

Where learning lives...



Annual Report 2017

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School

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Our school

Nestled in the heart of the Southern Highlands among rolling hills, with stunning natural displays of the best of each season, stands Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School.

Our school, while still young, has continued to grow in the past year with the addition of new families, programs and staff, establishing itself as a first choice option for independent education in our region. Our aim is to provide a living, inspired learning environment, which strives to foster the qualities of goodness, beauty and truth through the research and implementation of the principles in the educational approach of Dr Rudolf Steiner.

Our learning community and its physical, soul and spiritual needs are the focus of our school. We continue to strive for a respectful, safe and loving environment for all who work and learn at the school. We continue to reach for the best in each student, and our joy is to meet the children through their burgeoning discoveries of life, earth and humanity. Our school recognises that without the respect and understanding of who we are as individuals, the needs of our planet and all life on it, new forms of culture suited to the healthy advancement of humanity will be limited. So on we walk, hand in hand, making history as we go.



Statement of purpose

Aurora is one of over 1000 Steiner/Waldorf schools throughout the world. It is a small school offering a big-hearted education full of nourishment for the whole child.

Our approach, inspired by the indications of Dr Rudolf Steiner, actively engages the senses with real life experience, learning through the head, heart and hands.

We are a school that upholds a respect and reverence for the natural world. We celebrate the seasons, grow food in our garden and explore the beauty of our local area.

We are a school of spirit, welcoming families into our community with open arms and open hearts. We value kindness and compassion and we seek to create an environment that fosters healthy social relationships.

An education at Aurora builds a strong academic foundation. We provide a rich, engaging environment where students learn concepts and skills at a time that is developmentally appropriate. The attributes of curiosity and creativity are nurtured, equipping our children for today's world as morally responsible global citizens.

Our education

Rudolf Steiner once said the following regarding the need to understand the inner nature of the growing child:

Once we can understand those we are to shape, we will be able to educate and teach, just as painters must understand the nature and quality of colours before they can paint, and sculptors must first understand their materials before they can create, and so on. If this is true of the arts that deal with physical materials, isn't it all the more true of an art that works with the noblest of all materials, the material that only the human being can work with—human life, the human being and human development.

Our education focuses on more than the simple application of curriculum as prescribed by methods given to us through a set of standards. We recognise that as teachers, the way in which we educate children sinks deeply into the physical, psychological and spiritual nature of the child standing before us. The ways we teach in early childhood continue their work in the child over their entire lifetime, often appearing at different stages of their life. For this to be a positive influence, it is essential that we seek to understand the subtle nuances of teaching, harboured in warmth in the growing relationship between teachers and their pupils.

Our teaching program begins with early learning, through our playgroups, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. In this initial phase of learning, up until around age 7, our focus is on helping the children to develop their foundation - a healthy body, a healthy will. We do this through our understanding that rhythm is the grounding force of all life. Therefore, our educational program for this age is tailored around rhythms and repetitions in learning. Healthy physical development depends upon movement and play. These foundations are beautifully paved in our school, with our natural environment, our large grounds, and beautiful resources for open ended creative play.

In the second phase, we recognise that children, after 7 and up until the early teenage years, develop most strongly their innate sense of being. Children learn academically much more effectively when they are engaged in a warm relationship to their teachers, whom they look up to as a loving authority. During this middle phase, everything artistic in quality, whether it be singing, playing a musical instrument, learning to speak poetry, moving with grace or visual arts expression brings nourishment and balance to the literacy and numeracy lessons.

Aurora, currently, does not offer a high school program. However, we recognise that from 14 years onwards, once the physical foundation has been laid in the first seven years, and the basis for a healthy feeling life in the next seven years, the intellect is now stimulated. In this third stage, the teenager engages in the life of thought, questioning the world and developing a true basis for scientific thinking.

In this triad of the developmental stages in childhood, a harmonious chord can sound which is carried through the stages of life beyond the school years.

Below are the elements which play through the structure of our educational program:

Main lesson and storytelling

Main lesson and storytelling is based upon a historical developmental perspective which gives a sense of timeless values: that we are all a part of humanity, each having qualities to value, share and contribute meaningfully. The archetypal richness speaks to the feeling experience and awakens a sense of beauty, truth and wisdom. This feeling engagement, providing the life force through a deepening, balanced experience of the senses is always considered in the learning process



and encouraged through physical experiential expression, advancing the use of imagination and initiative.

