

**Belmore School
4675**

**2008 Annual Report to the
School Community**



Growing together



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

School Overview

At Belmore School we are aiming to achieve a learning environment for our community that supports families and enhances self esteem, independence, wellbeing and safety for all students.

Belmore is a special school for students with physical disabilities and health impairments. In 2008 we had 63 students enrolled with an effective full time equivalent enrolment of 60 students, with a range from mild disability to students with multiple disabilities, who may have moderate to profound intellectual disability. A small but increasing number of students require intensive medical intervention.

Staff with very different skills work to devise and implement the programs that meet students' needs. The staff team comprises teachers, assistants, therapists (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and music therapy), nurse and attendant carers and an equipment technician. We have an ongoing relationship with Yooralla to provide therapy support.

Students come from the widest range of socio-economic backgrounds and a wide geographic area; however, children's disability brings emotional, financial and physical demands to all families. 23% of families are eligible to receive the Education Maintenance Allowance.

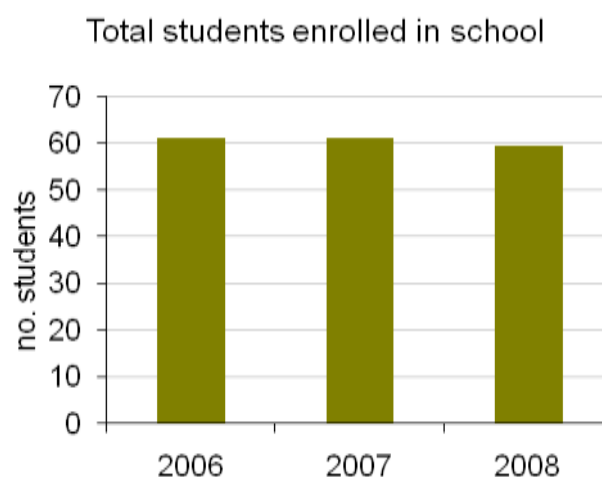
The school has strong partnerships in the community, with a large and loyal volunteer program. "Friends of Belmore" provide many supports for families.

The curriculum is based on the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and is delivered in integrated thematic units.

Belmore School is very well equipped. All classrooms have computer and food preparation facilities; many have ceiling hoists. A hydrotherapy pool, sensory room and sensory playground allow for the delivery of appropriate programs. A school owned bus allows community access for students. Every classroom is air-conditioned. We have appropriate and modern equipment to facilitate students' mobility, independence, communication and technology needs.

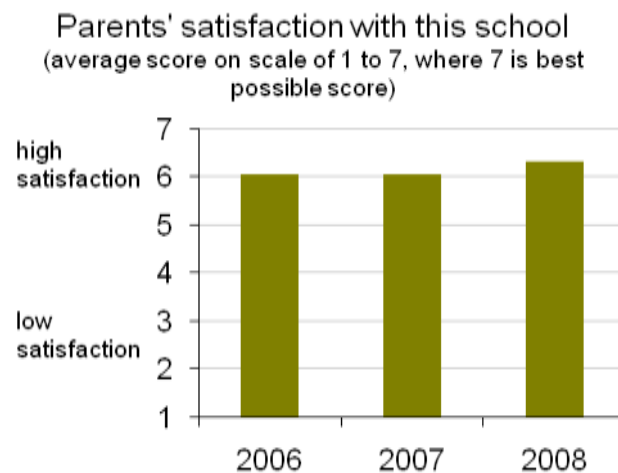
Student enrolments

The graph below shows a very stable pattern of student enrolments over the last three years.



Parent Satisfaction

The average score for parent satisfaction for Belmore school is 6.30 on a 7 point scale. In the survey parents are asked to what extent they agree with the statement "Overall, I am satisfied with the education my child receives from their school". This reflects a very high level of satisfaction with the school and an improvement from a high base.



Parents report very high levels of satisfaction between 6.41 and 6.02 for the following variables. They are listed in descending order:

- Teacher morale (6.41)
- Student motivation
- Student safety
- Approachability
- Student learning
- School improvement
- Behaviour management
- School connectedness
- Connectedness to peers
- Program support group
- Therapy services
- Parent input
- Learning focus
- Transitions (6.02)

Teacher Satisfaction

The average score for staff satisfaction (morale) at this school is 72.7.

Of the teaching staff at Belmore School at June 2007, all were still at the school at June 2008.

All teaching staff have participated in professional learning throughout the year such as Intensive Interaction, Communication, Conductive Education, Behaviour Management, First Aid. Teachers, therapists and assistants work closely in professional collaborative learning teams.

All teachers in Victorian government schools are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The requirements for registration with the Victorian Institute for teaching can be found at <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/content.asp?DocumentID=241>

Principal's Report

2008 has been a great year for Belmore School.

