended by representatives from industries identified by students as being of interest to them.
- Students sought assistance in getting their tax file numbers, opening bank accounts and finding part time work while still at school.
- 50% of 2008 graduating students made appointments as part of the Changing Lanes Program seeking assistance. This number was augmented by a smaller amount of students from previous years, too, maintaining contact through Changing Lanes.

As at April 2010, graduating students from 2009 (who completed the full range of programs at school) are represented as follows:

27% engaged in full time study of Year 11 courses

27% engaged in full time employment (apprenticeship or general employment)

27% engaged in part time study at TAFE

13% engaged in actively looking for work and/or study via participation with the JSA network

6% (one student) not able to be represented in the above.

To summarise, 81% of Year 10 graduates, six months after graduation, are engaged in full time employment, full time study or part time study.

SCHOOL POLICIES

Amongst the various policies of the school is a one entitled *Pastoral Care, Behaviour Management and Discipline*. This policy addresses student welfare and discipline. It explains the use of the Behaviour Management Record, the cornerstone of our behaviour management approach. This card makes a daily record of students' behaviour and application to tasks. It incorporates the bonus point system that encourages positive behaviour. The bonus point system has been changed and upgraded in recent times and we are in the process of adjusting this policy to reflect the change. The policy also outlines our behavioural expectations and the use of consequences in dealing with negative behaviour, including

suspension and exclusion. The exclusion policy is consistent with the process required by the Marist Brothers Sydney Province in their independent schools. Exclusion would only be used in rare cases and requires the Principal to consult with the Regional Director of the Marist Ministries Office, Drummoyne. The policy includes references to the part played by the counsellors in working with students to achieve better outcomes in the many dimensions of their lives. Corporal punishment is never used at any time and the school is strongly opposed to such techniques.

A grievance policy has been updated for the staff outlining the steps that they can use to address issues of conflict or tension amongst themselves. In the first instance, staff are encouraged to address the matter directly amongst themselves and if this is ineffective they are given options and steps, including approaching members of the leadership team and an officer (one of our counsellors) to deal with grievances.

A complaints policy has been updated in recent times explaining the approach that parents or members of the public can use to address concerns that they have. A reminder of this policy and where it can be found is now placed in the school newsletter each term. This policy also lists the steps to resolving complaints.

Full text of 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.

This enrolment process is consistent with the enrolment policy and philosophy of the Marist Brothers of the Sydney Province for their independent schools.

SCHOOL DETERMINED IMPROVEMENT TARGETS

Behaviour Management and Pastoral Care

In 2009 we implemented changes to the Behaviour Management Record and its daily application. This

simple card, the cornerstone of our system, enables staff and students themselves to monitor their behaviour and application to school work. The staff has developed a clearer picture of how to use the card thereby ensuring greater consistency in expectations and the application of consequences. These basic changes have had a significant impact on the students' behaviour and have also served to draw the staff into an even stronger team.

The counsellors and teachers have worked more closely to find common ground in approaching issues with students. The counsellors have facilitated some staff in-services in order to assist teachers in finding different ways of responding to a range of complex and difficult behaviours. Teachers and counsellors have reported their appreciation of these opportunities. A new bonus point system is now being trialled in 2010 as a result of these meetings.

Literacy

In 2009 a new member of staff was added to the literacy team in order to address those students who have significant problems and are struggling to access the curriculum effectively. A more systematic approach was devised and will be expanded in 2010.

Research Project

A research project was begun in conjunction with Dr Roger Vallance from the Australian Catholic University in October 2009. He devised a comprehensive questionnaire for Year 10 students and their parents and conducted interviews with each student so as to document the students' experience of their time at Berne. This project will be expanded to staff, ex-students and other members of the community who interact with our school in 2010. Ultimately, we are hoping this will provide us with valuable data to evaluate our services and their impact.

Fundraising

The Finance Advisory Committee has identified initiatives for greater fundraising opportunities. We set ourselves the task of broadening our options in this area. Consequently, in November two new events were initiated: a golf day at Northbridge Golf Course and a Recital Evening at St Joseph' College. Both were successful starts but we have learned a number of things about enhancing the number of participants, and hence the financial outcome. The increased funding will go toward the extra services and programs that we conduct for our students with special needs.

