Our Lady of La Vang
Specialist educational facility for students with intellectual disability

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School Assistance Act Report
2013

Contextual Information

Context
Our Lady of La Vang (formerly St Ann’s Special School) is a non-graded, Catholic special school that provides a specialized educational environment and facility for 54.2 FTE students aged between 5 and 20 years. The school has the capacity for a FTE enrolment of 63 students. All students have an intellectual disability; many have multiple disabilities and complex medical conditions.

Our Lady of La Vang is a division of Catholic Special Schools Incorporated. It is responsible to a Board of Management. Membership is comprised of a Chairperson appointed by the Director of CESA, a secretary finance officer and two community members appointed by the Archbishop of Adelaide, the two Principals, and one staff and one parent representative staff from each school.

In June of 2013 St Ann’s Special School was officially closed and the school was relocated to the new purpose built facility at Flinders Park. The name of the school was changed to Our Lady of La Vang and was officially blessed and opened in October of 2013 by Archbishop Phillip Wilson and Mr Hue Van Le, Lieutenant Governor of South Australia. It is a contemporary, specialized educational facility containing the specialized resources and equipment necessary for these students.

With the active support of South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) and Catholic Education South Australia (CESA), the school is adequately funded. Funding is indexed and adjusted annually, based on student enrolment numbers. This financial security has resulted in achieving the necessary staffing levels for students to access a curriculum specifically designed to meet the needs of this cohort of students.

A formal leadership structure has been developed based on a distributive model. This is made up of the Principal, an Assistant Principal: Curriculum, an Assistant Principal: Operations and the Coordinator Wellbeing. Staffing is made up of professional educators, a Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and Education Support Officers.

The school is organized around three clusters: Early Years (5-10 yo), Middle Years (10-15 yo), and Senior Cluster (16-20 yo). Each Cluster is responsible to a teacher who has been formally appointed to the position of Lead Learner (POR 1 Level).
A new school website and prospectus celebrating this new school were developed in 2013.

The school has an active Parents and Friends Group who work cooperatively with staff and the Parent Liaison Coordinator to develop community at the school. While they raise much needed funds for the school this is done through a range of social activities. However, the major emphasis of their work is to develop effective connections and supportive relationships amongst parents/carers of the students at the school.

1. **Staff Attendance**
Professional staff attendance for the 2013 school year was 93% and our teachers took sick leave, carer’s leave and bereavement leave, as is their industrial entitlement.

2. **Staff Rates and Retention**
In Term 1 2012, 90% of our teaching staff were retained from the beginning of the previous program year. Two professional educators took Leave Without Pay to pursue employment with students with special needs in mainstream secondary Catholic Colleges. We celebrate the expertise, talent and commitment of our existing staff and that of our new staff members.

   Staff rates:
   - Teaching staff numbers and FTE teaching staff numbers 14.7
   - Non teaching staff members and FTE non-teaching staff members 20.0

3. **Teaching Qualifications**
A number of professional educators hold two or more qualifications in education: 57% Masters Degrees, 31% Bachelor Degrees and 12% hold Diplomas.

4. **Expenditure and Teacher Participation in Professional Learning**
In 2013 there has been 100% participation by the teaching staff in professional learning. There was a wide range of significant professional learning involving the whole school, Year Levels, Learning Areas and individual teaching staff and education support officers. As the school community has been informed of many of these throughout 2013 via the newsletter, some of the professional learning that has informed curriculum development for this program year includes:
   - Autism Strategies and Behavioral Support
   - Early Years Learning Framework: National Curriculum
   - Developing and Implementing a Play Based Curriculum
   - Child Development
   - Intensive Interaction: school based, cluster meetings and interstate conferences
   - Child Protection Updates and 7 Hour Courses
   - Beginning Teacher Courses
   - Counselling
   - Computer Education
   - Positive Programming and Behaviour Education
- Literacy for all Students
- Key Literacy Teacher Program
- Play for Literacy Workshops
- Religious Education Conferences and Seminars
- Communication Strategies with Intentional Communicators
- Connecting Pedagogy with Assessment
- Learning Stories
- Neuroscience and Learning
- Sensory Integration
- Stress Management
- Manual Handling
- Play Based Curriculum
- Coaching Courses
- Leadership Conferences
- Developing Outside Sensory Spaces
- Personal Development

In 2013 a total of approximately $20,000 was spent on professional learning for professional staff. In addition to this, Catholic Education SA provides professional development and consultancy services for all Catholic Education SA schools. Our teaching and support staff have been involved in other training and development that was supported and funded by Catholic Education including the Study Incentive Program.