We have seen the consolidation of some excellent programs and the development of some innovative ones.

Students involved in Intensive Interaction have continued to expand their repertoire of responses and meaningful engagement with others. Conductive Education continues to be a mainstay of physical movement programs, with students acquiring and maintaining more control of the quality of their movement.

Community Access programs have been expanded this year, with more opportunities for excursions. Three groups have been on camp this year, with students experiencing the fun and independence that comes from being away from home. Riding for the Disabled continues to be an ambitious activity, and, along with the gym program encourages students to try their very best.

Some of our innovative programs this year have been TAC PAC and the use of sensory books. Several more independent students have had work experience placements.

We have had inter-school sport, in-house sports and lots of fun activity days during which the house captains have risen to the occasion.

Caitlin Morrison has been an absolute star and has continued her winning streak for the fourth time in coming first in the Australia Children's Music Songwriting Competition. This is a National Award!

Our parents' group have excelled all previous efforts with a magnificently successful auction night. We are putting the proceeds towards a new bus.

We have been involved in a building project at the Belmore Road end of the school. The ducting and old sheds have been removed, the wall has been repainted and we have a new sign and fence. We now present a much more attractive exterior to the passing traffic. We have also obtained new hoists in Room 9, Room 3 and the senior toileting bay. We have hoists now in all classrooms except Room 5.

We have gained accreditation as a school with a performance and development culture.

None of this would be possible without our magnificent staff, tremendously supportive parents and delightful students.

We needed to farewell two valued teachers who left at the end of 2008. Glenys Stent has had a very long relationship with Belmore School, and Jenny Laity has come more recently. Both teachers have had tremendous success with students and will be badly missed.

Congratulations Belmore School Community on another great year.

Student Progress & Achievements

Student Learning

We set out to provide challenging individual programs for students which would promote independence and wellbeing while meeting individual needs of students.

Student needs at Belmore are extraordinarily diverse and complex. Approximately one quarter of the 63 students at Belmore have very high support needs, requiring sensory stimulation programs, four of these require intensive medical intervention. One third of students have complex communication programs and one quarter of students are involved in intensive conductive education programs. Approximately one third of students are participating in modified academic programs.

Students at Belmore continue to make very pleasing progress in their learning areas. As an example, 88% of students have made "satisfactory or better" performance in communication. Students are assessed on their progress against their goals in English in their Individual Education Plan. The data indicates that Belmore School maintains the highest standards in communication. This reflects the emphasis in the school on speech pathology and music therapy, signing, PECs, switching, technology Intensive Interaction, and pragmatic communication programs.

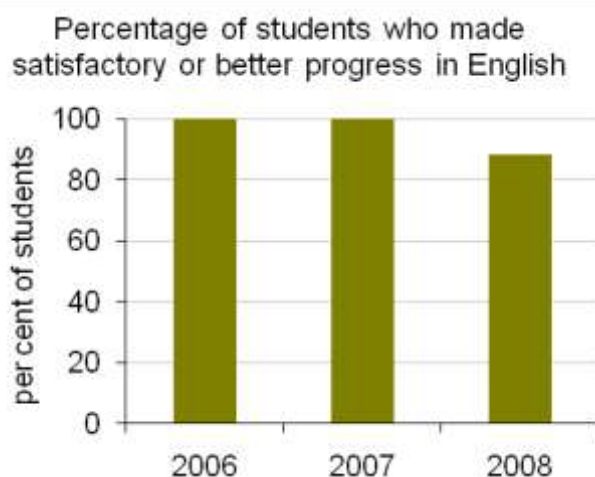
Students made measurable and significant progress, often in very small incremental steps. Data for this is recorded in individual student reports. Students made progress in communication throughout the school in the following skills – attention, picture exchange, symbol recognition, vocalisations, verbalisation, choice making, eye pointing, signing, use of multilevel communication books, use of electronic communication devices, speaking, functional reading and writing, computer use and handwriting.

Students made progress in motor skills, e.g. walking, standing, crawling, sitting balance, transferring, floating, swimming, grasping and releasing, improving the range of quality of their movements, using electric wheelchairs, pushing their own manual chairs and horse riding.

In 2008 Room 5 students also made intensive use of Auslan signing. They were assisted in this with support from Aurora School. Noticeable improvements were made in these students' communication skills, independence, self esteem and behaviour.

Intensive Interaction programs were continued in four classrooms (2 senior and 2 junior). These programs, for students with profound disabilities, generally led to improvements in student's engagement. In several cases dramatic improvements in student wellbeing were noted. This program was considered to be very successful by the school community and is to be expanded in 2009.

Percentage of students who made satisfactory or better progress in English



The drop in achievement of students' progress in English reflects more rigorous assessment of student progress against long term goals.

