

HELPING SPECIAL CHILDREN SHINE



**W O O D B U R Y**

AUTISM EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

**2006 ANNUAL REPORT**

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## Report from Clinical Director

It is my great pleasure to report on the year of 2006, our first year of operation. After seven years of planning, negotiating, fundraising and lobbying, "Woodbury Autism Education and Research", opened the doors of our school to 21 children on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006. Despite the exhaustion of the final preparations, it was both exhilarating and gratifying to see these children arriving into the care of an excited and eager staff.

Woodbury is an Independent School, registered with the New South Wales Government Board of Studies, and is a member of the Association of Independent Schools (Australia).

Our students range from 4 to 14 years of age and have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and a range of abilities. I am pleased to report that all have made significant progress, as reflected in our data collection, in reports from families and in everyday observations. Several children have made outstanding progress, and one child has moved to mainstream school.

Our parent body are united in their enthusiasm and support for Woodbury, and last year, was able to fundraise a considerable sum for the school.

Along with our successes, Woodbury has also faced many challenges in its first year. Accessing experienced staff has been challenging, so there has necessarily been a very heavy emphasis on training and monitoring of new staff. This has resulted in the development of a core group of enthusiastic, dedicated and highly skilled staff.

Ensuring the future financial security of the school is an ongoing challenge, and will probably remain a significant focus for many years. The high teacher to student ratio is an inherent part of our teaching method and results in higher operational expenses. However, our priority is to provide quality education programs, using Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) techniques to address the elements in each child's Individual Education Plan, which includes all Key Learning Areas, at a level which is appropriate for each student. At all times we are working to improve the outcomes for all our students, with continuous monitoring through data collection and review of programs.

Our third major challenge has been a lack of space. During 2006, we were able to spread into part of an adjacent building, giving us some more options to reorganize the physical environment, and to offer more student places in 2007. Woodbury is inundated with enquiries from desperate families, who are seeking an appropriate education for their child with Autism. Our waiting list is huge and our small buildings are already full.

We have enjoyed considerable support from the Baulkham Hill Shire Council in the form of donation of playground equipment and sourcing additional funds for the school.

Councillor Ray Harty deserves special mention for his tireless efforts on our behalf. We continue to be amazed by the efforts and generosity of Woodbury's many supporters, especially our hard working parents and staff.

As Clinical Director, I am proud to be part of Australia's first Applied Behavioural Analysis School, and would like to thank all of those who have chosen to be part of this journey with us.

Elizabeth Watson  
Clinical Director  
Woodbury Autism Education and Research



## **Report on Achievement of Curriculum Outcomes by Students**

Woodbury School develops an Individual Education Plan which is designed in conjunction with parents, to address their specific learning needs. From this plan, a program is designed, and continuously monitored and updated, in response to the student's progress.

Within each individual program, all Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are represented at an appropriate level for that student, as well as other focus areas which have been identified such as social skills, leisure and play activities or living skills.

Woodbury does not participate in any form of external testing, as it is not appropriate for our students, and each child's program is so individualised. However, the following table represents the number of students at each stage of the Key Learning Areas.

## Syllabus stage levels for students at Woodbury School

Strands and sub strands	Foundation	Early Stage 1	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Life Skills	Totals
<b>English</b>							
Talking and listening	15	11		1		1	28
Reading	13	10	4			1	28
Writing	20	4	4				28
<b>Mathematics</b>							
Number	12	10	1	3	1	1	28
Patterns and algebra	18	7	1	2			28
Data	23	3	2				28
Measurement	18	5	3	1		1	28
Space and Geometry	14	11	2	1			28
Working mathematically	20	2	4	1		1	28
<b>HSIE</b>							
Change and continuity	21	2	3	1			27
Cultures	22	2	3				27
Environments	18	7	2				27
Social systems and structures	19	5	3				27
Geography/ History						1	1
<b>Science and Technology</b>							
Content	20	5	2			1	28
Process	18	8	1			1	28
<b>PDHPE</b>							
Skills	12	12		4			28
Content	15	10	2	1			28
<b>Creative Arts</b>							
Visual Arts	13	11	3	1			28
Music	16	8	2	2			28
Drama	24	3		1			28
Dance	21	5	2				28

## Summary of Professional Learning Undertaken by Teachers

Category	Number of Teachers
Teachers who have teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognized within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines.	7
Teachers who have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognized within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications.	0
Teachers who do not have qualifications as described above but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context.	0

## Average Teacher Attendance and Retention

2006 was Woodbury's inaugural year and the teacher attendance rate was 93.08%



## Average Student Attendance and Retention

As the oldest student at Woodbury is 14 years of age, and still bound by compulsory schooling requirements, retention and post-school destinations are not yet areas that we can report on. However, the average student attendance for 2006 was 94.28%.