Strategic Plan

In 2009, we wanted to consolidate the beginnings of a strategic plan that was begun in 2008. This was achieved and targets set for 2010 and beyond. It involved a consultative process with the community, especially the staff. This enabled us to begin to address various issues toward the end of 2009. A copy of this strategic plan and the priorities for 2010 are available from the school office.

INITIATIVES PROMOTING RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Overarching all aspects of the programs at Berne is providing experiences for our students which enable them to have the best opportunities to contribute positively to society, to be aware of others and to be content and happy within themselves.

An integral component of our program that helps promote respect and responsibility is Berne's Outdoor Education Program. There are a number of camps for each year group that are held every year including the Snow Camp for Years 9 and 10 in term 3, teambuilding camp to Gerroa in Term 1 for our year 8 students and a challenge camp that is run by a team from Marist Youth Care for Year 9 in Term 1. All students participated in at least three camps throughout the year. The Outdoor Education Program has been designed specifically to encourage students to participate in demanding outdoor challenges where they are supported so as to help them improve their personal attitudes, sense of self, confidence, team work, respect for the needs and abilities of others and responsibility. The students established modus operandi is constantly 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.

It is essential for our students to constantly see the real life examples of people who have overcome difficulties in their lives and to be able to come face to face with the reality that there are people who truly do understand that life is often not what they expected it to be but who have made a conscious decision to make a difference. We are very fortunate to have a core group of people who regularly attend our school to share their life experience with our students but also who challenge their thinking and understanding. Of special significance is Ken Marslew the founder of Enough is Enough who is presenting to the school in 2010 a special award for the contribution the school has made to being a peacemaker in our society. Ken visits the school to speak to students about the importance of focusing on personal responsibility and 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.

Another significant group that regularly visits our school are presenters from the Youthsafe Program who help our students to recognise and manage dangerous risk-taking in a variety of contexts and encourage them to make safer, responsible choices. The important aspect of this presentation is that the students see first hand what can happen when responsibility is not part of a decision because the presenters have all had accidents that were a result of negligence on their own part and want to share with the students the consequences of their actions.

Every student at Berne is allocated a counsellor who assists them throughout their time at the school and often after they have left as well. The counselling team work alongside the teaching staff so that the whole person is being looked after on a daily basis and so all members of the Berne team have a better understanding of the challenges that face the students. As such the students are constantly being challenged to focus on their individual goals and are given guidance and help to become responsible for the outcome of their actions and to learn skills that help them cope better with these consequences. A significant part of this is developing empathy within each student towards other people and the wider community.

From the time the school originated, a restorative justice approach to conflict between members of the school community has been undertaken. This can happen informally on a regular basis as staff work with the students to guide them in taking responsibility for their actions. There is also a more formal approach for situations where there have been more significant breaches in relationships. This involves interviews with counsellors for both parties to enable them to reflect on their behaviour and to understand on a deeper level what triggered the situation, what action was undertaken and what the alternative options for behaviour could be in the future if the same situation was to occur. 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.

It is important for our students to develop an understanding of other people who have been disadvantaged in their life through no fault of their own and to learn how to act responsibly towards these people as members of our community. Prejudices are always a result of ignorance; so to help overcome this in some small way is allowing our students to interact with others who are different to them. Over the last 13 years, students from Berne have developed a special connection with the students at Mater Dei College, Camden.

Visiting the students at the school has enabled our students to learn respect towards others and also to develop a tolerance and understanding that for some students did not exist before.

PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT SATISFACTION

As indicated elsewhere in this report, a research project was begun towards the end of 2009. This resulted in surveys and interviews of staff, students and parents. This is the most comprehensive review we have attempted in the life of the school. The project is continuing during 2010. A report of the first stage of this review is being released in the middle of 2010. Some overall impressions are recorded below.

The student surveys revealed a deep appreciation for the work the staff does for them at Berne. This highlighted, almost to a person, that the school has had a positive impact on them and has changed their experience of education significantly. They cite how their results and confidence in their academic ability has grown in their time here. The single most common comment indicated that they have felt genuinely cared for and the relationship with their teachers and counsellors has impacted on all aspects of their lives. The work experience program was also mentioned as a helpful aspect in preparing them for the future. By the start of 2010, eighty percent of graduates had either secured a job and further education or were embarking on it.