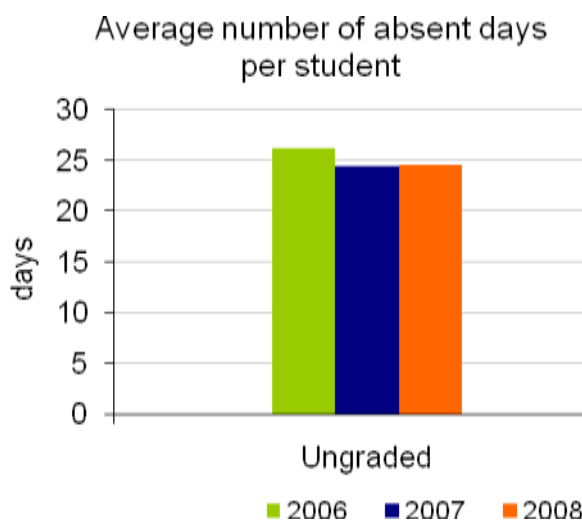
Student Engagement and Wellbeing

As detailed previously, a high proportion of Belmore students have extremely complex medical, educational and wellbeing needs.

Their complex needs are supported by education staff, medical intervention teams, therapy staff and nursing and attendant care staff. Teachers and classroom assistants present regularly for training and assessment of their medical intervention skills. Expertise is provided in splinting, positioning, specialised equipment, specialised mealtime assistance and gastrostomy feeding. Parents are confident to send children to school, where they will be well cared for. There is excellent daily communication between teachers and parents/carers, generally on a written, daily basis. Anecdotal information from parents confirms that children enjoy school and that some children would prefer to come to school, even in holidays. Children miss school and are delighted to return after a break.

Students have high incidences of hospitalisations, fractures, surgery, medical appointments and wheelchair and orthotics clinics. Many students have compromised immune and respiratory systems and become ill often.

The complexity of medical needs of our students is increasing each year. Students are transported to school from home by bus. Truancy/absenteeism is not an issue. The graph below reflects the frail nature of Belmore students' health.



Staff particularly value the expertise provided by the Guidance Officer, who supports families individually and class groups with student wellbeing programs, e.g. disability awareness, protective behaviour.

The Parent Opinion Survey rated School Connectedness at 6.21 on a scale where 1=Strongly Disagree and 7=Strongly Agree. Connectedness to peers was rated by parents at 6.14. These are excellent results. Students have very strong friendships at Belmore.

Students are highly engaged in programs where they experience success. This high level of engagement occurs because of individually designed and highly motivating programs. Staff ratios are high to maximise student participation.

Here are some examples of the range of student programs offered in 2008.

Physical Program

Horse riding, bike (tricycle) riding, conductive education, hydrotherapy, gross motor programs, sports and recreation activities, gym, hand skills, perceptual motor programs (PMP).

Communication

Pragmatic communication programs, choice making, switching, basic literacy, signing, picture exchange, use of multi-level communication systems and communication boards.

Technology

Everything from switching to web design.

Sensory Programs

In the classroom and sensory room, oral sensory programs, homecrafts, sensory art and "tac pac".

Music

We know students are highly engaged in these programs because of the smiles of anticipation and rapt attention when the therapist is working with the group. One of our students has won a national song writing competition for the fourth year in a row.

Art

Students participate in a diverse range of art and craft projects which are displayed around the school.

Camps

Junior groups participated at Garfield Camp in 2008. A senior group participated in a "Country Camp" where they travelled by train.

Performance Arts Program

Groups from other special schools joined us for performances of Rock and Roll band, clown, circus, drumming, Mr Whiskas and Ticklish Allsorts.

Self Care

Grooming, toileting, hand washing, more independent eating, dressing, showering, Circle Concept, Protective Behaviours, disability awareness.

Recreation

Excursions, lunch time program, travel training, dance and a whole school picnic.

Student's success was celebrated regularly through awards, student of the week, graduations and special ceremonies. Photos of students engaged in activities were sent home regularly. A student portfolio was produced by staff or students and sent home at the end of the year. Parents were delighted with videos of samples of their child's activity.

Parent involvement at Belmore was very evident in 2008. Parents participating in formal programs like the Program Support Group processes, "Sign Posts" and information sessions.

Many parents also volunteered in hydrotherapy, on excursions and came to "Friends of Belmore" activities and supported the wonderfully successful auction night.

Student Pathways and Transitions

During 2008 Belmore School supported nine students who were involved in dual enrolments in their local schools. This involved teachers and therapy staff visiting, meeting, liaising with and advising staff in these mainstream schools. At the end of 2008 three of these students made the transition to full-time mainstream school. In 2008 one teacher was part of the whole year program of professional development in literacy at the mainstream school, where two of her students attended.