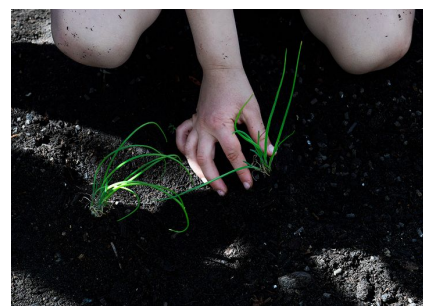


Creative arts and craft

Expressive movement and dramatic and poetic language, verse and song are integral to the daily rhythm of the school day. Deepening students' experience through the living arts such as dramatic playmaking, creative movement and language and the exploration of colour creates dynamic nurturing experiences building on the life forces. Children learn about natural resources and how these become the material for making useful utensils, containers, props and aids in their developing lives. Practical application of a variety of crafting skills develops their confidence and abilities contributing to their sense of well-being.

Caring for our environment

Outdoor classroom, nature walks, the nature table, building the garden, reaping and preparing foods for community soup and bread, engaging with 'green time not screen time': all these are activities which deepen our connection to the natural world and provide a sense of reverence for life. This in turn develops a sense of responsibility and care for the future and a feeling of empowerment to affect change.



Caring for each other

Group and self-directed play, in particular, engages the children in social and emotional education. The children negotiate many levels of relationships such as experiencing responsible leadership/cooperation, consensual agreements, independence and self-reliance.

Guidance and modelling by the teachers through their values, including a restorative practices approach, means that their interventions and modelling are always aimed towards respect, equality, health and wellbeing. A weekly focus for discussion at staff meetings is based around aspiring values and student social/emotional welfare. A three weekly in-depth child study builds on nurturing and restorative processes.

Sharing circles with the whole class are founded on values of equality, community and an ability to negotiate and accept differences. Strengthening the sense of connection, daily circles (including group mealtimes) are a form of communication and engagement, deepening an attitude of care and respect for each other. This in turn encourages a safe and secure balance in personal relationship and group dynamics.

Teachers promote caring from older to younger children at transition times in the day, they instill procedures such as greetings and acknowledgements and bring attention to inclusive behaviours and changes that assist conscious integration and a sense of rhythm. This in turn adds to a sense of security, self-reliance and self-respect for the child.

Caring for others and visitors to our school

Seasonal festivals and community events are community building with a global and historic perspective. They celebrate multicultural presence and contributions from within our community with aspirations for social renewal. Attending special indigenous nature days encourages respect for Aboriginal heritage and a deeper sharing of values for our environment.

The living organism of our school

We call our structure 'a living organism'. Such a statement fits with our concept and practice of education. The 'place' of education is more than the physical structure of the classroom, the grounds and buildings. For, within these grounds and walls, life happens, and it happens in a lively way because of all that holds it together.

School governance board – Southern Highlands Association for Steiner Education Inc. (SHASE)

SHASE was developed in 2009 for the advancement of Steiner education in the Southern Highlands. SHASE members elect a School Board made up of seven members. The vision and purpose of the School Board is to ensure that families in the region have access to Steiner education if they choose it for their children. The School Board carries and upholds the school's vision, ensures that school's practices are both lawful and secure, and that the whole organism of the school is overseen. Through the governance of SHASE, the school can continue to grow into a learning environment and workplace that reflects accountability, responsibility, transparency and inclusivity. The Board's vision continues to support the existence of the school and its place in the Highlands. The Board continues to develop strategies to lead into the future and consolidate the gifts of our pioneering years.



School management

The Principal is the responsible manager for the school, ensuring that the College of Teachers have the support of content, study and professional development to maintain and grow the quality of the educational program. The Principal is also responsible for liaising with NESA, the School Board, Steiner Education Australia, AIS and all other organisations that schools are in contact with. The Principal forms the link between staff, parent, students and the School Board. The Principal is responsible for educational and business management with the aid of the Business Manager and the College of Teachers, as delegated by the School Board.

The College of Teachers

The College is a group of teachers and other staff in our school who undertake to develop education programs to deepen the experience of teaching and leading and form a vision of what next needs to be achieved on an educational level. All staff members are welcome to take part in College matters. The College undertakes studies to further their own practice, but also central to the work of the college is the development of child study, where each individual child can receive a time of focus. Parents are often welcomed throughout to this College activity as well as other artistic work such as Eurythmy and Bothmer gymnastics. Our teachers are constantly developing their teaching practice in accordance with the needs of students at the school

Students

The students are the heart of the school. All of our work circles around the needs of our children's education, and how to best meet requirements for their strong and healthy development. The students bring, not only their bodies and minds, their joy and anticipation to learn about the world, but also they bring the seed of their destiny, which informs the future of the world. Our children also bring us the challenges which enable us to overcome our own limitations, and compel us to develop capacities we didn't have before, which in turn offers the best of human example and role modelling towards their education.