Student Attendance
The average student attendance rate for our school in 2013 was 91.16%.
- Junior Cluster 92.18%
- Middle Cluster 89.18%
- Senior Cluster 93.07%

Student Non-Attendance
When a student is not attending school for the day, parents / caregivers ring or email the school informing personnel of the student’s absence and this is accordingly documented. If a student has not arrived by 9am, school personnel make contact with the parent / caregiver by phone.

Value Added
- **Programs:** Post School Options Program, Transition Education, Phoenix Society, Bedford, Sensory Gym Program, Intensive Interaction, Sensory Integration, Toileting Program, Kinder Gym, Positive Behavior Support Coordinator and Positive Programming, Undergraduate and Post Graduate programs for professional educators and Support Officers through the Study Incentive Program, speech pathologists and occupational therapists, community placements for secondary students and TAFE students completing certificates in disability, Graduation Ceremonies, Premier’s Reading Challenge.
- **Catholic Culture:** Liturgies, Opening and Closing Liturgies, Prayer at staff gatherings and meetings; Project Compassion, Sacramental Program, access for secondary schools and colleges to complete Year 11 Community Service programs, special Archdiocesan celebrations and Archbishops Awards.
• **Extra Curricular:** Involvement in the Catholic School Music Festival; Vacation Care run by Minda Inc.
• **Facilities:** see above

**Plans to Support Student Learning**
- A range of plans to support student learning and wellbeing are incorporated into the school’s practice. These include Individualised Education Plans (IEP), Behaviour Education Plans, Moving and Handling Plans, Personal Care Plans, Continence Care Plans and Oral Eating and Drinking Plans.
- The development and review of these plans require a significant amount of time, resources and energy. Considerable collaboration between home and school is required. It is hoped that the promotion of healthy home/school relationships continues to be a characteristic of this school community.

**Reports: Statement of Learning**
**All students are exempted from participating in the NAPLAN testing program.**
IEP’s are developed for all students in Terms 1 of the school year. Learning Stories are produced in the First Semester for all students. Formal reporting against IEP goals are produced in Semester Two.

**Post School Destinations**
A variety of post school pathways are provided for Our Lady of La Vang students and their families. They are supported in this process by a Transition Coordinator. 100% of students who left school in 2013 were successfully placed in a Business Enterprise Centre or a Day Options program and their achievements were celebrated in a graduation ceremony.

**Satisfaction Levels**
- **Staff**
  Please see attachment regarding staff satisfaction
- **Parents**
  Please see summary of questions and responses below.
- **Students**
  These are not obtainable in traditional ways with our students.

**Funding**
- **Government** $4,205,022
- **Fees** $168,919
- **Other** $199,487

**Conclusion**
I would like to sincerely thank all the staff of Our Lady of La Vang for the professional manner in which they approach their work and the commitment they display to the students. I would also like to thank the parents and members of the wider school community for their ongoing support of the work of the school. Most importantly I thank the students for their presence in our lives, for without them, the school would not exist.
Staff Satisfaction Survey

What 3 things give you the most satisfaction in your work?