For new students enrolling at the school, the transition process involves orientation visits, parent information sessions, a parent kit, Belmore team visiting students in their prior setting, a therapy assessment, an intake meeting with parents and staff from the previous setting, and medical and therapy reports. The school community and "Friends of Belmore" goes out of its way to welcome new parents with a personal phone call from another parent on School Council, a welcome morning tea and a family night in Term 1 so that siblings and families can have the opportunity to use Belmore's excellent facilities.

Students who made the transition from the junior to the senior department of the school have orientation sessions in new classrooms (where appropriate) as well as a "mini graduation" at our awards ceremony. Students leaving the school have intensive assistance with accessing the "Futures for Young Adults" Program. The students and parents are accompanied, if they wish, on visits to possible adult placements. When a decision has been made about the most appropriate placement, then orientation trials are supported by school staff. Very comprehensive written reports are provided to the new facility.

The student graduation ceremony in 2008 was a highlight of the year. Students, parents, friends, staff and volunteers celebrated the milestone. All three graduating students moved successfully into full time day programs.

Major orthopaedic surgery is very common for Belmore students. Many students return to school relatively soon after hospitalisation and surgery. They are assisted by the specialist expertise of the nurse, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Extra physiotherapy, on recommendation from the child's surgeon, is often provided.

Future Directions

In terms of student learning, we wish to capitalise on professional development in intensive interaction. We will be maintaining the development of intensive interaction methodology, using IT resources for feedback and increasing the number of students involved.

We will be enrolling a new group of students in VCAL.

We have gained Performance and Development Culture accreditation and will be working towards maintaining and improving this collaborative professional culture.

In 2009 we will review the communication strand of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. We will be assessing students' communication skills according to the reviewed curriculum. We will continue to provide effective school transition for all students at key points in their schooling, with a particular focus on students moving between sub-sections of the school and pathways to post school options.

We will apply for a National Solar Schools Grant to enable us to provide 2mw of electricity generation on the roof, as well as new shade awnings for the western side of the school.

We will actively pursue "Building the Education Revolution" federal grants for a significant building project as well as facilities maintenance.

Financial Performance and Position

The recommended word length for this section is approximately 400 words.

In this section, schools should reflect on their financial performance and how this supported their plans for improvement.

Financial Performance – Operating Statement Summary for the year ending 31st December, 2008		
Revenue	2008 Actual	
DE&T Grants	601,761	Belmore School operates Regional Visiting Teacher funds. This exercise is cost neutral for the school
Commonwealth Government Grants	18,043	
State Government Grants	8,014	
Other	50,657	
Locally Raised Funds	71,556	
Total Operating Revenue	750,031	
Expenditure		
Salaries and Allowances	117,340	
Bank Charges	782	
Consumables	48,410	
Books and Publications	1,138 +	
Communication Costs	8,094	
Furniture and Equipment	65,766	
Utilities	30,374	
Property Services	252,594	Includes Investing in our Schools Project funding.
Travel and Subsistence	4,908	
Motor Vehicle Expenses	1,616	
Administration	9,665	
Health and Personal Development	1,148	
Professional Development	22,026	
Trading and Fundraising	16,640	
Support/Service	324,622	Yooralla Service major cost here.
Miscellaneous	26,731	
Total Operating Expenditure	931,852	
Net Operating Surplus/- Deficit	-181,821	The Belmore Road entrance was completed and paid for in 2008. The grant was received in 2007, showing a net operating deficit.
Capital Expenditure	53,983	
Please note that the above amounts do not include any credit revenue or expenditure allocated or spent by the school through its Student Resource Package		

Financial Position as at 31st December, 2008	
Funds Available	2008 Actual
High Yield Investment Account	77,968.13
Official Account	2,154.90
Other Bank Accounts(listed individually)	106,099.17
(insert)	
(insert)	
Total Funds Available	186,222.20
Financial Commitments	2008 Actual
School Operating Reserve	124,973.59
Co-operative Bank Account	
Assets or Equipment Replacement < 12 months	
Revenue Received in Advance	
Building/Grounds including SMS < 12 months	
Region /Clusters Funds/School Based Programs < 12 months	38,442.61
Provision Accounts < 12 months	
Repayable to DEECD	
Other Recurrent Expenditure (Accounts Payable)	
Assets or Equipment Replacement > 12 months	22,806.00
Building/Grounds including SMS > 12 months	
Region /Clusters Funds/School Based Programs > 12 months	
Provision Accounts > 12 months	
Co-operative loan >12 months	
Beneficiary/Memorial Accounts	
Total Financial Commitments	61,248.61

School Contact Information

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This report contains summary data extracted from the School Level Report. If you would like to access the School Level Report, please contact Wendy Bergin.