Parent body

The parent body is the grounding element in our young school. Much of our active work in the outer community through marketing comes from the efforts of our supportive parents. Our parent group is

diverse and active, celebrating the fruits of what the education brings to their children and, in turn, being celebrated in the school for their valuable contributions. The school recognises that the value of our school is supported by parents also through their payment of fees. The financial support goes a long way to contribute to the success of growing this school with a stable and secure foundation. Our parents offer an active voice in the wider community. Our vibrant parent group works to create our newfound presence in the Southern Highlands.

From the Chairman of the Board

I again have the pleasure of presenting the Chairman's report on behalf of the Board for the year ended 31 December 2017.

Consolidation of the school's foundations

Over the 2017 year, the Board continued its focus on consolidating the foundations of the school and on building a reputation based on academic excellence. Our expectations on and trust in our Principal James Goodlet, teachers and Business Manager in developing the school were fruitful and we ended the year with strength – and a waiting list.

New Board

During the year we were pleased to welcome three new members to our Board, Meredith Hatton (Vice-Chair), David Savill (Treasurer/Public Officer) and Jennifer Lloyd to complement the continuing Board members, being myself (Jane Button – Chair), Inga Oates (Secretary), Shirley Bell McLeod and Lisa Devine.

Training and development

The Board accepts all Board members are subject to mandatory training in the area of governance. Fortunately the Association of Independent Schools provides online modules for training purposes in the quiet of our own homes; and we all diligently set out to undertake those in our own time.

The school grows

It is important to recap events of 2016 to recognise the significant achievements of 2017.

At the commencement of 2016, we had 19 students across the age groups from Pre-kindy to Year 4. Then, at the beginning of Term 2, 5 Koori children joined the school under a special scholarship arranged between ourselves, our landlord Kazcare and Koori Kulcha and at the same time, another 14 children started across all year groups resulting in 38 students attending school in Term 2.

The number of students continued to grow. As at 22 March 2017 we had 48 students; as at 20 September 2017 there were 53 students and at the conclusion of 2017, we had 58 students from Pre-kindy to Year 6.

Our six Year 6 students were advancing to High School and leaving the school. However our concern about losing them was short-lived, as we had strong enrolments in the younger year groups. As a consequence, we were expecting 62 students to start the 2018 school year in all age groups from Pre-kindy to Year 6 with a waiting list for the Kindergarten.

Inaugural Years 5 and 6

At the beginning of 2017, our inaugural Years 5 and 6 began with strong student numbers. Some of these students were new to Steiner education so there were additional challenges for our teacher Jeddah Teasdale. However, by the end of the year, all Year 6 students graduated with a very special graduation event held in the Kazcare Hall.

My strong appreciation goes to new vice-chair, Meredith Hatton, who provided the design and theme for this very important event, and to those parents and teachers who helped with the decorations and provided the food. Special thanks go to Principal James Goodlet and Year 5/6 teacher Jeddah, not only for their beautiful speeches but for their dedication to the education of the students of Year 6 and making their journey to high school easier. Thanks too to Jenny Lloyd for her beautiful gift to Jeddah of a silk scarf handmade in secret by the children, and for arranging for their fingerprints on the Graduate Tree.

High School

While a formal commitment to extending to High School was shelved by the Board and the staff in the early days of 2017, the concept has again arisen with concern for children of high school age still falling through the cracks of conventional education systems. While the Board acknowledges the many foreseeable challenges, such as space, curriculum, equipment, minimum student numbers, teachers and the financial resources to fund it, everyone could see the need to support teenage students. A few meetings were held throughout the year on the topic and a small group is developing a plan to ascertain the various aspects of project based high school education and address how it could work while still fitting within the formal curriculum and educational requirements for a high school.

Building program

With the expansion of our school into Years 5 and 6, we increased the number of rooms being rented from Kazcare. Significant work was carried out at the beginning of 2017 for the renovation of a new room for the Kindergarten and the grounds around it, including the construction of fencing and the design and layout of the outdoor play area. The Board attended the site and sprinkled water to bless the site, and the new room was officially opened on 30 January 2017 by the cutting of a ribbon.

A new school bus

As noted in our Chairman's report of 2016, we purchased a new school bus at the conclusion of 2016/beginning of 2017. The bus was printed with the school logo and started a school bus run from Picton at the beginning of Term 2, although excursions take priority.

Thank you to our leaders

On behalf of the Board I again thank James Goodlet for his hard work and attention to the task of Principal in growing the school; he has managed the different aspects of this task well and we are grateful to have him.

A big thank you must also go to our Business Manager, Melissa Savill who makes all of our jobs so very much easier.