Teaching and Learning

- The philosophy and pedagogy of the school which gives students voice and choice*
- Working as a “valued team member” to deliver a curriculum which best suits EACH individual student*
- How student focused we are and how students are encouraged to explore and be creative
- Teaching our students and going on a learning journey with them
- Playing with the kids
- That there are no set recess and lunch times
- “Smiles, joy and laughter” from students and staff*
- Making “real connections” and developing relationships to foster ongoing LEARNING for the students***
- Our open door policy
- The emphasis on training and access to training and professional development and learning, the encouragement we get to do this and sharing information with colleagues*****
- Being trusted to plan and implement an individualized play based curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for each student
- Learning Stories
- The students: growth, achievements, goals reached* and making a difference in their lives*
- Intensive Interaction sessions when I make a connection with a student
- Seeing the students in my care make progress and are happy and relaxed and making the most of everyday and watching them thrive*
- Watching our students engage and interact
- Winning: after completing new and challenging tasks
- Building relationships with staff and students alike
- Creating a warm, inviting atmosphere where students feel “at home”. Facilitating a rich, sensory learning environment, where students and staff talk. Create, discover and learn. Playing, singing, dancing, creating and doing dramatic play and storytelling with students. Encouraging staff participation in these activities
- Feeling and forbearance: Knowing that I am being supported by colleagues who really KNOW our student’s subtle but significant needs, and are always ready to lend a hand. I get most satisfaction from seeing those who put aside what their society has inculcated so as to appreciate what a student is feeling in that moment and understanding it from their perspective as much as possible.
- Bringing out the best in me and letting the students be
- Not making our students do maths or English that they will NEVER understand or be of any use to them
**Staffing**

- Having the staffing to allow time to spend with each student
- Supportive and consultative leadership
- The skill level of the staff
- The way the Junior Cluster works is a great example of staff cooperation and sharing. How they work as a team, to support not only students but each other
- Team work: colleague interactions for common goals and staff dedication
- Positive relationships with staff members, good team work, and an excellent support network system
- Having great support from our leaders and our colleagues
- Working collaboratively: the warm, non-competitive, congenial relations between staff is such a special and unique aspect of working at OLOLV. I feel there is equal partnership between staff regardless of their role or professional status.
- Being open and helping each other

**Environment**

- Working in a beautiful environment with mostly united colleagues in a student centred learning facility
- Welcoming people into our school community and organizing community events
- Working in an open and calm environment
- Fluidity and Freedom: the flexibility and openness of sharing classrooms, toys etc, and especially seeing the students interact with just about anything and anyone they choose in any given moment. I get a lot of satisfaction knowing that our students anxieties are looked after in this one way, which then leads to better teaching/learning opportunities.
- Fun and Friendly: Beyond the stress is the fact that everyone is working (or attempting to work) towards the same goal of creating an atmosphere that is fun for both staff and students. There is a LOT of laughter.

**What 3 things give you the least satisfaction in your work?**

**Teaching and Learning**

- Staff that don’t always work in ways that supports the pedagogy of the school
- Not being able to spread myself around to each child at every minute
- Not knowing some triggers that may upset some children: a matter of learning, watching and getting to know everyone much better
- Some people still just don’t get it
- Not knowing some of the new students, especially in the Junior Cluster
- Feeling the need for more structure
- Getting people to be open and to learn
- Lack of relevant professional development
- Lack of communication re students/families having issues
- Sometimes my experience and knowledge are under utilized
- Cutting back on specialist teaching eg PE and Music
- Communication breakdown at OLOLV between staff and parents
- Still do not feel I have acquired sufficient knowledge and experience of Play, Intensive Interaction and Child Development
• This often doesn’t happen but any inconsistent approach (between staff or between staff and parents) in working with a student, can cause frustration. Inconsistent management may cause confusion for a student. Across a cluster, staff can have differing views regarding a situation. It can take a lot of thought and energy, on a teacher’s behalf, to introduce a new strategy to manage a student’s undesirable behavior or implement a new routine.

• It’s not with the work that I am dissatisfied but quite often I feel like I am not doing enough to help teachers in the area of managing behaviours triggered by anxiety.

• Sometimes, not often, I feel dissatisfied when I see a child with great learning potential ignored or unattended because there are more urgent matters at hand such as melt downs, lock downs and break downs (mostly in communication) Oh the tyranny of the urgent!!

