



With Love From
 Riverland Special School
 2020

Riverland Special School

2020 annual report to the community

Riverland Special School Number: 962

Partnership: Berri & Barmera

Signature

School principal:

Mrs Carolyn Trifonoff

Governing council chair:

Mrs Minyon Smart

Date of endorsement:

4 March 2021



Government
 of South Australia
 Department for Education

Context and highlights

Riverland Special School is based in Berri and is a category 3 school, which caters for students with intellectual disabilities. In 2020 we started the year with 59 students in 8 classes. The student population included approximately:

- 74.5% school card holders,
- 1.7% students with English as an Additional Dialect
- 18.6% Aboriginal students.

2020 was a year that truly reflected the flexibility and professionalism of Riverland Special School staff and the high level of trust and cooperation shared by the families and school community.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused concerns and issues for all members of the school, particularly those with health vulnerabilities.

With many children staying at home and others at school, it was essential to ensure consistency for learning. The staff prepared activities and learning opportunities, across all curriculum areas, based on the letter of each week. Students learning at home, were provided with work packs, which included the same activities and materials used at school.

The Riverland Special School Youtube channel and Class Facebook pages provided engaging learning activities and several staff members created literacy, numeracy, science and PE video clips.

The School Facebook page kept parents informed by sharing activities and student work from each of the classes. Contact between teachers and students working from home was maintained with additional resources or work delivered/posted if necessary.

The success of the Letter of the Week resulted in its continuance to the end of the year with activities engaging students during both class and break time.

Despite the difficulties, restrictions, and changes in 2020, there were still so many highlights and special events that were truly memorable. Our COVID safe events: Biggest Morning Tea, the Primary Schools Music Festival, SALA evening, Prom and Presentation Day, required a lot of careful planning and consideration but were very worthwhile.

While we were unable to hold camps, our Duke of Edinburgh team continued in its 27th year and 3 students were awarded with medals.

2020 was also my last year as principal and as I retire, I am proud and privileged to have shared in the lives of so many inspiring and unforgettable young people and their families over the last 21 years.

Thank you also, to all the amazing teachers and support staff, with whom I have worked and to the Riverland community for their support.

Governing council report

This year has been a challenging year for all members of our community, children and adults alike. It has been a challenging year for the entire world, in fact but I can say with absolute pride that our school excelled and dealt with the global pandemic brilliantly. Although there were moments of uncertainty, we kept the education and well being of our students at the forefront and developed new and exciting ways for the students to learn.

Many things spring to mind when discussing the year that was 2020. For instance, finding out what the weekly letter was and discovering all things associated with that letter. There were classroom activities, art activities, physical activities that all revolved around the letter of the week. These activities enthused the students and parents, with parents also learning a few things along the way.

Our school held a SALA exhibition, a car boot sale, graduation presentations AND even our Prom, which, considering the current situations in Australia and around the world, is certainly a mighty feat. All staff have worked diligently and have had to think outside the box to accommodate the demands of the government to maintain a level of 'Covid safety', all while constructively teaching!

Hats off to everyone at our school, be proud of our achievements and let's hope 2021 won't be as challenging.

Minyon Smart
Chair Person
Riverland Special School Governing Council

Quality improvement planning

Reviewing and evaluating improvement planning was quite interesting in 2020. The goals of the RSS Site Improvement Plan 19-21, for students R-10 for 2020 were:

1. 75% of identified students with low or no progress will make appropriate, incremental and developmental progress in the area of
Number and Algebra - using Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) baseline data.
2. 75% of identified students with low or no progress will make appropriate, incremental and developmental progress in the area of
Reading, Speaking and Listening - using ABLES baseline data.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on student attendance and teaching and learning in 2020, the potential progress of all students was of concern. Some of the originally 'identified' students were unable to be assessed, due to prolonged absences related to COVID-19 risks or were students who had relocated from the Riverland in late 2019.

To modify these goals and to provide relevant and useful data for 2021, ABLES assessments were used to track the progress of ALL students R-10. This was done by comparing student incremental and developmental levels in comparison to those from the same assessment period in 2019.

NB: A small number of students were exempted or unable to be assessed due to long term absences. Year 11 and 12 SACE students were not included in this data.