Thank you also to the ongoing Board members; your continuity is essential for a strong future. Of particular note it is refreshing to have Inga undertaking her role as Secretary with such passion and fervour, for which we can be thankful when reading over our updated Board Members Manual. And we are so very grateful to Meredith and David, whose particular skills have provided a special depth to what the School Board can offer.

In closing I'd like to note that as it currently stands, our school is in great shape. We have experienced a trend of strong growth and it looks like continuing into the 2018 year and beyond. In our Principal, we have a strong capable leader, a man of vision. The teachers' feedback is that he provides them all with space to grow and develop in a safe and supportive environment. I think this speaks for the children too.

Jane Button, Chairman

From the Principal

A healthy social life arises when the whole community finds its reflection in the mirror of a person's soul, and when the virtue of each person lives in the whole community.

Rudolf Steiner

2017 in review

In 2017 our theme was *strengths-based school*. We examined our strengths as individuals and as a community. The staff and the board were involved in professional development on this theme and we brought in a consultant, Steve Bagi, to lead us in individual strength surveys and discussions on this theme. We also used the strengths concept in staff reviews and professional conversations using the SOAR method (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Resources). Looking back, this seems to have had a very positive effect. From a strong base, there has been an increased confidence in the staff to act independently and intuitively.

In support of this strengths-based theme, the importance of healthy community relationships was examined further and enhanced by a refresher course in Restorative Practices with Vic and Liz O'Callaghan in November 2017. The Restorative Practices approach has been used in the school since 2015 and utilised in student behaviour management and community building. This time, there was a focus on student leadership and participation. Class 5/6 students started a trial run of their playground leadership program in the Term 4 2017 and will continue to develop this program in 2018.

Some of the new programs and projects implemented in 2017

Language teaching

We were very fortunate to have Jo-Anne Woodman join our teaching staff in 2017, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge and experience in Japanese language and culture. Jo-Anne's role included language teaching, librarian and student support.

Élodie Guidou continued with her French classes as well as assisting in the Kindergarten. Having both French and Japanese taught in the school is a great strength in Aurora's program.

First graduating Year 6 class

2017 saw the establishment of our first Class 5/6. There were 6 students who left our school to go to high school at the end of 2017. This was a special moment in the school's history, and although most of the students had only been at the school for a short time, less than two years, they and their parents expressed their gratitude for the commitment and care shown by the school community. They were especially thankful for Jeddah Teasdale's work as class teacher.

IT program for Class 5/6

One point of difference in our school is our limited use of digital technology and screens for young students. We will continue to encourage parents to limit screen time at home and will continue to do so at school. In Class 5/6 we feel that it is appropriate for students to have access to digital technology for some projects. Starting in 2017, each Class 5/6 student has access to a laptop, provided by the school, and a structured program implemented by their teacher, Jeddah Teasdale, to enable the students to develop skills and use digital technology as a tool when appropriate.

New Kindergarten space

In January 2017 the new Kindergarten classroom and playground was established. Throughout the year, the playground has been an ongoing project with parents and students assisting in establishing a beautiful, inspiring and challenging setting for children. The new play equipment is still being developed by parents and is a unique, multi-faceted structure.

Primary School landscaping

In 2017 a major landscaping project was undertaken to build a new timber retaining wall around the ballcourt and bush rock steps leading to the office. This has been, aesthetically and functionally, an excellent transformation.

Outdoor education and environmental studies program

In 2017, when Aurora became a fully fledged K-6 school, we had the opportunity to more fully develop outdoor education. This includes a camping program starting with one camp on the school site for Class 1/2, two camps for Class 3/4 and three camps for Class 5/6. There were also more day excursions to experience the wonders of the Southern Highlands. The outdoor classroom and environmental education program expanded with strong links to the curriculum. Camps and excursions are included as part of school fees. With the skills, experience and energy of our staff we have a unique opportunity to create a school where experience in and study of the natural environment is a core element.



Kitchen garden program

Pascalie Nelemans ran the kitchen garden program for the whole school in 2017. It included providing a healthy lunch for all students as well as gardening and cooking classes. This will continue into the future.

Enrolments

Throughout 2017, numbers continued to steadily increase to over 60 students enrolled; 58 school aged and 4 under school age at the end of the school year. This is roughly in line with our projected growth of 25% per year and an expected 60 students enrolled at the start of 2018.

Aurora Map and Master plan

The Aurora Map, strategic and business plan for 2017-2019 will continue. A master plan for building works will be established in April 2018.