• Loss of our music lesson and/or music based assembly

Negativity in the Workplace
• The gossip mill and staff that participate in “Chinese Whispers”
• People who moan about no set recess and lunch times
• People who moan about our open door policy
• People who don’t cope with or accept change

Time and Workload
• COMPUTERS!!! Slowly improving thanks to Mary K and Luke
• Workload, particularly in Term 1 and Semester 1, deadlines, working under pressure
• Extra admin workload: W & C Feedback to people you don’t work with*
• Injuries in the workplace. Our work environment brings many challenges, so SAFETY is so important!
• Feelings of exhaustion (sometimes)
• Inconsistencies in staffing: never know who will be absent, who you are working with etc
• Lack of time to access computer online info due to bus commitments
• Stressful situations which may occur eg staff, student injury and high anxiety levels of some students
• No time to interact with students and staff members from the Middle and Junior Cluster
• Paperwork*: I feel it piles up sometimes and then I have to spend time at home catching up
• Data entry
• I get the least satisfaction when I have a “touch and go” day, going in and out of classrooms but not having the proper time to interact with the students on a deeper level

Environment
• Swipe cards do not always work quickly enough when issues arise*
• Faulty fixtures and doors
• Cupboards in classroom hard to lock or don’t lock at all
• Undercover walkway for Juniors*
• The gap between the junior cluster and the rest of the school
Parent Satisfaction Survey 2014

Can you please list 3 things that are done well at OLoLV?

- The focus and interaction with our child
- The trust that has developed between our child and staff
- The opportunity to go on excursions, to see and be involved in the wider community
- Inclusivity of all children regardless of developmental issues
- Understanding and empathy amongst all staff members towards children
- Wide range of activities throughout the day
- Parent communication
- Individualised education
- Respect for neurodiversity and children’s individual needs/ uniqueness
- Great staff
- Safe environment, Good facilities
- Ensuring my child is happy
- Safe
- Is allowed to do things he enjoys as well as what is required
- Friendly, approachable, welcoming
- Care for each individual family
- Flexible and adaptive
- Staffing levels are good and the staff are all excellent!
- Beautiful, happy and safe environment
- Meeting the differing, individual needs of each pupil
- Lots of one on one time for students
- Catering to students’ interests
- Providing a fantastic facility
- Selection of amazing staff
- Developing a program of learning that is appropriate to each cluster
- Developing a feeling of community
- Cultural/community of the school
- School set-up – facilities
- General level of care
- Very efficient and understanding staff
- Child – teacher bonding
- One paragraph in the diary highlighting the daily activities
- Parent Liaison officer – info to parents
- Fosters a sense of community
- Good for communication in a generic sense eg. Access to staff and newsletter
- Concerns are listened to
- School is very well resourced
- Staff are caring and pro-active
- Emotional well being
- Staff genuinely care about students/families
• Staff tailor learning programs to be flexile and responsive to childrens’ needs

Can you please list 3 things we could do better at OLoLV?

• We answered Question 1. With a 5, but we don’t really understand the curriculum for our child
• More communication (written) about how our child is learning and developing
• Would be wonderful to be able to have the opportunity to see our children, say, a couple of times a year, performing their normal class activities
• Everything is done so well, no issues have arisen
• Post school options (more choices other than ADE’s)
• Would love music teacher to come back! The music program was incredible!!
• Daily notes home
• Be more flexible
• Drop off point at junior side needs a buzzer
• Because my child is nonverbal I know nothing about his week till Friday where I may receive 4-5 pictures but no written feedback
• A small entry in his diary 2-3 times a week and not just when he’s been difficult
• Communication of non teacher base programs (i.e toileting, oral food intake) and their progress
• Pupils to have more regular contact with their non-disabled peers/schools
• Daily/weekly feedback/photo’s etc of activities and achievements
• I miss the communication in the diaries. I know this is an issue that has been hashed around but it really helps me to talk to my son about his day. It only has to be a line or two which helps build relationship with his teachers. eg I had to look on the website to learn about the city.
• Better communication between educators to parents (use of communication book)
• New to the school to answer this question, but would love to see more pictures (just one page) highlighting our child’s routine to be send per week.
• Specific communication about individual children
• Better explanation to parents (in lay language) as to why the pedagogy and the curriculum is best practice
• As my son is unable to tell me what he does daily I wish there was a procedure where I would receive written information as to what he has been doing.
• We are happy with how things are being done
• I would have liked there to be a place for my son’s communication system, proloquo2Go, as I am concerned about how he will communicate with others in the future who do not know him well.