Assessment results showed that:

1. In the areas of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, 78% of all R-10 students assessed, made incremental, developmental progress.
5% of students remained within the same incremental and developmental level.
19% of students regressed a developmental level in one area
2. In Maths, 52% of all R-10 students assessed made incremental, developmental progress.
12% of students remained on the same incremental and developmental level.
11% of students remained within the same developmental level
10% of students regressed a developmental level

While these results are extremely positive considering the 2020 school year, it is important to remember the many factors that may have potentially affected student progress, in this COVID-19 year. These include student attendance, student physical and mental health and wellbeing, home schooling, relationships, stresses and financial worries within the families of both students and staff and the general uncertainty and confusion about the future.

By using the ABLES assessment area Personal and Social Capabilities: Self, Self Emotion and Social, teachers were also able to compare the results with each student's academic progress.

"Students do not necessarily progress to new levels, or move forward within a level, over consecutive assessments, which are usually conducted with a six month interval. Rather, students may show rapid periods of growth in proficiency in a particular area, and then take some time to embed their new level of understanding. They may show a loss of proficiency in some domains of learning, especially after a period of ill health or disrupted schooling. (Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) User Guide (Draft))

Taking this into account, I would like to give credit to all RSS families and staff members for the exceptional team work and efforts made, to ensure students were provided with every opportunity to enjoy learning, while feeling safe, and supported.

2021 will be a time for reassessment - both of student learning and of teaching. It will also be a time to determine and prepare for the Site Improvement Plan for 2022 and beyond and I am very confident that Natalie Coote, the new RSS Principal will have this well in hand.

School performance comment

In 2020, we have continued to build our curriculum and assessment around the developmental levels of our students. The Abilities Based Learning and Educational Supports (ABLES) suite and the Australian Curriculum enable us to provide learning opportunities which are developmentally appropriate for all our students and still encourage problem solving and challenge.

In Literacy, our focus is on the areas of oral language, phonemic awareness and phonics to improve reading skills. These areas are part of the 'Big 6' components of reading. In 2020, staff professional development with Jane Farrell included the introduction of the Chat-Now resource communication boards, which are now used throughout larger versions of which are found throughout the school to provide communication opportunities for all students.

Similarly in Numeracy, RSS has taken a developmental approach with the introduction of Natural Maths across the school. Natural Maths provides the core knowledge and understanding of the 'big ideas' or concepts students require to become confident and enthusiastic maths users.

Our Letters and numbers of the weeks, introduced during the uncertainties of the COVID-19 Pandemic, certainly enhanced and supported our literacy and numeracy goals.

The ABLES assessment tools provide a comprehensive picture of each student's strengths and abilities and enable us to track student progress across a range of curriculum areas. Within each of the Pre-Foundation levels A-D, students are able to show improvement in increments, appropriate to their learning.

In 2020, key assessments have been: Reading and Writing; Speaking and Listening; Maths; Personal and Social Development: Self; Personal and Social Development: Social and Personal and Social Development: Emotion.

In late 2020, the South Australian ABLES (ABLESA) was launched. RSS was one of 8 schools selected to provide feedback on the new ABLESA Ruby platform. As a result of this feedback, South Australia has been invited to be the first state to use the new Ruby platform.

In 2020, 3 senior students successfully completed and achieved the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). This continues the 100% completion rate for RSS Year 12 SACE students.

Attendance

Year level	2017	2018	2019	2020
Primary Other	85.1%	82.2%	82.0%	77.0%
Secondary Other	88.8%	86.5%	81.8%	84.4%
Total	86.6%	84.0%	81.9%	80.4%

Data Source: Site Performance Reporting System (SPER), Semester 1 attendance.
NOTE: A blank cell indicates there were no students enrolled.

Attendance comment

Obviously student attendance this year was greatly affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many of our students and/or family members have health conditions that make them highly susceptible to infections. Learning from home was the preferred option for these families. Students returned to school, as families became more confident about the safety of their sons or daughters at school. Extra cleaning and school COVID safe protocols, also encouraged student return. In general, unexplained non-attendance is followed up by calls to parents. Occasionally, assistance concerning chronic non attendance may be requested through the attendance officer or the social work team. This may only occur if parent contact is unavailable and home visits are unsuccessful.

Behaviour support comment

All staff try to be proactive, rather than reactive when dealing with student behavioural issues. When facing situations where a student's responses have already escalated, we use a range of strategies including Restorative Practices, Positive Behaviour Support and Emotion Coaching. Our prime intent is to de-escalate rather than escalate situations, and we use non-restrictive practices to ensure all students are safe. While bullying is not an issue at RSS, there are occasionally issues when students on the Autism Spectrum have obsessions with/against other students. These incidents are not based on malice or power, but rather because of the disability.