## Enrolment Policies

Referrals for enrolment or placement on the eligibility list are accepted from a child who:

- has a **primary diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder**;
- may have an associated development delay;
- may have other disorders that are not the primary diagnosis;
- may be of any sex, race or socio-economic status;
- Will be aged between 4.5 and 16 years at the time of their proposed commencement at Woodbury.

### Admissions Committee

1. The Admissions Committee consists of three representatives of Woodbury, presently comprising a member of the teaching staff, a Board member and the Clinical Director.
2. The Admissions Committee will meet to consider applications at the beginning of Term 4 for placements for the following year or more frequently if a student placement becomes available.
3. All applicants will receive a letter of acknowledgment upon receipt of their enrolment application.

### Admissions Process

1. The admissions process will consist of the following stages:

- Stage 1: Examination of Application to meet general criteria.  
Stage 2: Parent interview and play based or curriculum-based assessment of child conducted in person or via video.  
Stage 3: Admission Committee's review of assessment and recommendation

For the full text of our Enrolment Policy please go to [www.woodbury.org.au](http://www.woodbury.org.au) .

### GENERAL COMPOSITION OF THE STUDENT POPULATION

Age	Number of students	Age	Number of students
4	4	10	1
5	5	11	4
6	1	12	0
7	1	13	1
8	1	14	0
9	3		

Class	Number of students
Infants 1	4
Infants 2	4
Infants 3	4
Infants 4	4
Primary	4
Senior Primary	5

## Policy for Student Welfare

Woodbury School has student welfare policies in place to ensure that all students are safe and supervised at all times, this includes a ratio of 1 staff member to 1 student, from the moment of their arrival at school, until they are safely placed in their after school transport each day.

Risk assessments with regard to outings and activities, as well as practicing evacuation procedures also contribute to the students' safety at school.

An individual Education Plan is developed in consultation with the Clinical Director and the child's parents, teacher and Senior Behaviour Therapist. This plan also addresses behaviour management issues and strategies are developed and implemented with parental consent.

To assist in our pastoral care, a qualified counsellor, external to the school, has been retained on a needs basis, to provide counselling and support to students, staff and families of the school.

Specialised staff training, highly individual programming, data collection and analysis and review of programs, as well as ongoing contact with families, ensures that the special needs of each student are addressed and monitored constantly.

Each child has a health care plan which includes diet and medication information. Special clearly stated and displayed procedures are in place for those students who have episodic and potentially life threatening problems.

All Woodbury staff and external tutors/providers are given a copy of our code of conduct and child protection policy which is observed at all times. For more information on Woodbury's Student Welfare Policy, please see [www.woodbury.org.au](http://www.woodbury.org.au)



## **Policy for Discipline**

This summary also refers to our “Positive Management of Challenging Behaviour Policy”. Due to the nature of our student population, behaviour management is different to that devised for typical children and words such as “penalties” do not apply. Any management of unacceptable behaviour is designed to reduce its occurrence in the future, usually by increasing desirable behaviour.

If severe challenging behaviour continues despite our best efforts, a meeting will be convened with the parents and all relevant staff to decide on new strategies, or to consult the Honorary Professional Advisory Board members for advice.

If the behaviours are harmful to other students, the child will continue to work with a teacher’s aide, within view of the supervising teacher, but at a safe distance from the other students.

The parents may be asked to keep the child away from school for a short period, because of extreme behavioural challenges which are due to special circumstances (for example medication changes), or while new behavioural strategies are being put in place. This would only occur with the permission of parents and with the certainty that they were able to cope with this change.

In the unlikely event that a student is unable to be retained in the school because of safety issues relating to staff and students, the parents will be assisted to find a suitable alternative. At no time will aversive techniques or corporal punishment be used at Woodbury.

In all of the above processes, the Clinical Director will invite parents to be involved and their concerns will be taken into consideration.