Staff allocations 2017

James Goodlet- full time Principal
Melissa Savill- full-time Business Manager
Annabel Brown- full-time Kindergarten teacher
Élodie Guidou- full-time Kindergarten assistant
Kate Koch- 0.6 FTE Class 1/2 teacher
Terence Corbett- full-time Class 3/4 teacher
Jeddah Teasdale- full-time Class 5/6 teacher
Pascalie Nelemans- 0.8 assistant teacher (Kitchen garden program) and bus driver
Lisa Devine - 0.2 FTE Chaplain and Eurythmy teacher
Sarah Hindson- 1.5 hrs pw strings teacher
Vanessa Woodhill- 3 hrs pw music teacher (volunteer)
Jenny Lloyd- playgroup and craft teacher
Shirley Bell McLeod- Craft assistant and early childhood mentor
Rochelle Hairs- 6 hrs pw playgroup teacher
Jo Anne Woodman- 27.5 hrs pw learning support, library, Japanese
Michael Barker- part-time bus driver

Summary

2017 has been another solid time of growth for Aurora and all the indications are that enrolment growth will continue at about 25% per year. Our plan, *Mapping Aurora's Future*, will see us continue to use the physical classroom and outdoor spaces on the Kazcare site and consolidate our composite class structures with a slight increase in staffing allocations along with increased student numbers. The great progress made at Aurora in its short history has been due to the work of the Board, the parents and the staff. There has also been some good fortune and good timing in taking up opportunities for funding and employing the right staff at the right time. Even with significant building and landscaping expenses and increased staffing, the school is in a healthy position financially and culturally to accommodate further growth. The College of Teachers has been operating as the spiritual heart of the school and there is an ever-increasing feeling of confidence in our ability, as a group, to make considered, healthy judgements for the school's pedagogical future and doing what is healthy for students at this time and in this place. Thank you to all the staff for their commitment, diligence and care shown to the students and other community members at Aurora. Special thanks to Melissa Savill who has provided great support to me and has displayed flexibility, skill and patience in her role as Business Manager. Also, special thanks to the School Board under the leadership of its Chair, Jane Button, for working in a very constructive way in governing Aurora.

James Goodlet

Principal



Staff profiles

At Aurora, we are in the privileged position of having a strong team of staff, all of whom share a passion for quality education and a commitment to professional excellence. All of our staff hold relevant professional qualifications, and in addition have a background of study in Steiner education.

James Goodlet - Principal

NESA Accreditation: Teacher Accreditation Authority Delegate, Existing Teacher

Bachelor of Arts, Diploma of Teaching, Master of Education (Leadership), MACE, MACEL

James believes in the power of educating the whole child: head, heart and hands. With over twenty years of experience in teaching, leadership and management across different school sectors, Steiner, state and independent, James sees the challenge of guiding our young school as an exciting adventure. Having worked in both the building industry and environmental education, and with passions ranging from music to coaching and playing sport, James brings an array of skills and experience to Aurora's development.

James holds a deep commitment to people's growth and development, including the staff and students of Aurora. 'What I want is a friendly, inclusive place for learning - a place where adventure is encouraged and creativity is nurtured. A healthy place for everyone, with a focus on the outdoor classroom, practical and artistic skills and the development of independence and resilience in young people. We're lucky to have such a strong community with committed, generous, big-hearted people here.'

Melissa Savill - Business Manager

Bachelor of Nursing, Certificate III Education Support (Administration), Diploma Business (ongoing)

Melissa brings a strong background in the administration of independent schools, having worked for a number of years in large K-12 schools in Sydney. Additionally, she brings skills drawn from her experience in nursing, farming and business. Along with her passionate belief in a Steiner approach, these combine to forge Melissa's rigorous commitment to building a strong and sustainable school.

'What's unique about this place is the positive, enlivening atmosphere. It's empowering to everybody and I can see the benefit to the children every day. I see myself as a facilitator, linking the wider community to the Aurora community and welcoming them to the family, and as someone who's here to ensure the success and longevity of the school so it can continue to provide what the community needs.'

Jeddah Teasdale - Class 5/6 Teacher

NESA Accreditation: Proficient Teacher

Bachelor of Science (Architecture), Master of Environmental Management (Honours), Master of Teaching (Primary), currently studying Foundations of Steiner Education

Quality relationships are the foundation of quality learning outcomes for students, Jeddah believes. With a passion for environmental education, maths education, and the intersection between the two, Jeddah brings a dynamic and reflective approach to the classroom. As a member of several professional associations including the Australian Association of Environmental Educators and the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers, Jeddah is continually investigating best teaching practice, and sets standards that are both high and also realistic for students to achieve.

She has a particular interest in helping students reach their full potential in all aspects of their lives, and invests real energy in preparing our students for their transition to highschool.