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

“I owe a lot to the teachers and staff of The John Berne School. Every one has helped me in their own way and without them I wouldn’t be the person I am today.”

“Since coming to Berne, I have changed in many ways. I see a different side of school now and I have gotten to know myself better and believe in myself more.”

“Berne has helped me to challenge myself more to see what I can do and has shown me how to be a better person.”

“Berne has helped me with my behaviour issues and also my knowledge of school work.”

“I believe I have changed since the start of my time at Berne in many ways, like now I don’t lie as much as I used to, also now I will take responsibility for my actions.”

“Berne has helped me understand more about the subjects and now I can pass my tests and exams.”

“I have changed and grown in my time at Berne by learning how to cope in negative and positive situations.”

“Through my time at Berne I have learnt to control my temper better and to take responsibility for my actions.”

“Berne has helped me by giving me opportunities through work-experience and to find things that I like doing.”

“My first impression of Berne was that I was welcomed here and it was more of a caring environment.”

“Since I have been at Berne I have learnt how to manage my anger and get more work completed. I am more focused now in classes and I don’t get into any more fights.”

“The teachers didn’t pick on me and they are always good to you no matter what.”

“Since coming to Berne, I have been more responsible and I’ve been more respectful to people.”

The staff has indicated a high level of satisfaction in working at this school. Helping young people at risk remains important to them. The sense of being part of a team was rated as a source of satisfaction. The close working relationships with colleagues brings security and safety in what is difficult work. The changes in policy development and clarification of expectations were also cited as significant protective factors for staff. Enthusiasm was generated by the collaborative approach adopted when constructing the strategic plan making staff feel that they are heard and have a role in creating future practices and emphases. The spiritual underpinning of our work and the focus on this area at staff days is valued. In the eyes of the staff, this is at the core of what we do.

Parents have commented on the different style of education and its appropriateness for their son or daughter. This style, which gives attention to the individual needs of children, is at the heart of parents’ satisfaction. Parents believe that the child’s self esteem and chances of a better future have been enhanced in their time at Berne. The special care for the child and consistent support of parents has helped to change their experience of the education system and has resulted in a partnership between home and school. Parents have commented on the helpfulness of the *Parenting in Practice Program*. The holistic approach of the school was noted as a primary cause of their child’s recent growth and development.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The financial position of The John Berne School has been audited by VJ Ryan Chartered Accountants.

Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 31 December 2009

<u>REVENUE</u>	\$
Fees – Tuition	130,094
Fees – Others	24,241
	<hr/>
	154,335
Interest	4,650
State Govt Grants – General Recurrent	115,517
Commonwealth Govt Grants – General Recurrent	914,971
Special Education & Special Disabilities	2,000
Building Grant Province	305,930
Tuckshop Gross Profit/(Deficit)	370,000
Donations	(3,344)
Fundraising	91,841
Gain on Sale of Assets	42,628
Other Income	100
	<hr/>
	1,126
<u>TOTAL REVENUE</u>	<u>1,999,754</u>
<u>LESS EXPENDITURE</u>	
Tuition Expenses and Materials	1,695,090
Administration and General Running Costs	167,025
	<hr/>
<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>1,862,115</u>
<u>SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR THE PERIOD</u>	<u>137,639</u>

BERNE SUPPORTERS

The John Berne School would like to express thanks for the support it received during the year from organisations and individuals in the wider community including: Ashfield RSL Club; Canterbury Bulldogs; Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club; C.I.R. Property Maintenance; Club Ashfield; Commonwealth Bank; Ex-Marist Mothers' Association; Former Members Association; Holy Name of Mary Parish, Hunters Hill; Illawarra Catholic Club; Dooleys Lidcombe Catholic Club; Mary MacKillop Foundation; PaKay Pty Ltd; Petersham RSL Club; Rotary Club of Burwood; St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill; St Thomas Becket Parish, Lewisham; Tenix 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 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.

The John Berne School would like to acknowledge and thank all of the work experience host employers who generously gave of their time and shared their knowledge with our students. More than 110 businesses supported the **job ready!** Program in this way during 2009.

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.