## **Positive Approach to Challenging Behaviour**

This policy reflects the commitment of Woodbury to ensure the right of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder to live in an environment that is free from abuse.

This is also a key Occupational Health and Safety consideration, as the positive approach seeks to reduce the likelihood of challenging behaviour by the following:

- An holistic approach that reflects positive principles
- The range of options are aimed at respecting the rights of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Continual monitoring and adjustment of these options to suit the needs of individual students
- Equally respecting both the students and those who work with them.

The crucial strategies of the positive approach are detailed in the student’s Behaviour Support Plan and are contained in each student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP also encompasses the student’s Crisis Intervention Plan, which details short term

strategies for managing any new challenging behaviour. During this time the Behaviour Support Plan is adjusted to address the longer term strategies required to manage new challenging behaviours.

For all these and other matters relating to the student's IEP, the collaboration and support of the student's parents or caregivers are mandatory.

## Grievances and Complaints

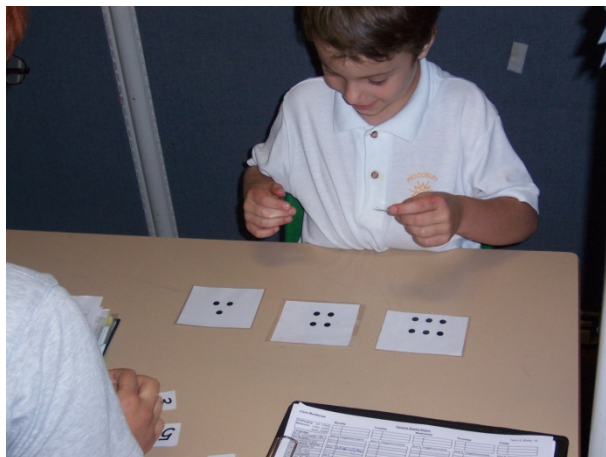
Woodbury has a grievance policy that relates to students and families, and one that relates to staff.

Woodbury school's grievance procedures for students and families, operates in the following ways. Where the student or their family are able to express a concern it is always taken seriously and responded to in a co-operative way. Because of communication difficulties, Woodbury staff needs to be particularly sensitive to any attempts by a student to express their needs or concerns, and follow it up on their behalf. In most cases, the staff member aims to resolve the issue directly with the student and/or family concerned. In the case that it cannot be resolved, it is referred to a more senior member of staff or to the principal, or even to the Board.

Staff grievances are dealt with according to the requirements detailed in applicable awards and agreements. This ensures that staff feel comfortable and supported to take a grievance to any level within our organisation without fear of reprisal, whether real, subtle or implied.

Whenever possible, staff are encouraged to resolve grievances at the point of conflict, but when a grievance is lodged with the Principal (Clinical Director), the results of the investigation and the outcome are recorded and kept on file.

**As 2006 is our first year of operation, there have not yet been any changes to these policies. The full text of these and all other Woodbury School Policies is available on our website [www.woodbury.org.au](http://www.woodbury.org.au)**



## **Priority Areas for Improvement**

Over the course of 2006, our first year of operation, several areas have been identified in which we would like to improve.

The first was to provide greater consistency and technique integrity in program delivery, to ensure that the progress of each child is maximised. We intend to address this by providing professional development opportunities, mentoring and establishing a more supervisory role for the Senior Behaviour Therapists.

Secondly, to develop a system of professional appraisal, which would provide feedback and assist in recognising excellence and addressing issues.

Thirdly, due to the nature of our student population and their vulnerability, to engage the Association of Independent Schools to provide training in Child Protection and Duty of Care.

Finally, to explore ways to ensure the ongoing financial viability of Woodbury School, so that it can continue to provide an appropriate and high standard of education for children with autism.

As 2006 was our first year of operation, these are new priority areas, and are ongoing.

## **Actions Undertaken by the School to Promote Respect and Responsibility**

Woodbury School has a Code of Conduct which is given out to all staff, and all visitors to the school, and by which we operate.

The Code of Conduct relates to appropriate language, dress, and behavior, as well as other important areas. These include respecting the safety and privacy of students, staff and visitors.

Our policies relating to student welfare, discipline, complaints and grievances all reflect Woodbury's commitment to respectful behavior.

Woodbury has a committed group of volunteers, especially amongst the parent body, who make a huge contribution to the school, with practical assistance and fundraising efforts.