'What I really value at Aurora is the way that we're always in conversation about our teaching practice and what works best for students. I appreciate that we're always reflecting and questioning - I think we're very forward thinking in that way.'

Terence Corbett - Class 3/4 Teacher

NESA Accreditation: Existing Teacher

Bachelor of Science, Dip Ed (Primary), Diploma of Steiner Education

An environment where children can experience security, groundedness and harmonious working together - this is what Terence is committed to providing for the students of Aurora. With over thirty years of teaching experience in Steiner, state and Catholic school settings, Terence also brings a strong repertoire of practical and artistic skills - having worked across a number of trades and artistic disciplines. This breadth of experience, Terence says, has strengthened his resolve to work with students using the holistic, integrated approach of Steiner education.

'Here at Aurora, I'm able to teach in the way that I feel most at ease and that I believe is most healthy for the children. By working with rhythm and by bringing movement, practical and artistic elements into all our learning, the work becomes enlivening for all of us. Music, verses, poetry, plays, and working with imaginative pictures - these things, in combination with solid practical skills and hard work, help the children to develop inner calmness, self acceptance, and an enduring love of learning.'

Kate Koch - Class 1/2 Teacher

NESA Accreditation: Provisional Teacher

Bachelor of Arts, Grad Dip Teaching, Master of Art Psychotherapy, Certificate of Rudolf Steiner Education

Kate is one of the founding teachers at Aurora. Since 1998, she has had a wide range of experience in early childhood, primary and high school settings. Kate brings a passion for each child's social and emotional wellbeing, a love of language, and a deep commitment to ways of working that are rooted in mutual respect rather than reward and punishment.

'In Steiner education we respect and value each child and what they bring to the world,' Kate says. 'The primary years are a magical time. We aim to meet the child where they are at developmentally. The world of childhood is a participatory, imaginative world and so it is through stories and artistry that academic learning is introduced... A child's primary school years are vital. Here they form the foundation on which their future lives are built - and so it is an honour and a great pleasure to be bringing Steiner education to the children of the Southern Highlands.'

Annabel Brown - Kindergarten Teacher

NESA Accreditation: Proficient Teacher

Bachelor of Communication (Social Inquiry), Graduate Diploma of Teaching & Learning

Annabel is passionate about children's social and emotional health and their relationship to the natural world. 'I find it immensely satisfying to create experiences and environments where children learn through their own exploration and through being in community together. I know that day by day here in the Aurora Kindergarten, each child builds a whole range of skills and attitudes that will underpin their long-term wellbeing - and that's the beauty of a truly developmental pedagogy.'

As a founding teacher at Aurora, Annabel reflects: 'Together we're building something very precious here; a school with so much heart and with solid academic and administrative foundations. I'm proud of the collegial culture of collaboration that we're creating as the school grows, all of us bringing different perspectives, yet brought together by our shared commitment to take a fresh look at how the essence of Steiner education can unfold in this particular place and time, to truly meet the needs of these particular children.'

Élodie Guidou - Kindergarten Assistant

Bachelor of Education (France), Certificate in Steiner Education (Early Childhood)

To seek to understand each child in a holistic way; this is the starting point of our journey as educators, Élodie believes. Having worked as a teacher in government schools in her homeland of France, Élodie set out on an exploration of what children need to be healthy and strong; an exploration that led her across the world and brought her to discover Steiner education. 'In Steiner's work', she says, 'we find at least some answers to the questions, What is it to be a human being? By looking at the whole picture, by looking in a profound way, we can more easily find the keys to help a child.'

'The task of being with the children at this age, at the beginning of their life - it's such important work and I feel so blessed to be guiding them gently - striving to show them a path that can help their abilities unfold, and laying a foundation for who they will become as adults. I don't have to wonder why I wake up every morning, and I'm happy to go to work! There is a meaning in this work and it's important, and it's a joy to see the children happy in this environment.'

Sandra Marques - Kindergarten Assistant

Cert IV Business Studies (Human Resources), currently studying Foundations of Steiner Early Childhood Education

Being present with children and honouring the early childhood years - these are things that Sandra is passionate about. Having spent over thirty years in and around Steiner school settings, Sandra brings a wealth of experience when it comes to creating inviting environments and nourishing experiences. A warm, domestic atmosphere is a key feature of life in the Kindergarten, and Sandra cultivates this especially through her focus on kitchen work and tending of the spaces with the children.

'Food is an integral part of the Kindergarten - it's a real part of the daily rhythm and ritual. I love the alchemy of being in the kitchen and supporting the children to build skills that they will use throughout their lives, peeling and chopping veggies, setting the table, washing up, sweeping and so on. For them, all this is still play and as educators we're here to create the rich, safe environment where children can explore the world through their play. And all of this within a school that's striving to be real, inclusive, transparent and open - it's a lovely thing to experience.'