Client opinion summary

The DfE School Parent Engagement Survey was discussed at Governing Council on 8/09/2020. Council members discussed concerns that the survey was too generic and did not take students in special options into account. Questions concerning post school options were specifically noted as non-inclusive, as pathways did not include day options, supported work, volunteering and home-based programmes. The chair of the Governing Council wrote a letter expressing these concerns to the Department, however, as yet there has been no response. Of the 9 Parents who did complete the survey, 100% agreed or highly agreed that:

- People including teachers and students respect each other at this school and children are important at this school.
- The school's communication with parents was effective and enough.
- Parents have useful discussions with the school about their child's learning and talk with their children about what happens at school.

88% knew or believed

- what standard of work the schools expects of the child
- that the school provides an opportunity to have input about the learning.

The question re future pathways was the most interesting with 7 responses of being unsure or too early to say about the students' options after school. This may support the concerns of the GC regarding the survey's lack of appropriate post school options for students with intellectual disabilities.

Intended destination

Leave Reason	Number	%
Employment	0	NA
Interstate/Overseas	1	7.1%
Other	0	NA
Seeking Employment	0	NA
Tertiary/TAFE/Training	0	NA
Transfer to Non-Govt School	0	NA
Transfer to SA Govt School	7	50.0%
Unknown	6	42.9%
Unknown (TG - Not Found)	0	NA

Data Source: Education Department School Administration System (EDSAS) Data extract Term 3 2020.

Relevant history screening

From July 1st 2019, the new Working With Children Checks (WWCC) have become mandatory. All staff at RSS, either have current DCSI/TRB screening or have transitioned to the the new WWCC. As DCSI screenings approach their expiry dates, staff will be applying for the new WWC checks which will last 5 years. WWC checks also apply to all volunteers, work experience students over 18, visiting therapists, artists, tutors and cleaners, as well as contractors and workman hired through Facilities. Governing Council members who do not have children at RSS must also been screened.

Qualifications held by the teaching workforce and workforce composition

All teachers at this school are qualified and registered with the SA Teachers Registration Board.

Qualification Level	Number of Qualifications
Bachelor Degrees or Diplomas	26
Post Graduate Qualifications	8

Data Source: Department for Education HR Management Reporting System, extracted Term 3 2020 .

Please note: Staff who have more than 1 qualification will be counted more than once in the above qualification table. Therefore the total number of staff by qualification type may be more than the total number of teaching staff.

Workforce composition including Indigenous staff

	Teaching Staff		Non-Teaching Staff	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Full-Time Equivalents	0.0	12.4	0.0	16.8
Persons	0	16	0	24

Data Source: Department for Education HR Management Reporting System, extracted Term 3 2020 .

Financial statement

Funding Source	Amount
Grants: State	\$3,066,806
Grants: Commonwealth	\$10,450
Parent Contributions	\$16,412
Fund Raising	\$3,412
Other	\$6,230

Data Source: Education Department School Administration System (EDSAS).

2020 School Annual Report: Tier 2 Funding Report*

*Tier 2 funding provides additional resources to support students who are unlikely to obtain the desired outcomes without further support.

Tier 2 funding section	Tier 2 category (where applicable to the site)	Briefly describe how the 2020 funding was used to improve the relevant Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) outcomes	Outcomes achieved or progress made towards these outcomes
Targeted funding for individual students	Improved wellbeing and engagement	1:1 staffing to support behaviour and improve attendance and achievement of individual goals for students with very challenging behaviours.	Students have support in class and at break times to develop self regulation.
	Improved outcomes for students with an additional language or dialect	N/A	N/A
	Inclusive Education Support Program	Increased staffing for classroom teams to support learning for all students with disabilities.	Improvement in individual developmental growth, through targetted teaching.
Targeted funding for groups of students	Improved outcomes for - rural & isolated students - Aboriginal students - numeracy and literacy including early years support First language maintenance & development Students taking alternative pathways IESP support	N/A	N/A
Program funding for all students	Australian Curriculum	Teacher professional development in programming and planning using ABLESSA for students with intellectual disabilities with links to the Australian Curriculum.	Increased teacher confidence and knowledge using ABLESSA and AC in RSS.
Other discretionary funding	Aboriginal languages programs Initiatives	N/A	N/A
	Better schools funding	Better schools funding has been used to purchase resources to support oral language development and communication. Funding also helped to fund professional development and classroom visits by Jane Farrell.	76% of students R-10 have made incremental and developmental progress.
	Specialist school reporting (as required)	N/A	N/A
	Improved outcomes for gifted students	N/A	N/A