The Woodbury community has contributed to awareness of the issues surrounding autism, by participation in various projects such as the inaugural Autism Awareness Expo at Macquarie University, and participation in various parent support and information networks.

The staff of Woodbury consistently model and prompt appropriate respectful behavior. The students are also encouraged to take on a level of responsibility that is appropriate for their level of functioning, in the areas of self-help skills and caring for their environment.

As all our students have autism, their ability to participate in community service activities is limited, however, an inherent part of each child's program is to develop appropriate social interaction.

## Parent Satisfaction

In July 2006, Julie Dang & Associates Pty Limited was approached by the Woodbury School to conduct a study amongst parents of children at the school to evaluate their degree of satisfaction with the school and its delivery within a number of areas, including:

- The extent to which overall expectations have been met
- The degree of satisfaction with the child's progress
- Perceived value for money
- Quality and level of communication as it relates to the child
- Strengths of Woodbury, any issues or concerns, changes or improvements parents would like to see

The results can be summarised as follows:

- In the main, those expectations parents had for their child, prior to commencement at Woodbury, have been largely met, with these centring on a "one-on-one" programme that is adjusted to encompass the changing skills of the child. All were either very or quite satisfied with their child's progress at Woodbury, with all pointing to what they saw as noticeable gains in the skills of their child (in language, or gross motor, or in behavioural aspects).
- Woodbury was commended for the "quality" of its programme, its focus on the individual needs of the child and the subsequent gains the child was making. Communication at Woodbury as it relates to the child was seen to be excellent. These were generally regarded as key strengths of Woodbury. Any concerns parents had related to the fee structure, with all stating this as an area they would like to see Woodbury address in the near future. While perceived to be a programme that benefits their child, parents commented on the expense and the desire to see fees reduced.

## **Student Satisfaction**



As many of the students at Woodbury School have severe communication disorders related to Autism, student satisfaction can only be ascertained by observation and reports from parents. There was a settling-in period when our new school opened, with students adjusting to the new environment and staff. This seems to have evolved into a mostly happy and productive student population. The improvements in compliance, behaviour and increased rates of learning for most children are also a positive indicator of student satisfaction.

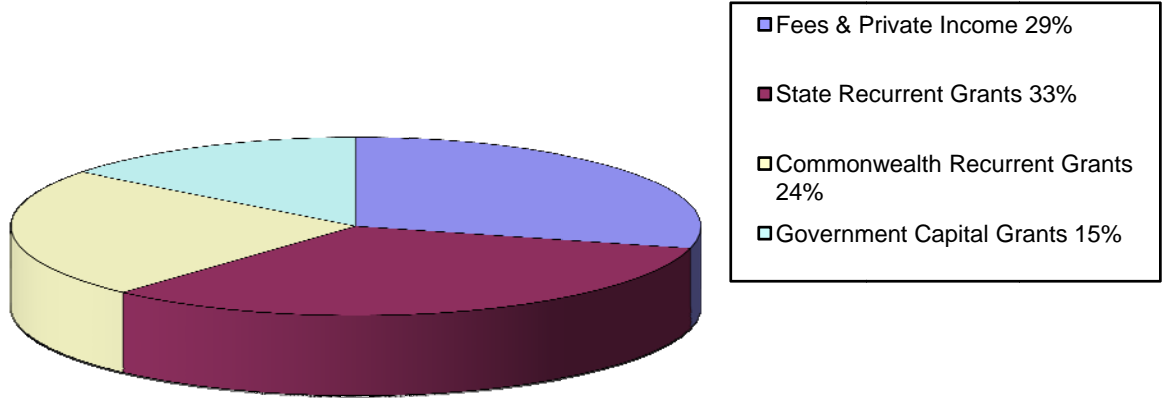
## **Teacher Satisfaction**

An informal survey of Woodbury's teachers indicated that, in general, the expectations of their position have been met. As some teachers were quite new to autism, and to ABA techniques, there was a general enthusiasm for additional specific and ongoing training. Some teachers felt that the continuity of having full-time teacher's aides would be preferable to many part time positions.

In general, however, teachers derive a high level of job satisfaction from the accomplishments of the students in their care, and have great respect for the the professionalism and dedication of the whole team at Woodbury School.

## Summary of Financial Information

**TABLE ONE - RECURRENT/ CAPITAL INCOME**



**TABLE TWO - RECURRENT/ CAPITAL EXPENDITURE**