Pascalie Nelemans - Kitchen Garden Program Coordinator

Bachelor of Cultural and Social Studies (Netherlands), Advanced Diploma of Nutritional Medicine

Pascalie has a background in nutrition and natural health, and a passion for connecting children with where their food comes from. Over the past year and a half, Pascalie has developed our Aurora Kitchen Garden Program, whereby a hot lunch is available to students each day, and students are regularly involved in food preparation, gardening, composting and chook care.

'Working here, I know that I'm doing something meaningful. It's wonderful to be able to give children the chance to grow a relationship with healthy food, so that they're set up with good habits for life. I love being able to show the students the connection between growing vegetables, being out in the fresh air with the chooks running around, and the kitchen. I just love preparing food with the children - seeing their enthusiasm to cook and their happy faces... they always want to stay in the kitchen!'

Jenny Lloyd - Handwork Specialist

NESA Accreditation: Existing Teacher

Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Diploma of Teaching (Primary), Graduate Diploma of Social Ecology

Jenny is a qualified teacher and practising artist who believes strongly in the value of handwork and practical skills as important aspects of every child's education. Jenny has run a number of successful workshops and creative projects in primary school settings over the past twenty years, and will soon be leading workshops for trainee teachers throughout Asia. With a background in sculptural ceramics,

Jenny now focuses on fibre crafts and community arts practice, and is particularly interested in sustainability, nature crafts, and the role of creative processes in bringing people together.

Of her work with the primary classes at Aurora, Jenny says, 'Handwork helps the children build a healthy attitude towards getting things done, it develops an enthusiasm for making and designing and bringing tasks to completion. For new students, as they gain some experience in handwork, I notice that their ability to stick at something grows, they don't get defeated so quickly, and they become more capable and self propelling. Joyful endeavour is a wonderful thing, and I feel really warmed to be able to experience it together with the children as I guide them.'

Rachel Buckley - After School Carer & Indigenous Perspectives Educator

Bachelor of Adult Education and Indigenous Studies

Aunty Rachel Buckley is a Wiradjuri woman and has a background in adult education, farming and indigenous studies. Rachel is particularly interested in the crossovers between Australian indigenous wisdom and the understandings brought by science and other cultures from around the world. She is passionate about educating children in the heritage of this land in inclusive, empowering ways; and she brings a rich perspective on the similarities and differences between Steiner and Aboriginal pedagogies.

'The whole idea of working with your hands and head together is an Aboriginal way of learning and teaching. In my work with the children, they set the direction and the pace and I guide and support them. The learning is emergent and it's always through the practical things that we get to see how the children are going in their thinking - it all works together.'

Lisa Devine - Pastoral Care & Eurythmy Specialist

Bachelor of Behavioural Science, Master of Psychology (Counselling), Diploma of Youth Work, Eurythmy Diploma and Eurythmy Therapy Training

Lisa offers a wealth of knowledge and experience when it comes to bringing Steiner's philosophy to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary life. With a lifelong love of movement and dance and a background in youth work and counselling, Lisa works with both children and adults, individually and in community, to promote healthy alignment on all levels.

Lisa has worked in a number of Steiner schools throughout Australia, and is widely regarded as a speaker, parent educator, teacher trainer and facilitator. At Aurora, her pastoral support is available to all members of the school community; and additionally she facilitates Eurythmy movement practices for class groups, staff and parents.

Rochelle Hairs - Playgroup Facilitator

Bachelor of Arts (Psychology and Education), Master of Nursing

Rochelle holds a strong commitment to children being able to reach their full potential through a warm and nurturing start to life. With a background in child and family nursing, and a love of creating beautiful spaces and objects, Rochelle supports and inspires families to create homes filled with laughter, presence and peace.

Over the past years, Rochelle has built up a thriving community of families who enjoy a parent-child session each week - and in doing so, has helped to build a strong foundation of young children who will come through as the school grows. 'We find that children who have come through the playgroup transition so smoothly to school at Aurora. And not only the children - parents find that it's a great way to gain a real hands-on experience of what this education is about. Every playgroup is a joy and it's a privilege to lead!'

Shirley Bell - Early Childhood Mentor and Handwork Specialist

Diploma of Early Childhood, Steiner Education Training (Australia and America)

Shirley brings to Aurora over thirty years of wisdom and experience as a Steiner early childhood teacher and craftsperson. She is sought after internationally as a mentor and teacher trainer, and travels regularly to work with Steiner educators throughout Asia where there is a flourishing Steiner movement. Shirley has particular interest and skills in fibre crafts, storytelling, puppetry and doll-making, and holds a strong regard for the benefits of these arts to community life. Shirley also offers a wealth of experience around child observation and the application of Steiner's theories of child development.

Shirley has been involved with Aurora since its inception, and now offers mentoring support to all early childhood staff across our playgroups and kindergarten.

Vanessa Woodhill - Music Education Coordinator

Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts in Recorder (Honours), Fellow of the Trinity College of Music, London (Recorder)

Vanessa brings a wealth of experience in children's music education. With a lifelong passion for music and its role in human development, Vanessa has studied widely when it comes to building children's musical literacy. She has been involved with a number of successful ventures including the establishment of the Goulburn Regional Conservatorium, the Creative Arts program at the University of Wollongong, and a range of choral and orchestral projects.

At Aurora, Vanessa works with class teachers and other music specialists to deliver a challenging yet developmentally appropriate music program for all students across the primary school, involving singing, melodic percussion, string and wind instruments.

Sarah Hindson - Violin Teacher

Bachelor of Music Performance and Graduate Diploma of Music Performance

Sarah is an accomplished violinist having studied throughout her life under a number of acclaimed musicians. She enjoys chamber music and plays with the WIN Wollongong Symphony Orchestra. Sarah is also a passionate teacher, having taught at the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music, as well as in a number of independent schools and privately.

'Learning an instrument is all about helping the children to foster a love of music. By loving music and loving to play the instrument, students will achieve best possible results. All students are given the opportunity to achieve, no matter their ability level. What I hope for most for my students is to inspire a lifelong love of music.'

Professional learning

In 2017, staff participated in the following professional development activities:

Highlands First Aid Training HLTAID001, HLTAID002, HLTAID003, HLTAID004

Attended April and July 2017

Attained by: Terence Corbett, Jennifer Lloyd, Melissa Savill, Pascale Nelemans, James Goodlet, Jo-Anne Woodman

Child Study

Each study conducted over 3 weeks throughout the year

Attended by: all staff

AIS - Obligations in Identifying and Responding to Children and Young people at Risk

April

Attended by: Jeddah Teasdale, Terence Corbett, Pascale Nelemans, Melissa Savill, Annabel Brown, Katherine Koch, Jennifer Lloyd, Vanessa Woodhill, Jane Button, Élodie Guidou, Meredith Hatton, Shirley Bell McLeod, Michael Barker, Sarah Hindson

AIS - Child Protection Investigation

August

Attended by: James Goodlet

AIS - Governance Online Modules (multiple)

January - December

Attended by: Meredith Hatton, Melissa Savill

AIS - Education SEPP Seminar

September

Attended by: James Goodlet

AIS - Child Protection Legislation: Reportable Conduct and Allegations Against Employees

January - December

Attended by: James Goodlet

AIS - Conducting School Based Research (Online Module)

August - December

Attended by: Jeddah Teasdale

SEA - Governance, Leadership and Management Conference

May

Attended by: James Goodlet, Melissa Savill

SEA - Delegates Conferences

March, August

Attended by: James Goodlet

ACEL - Strengths-based School (Robert Biswas-Diener)

February

Attended by: James Goodlet

reSolve Maths Champions

Attended by: Jeddah Teasdale

Restorative Practices Australia - Staff Training session

November

Attended by: Annabel Brown, Jane Button, Chris Cloran, Terence Corbett, Élodie Guidou, Katherine Koch, Jennifer Lloyd, Shirley McLeod, Pascale Nelemans, Inga Oates, Jeddah Teasdale, Melissa Savill, James Goodlet

ACEL - Strengths-based School (Robert Biswas-Diener)

February

Attended by: James Goodlet

Actuate Leadership - Strengths Workshop for Staff and Board

April

Attended by: Annabel Brown, Jane Button, Chris Cloran, Terence Corbett, Élodie Guidou, Katherine Koch, Jennifer Lloyd, Shirley McLeod, Pascale Nelemans, Inga Oates, Jeddah Teasdale, Melissa Savill, James Goodlet, Vanessa Woodhill

Creative Parenting with Lou Harvey Zahra

March

Attended by: Annabel Brown, Jennifer Lloyd, Élodie Guidou, Melissa Savill

The Biennial Conference for Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education, New Zealand

October

Attended by: Élodie Guidou

Dept of Primary Industries - Food Safety Supervisor

March

Attended by: Pascale Nelemans

Reach Institute - Foundation - OG Multi-Sensory Learning

December

Attended by: Jo-Anne Woodman

IEU Environment Conference 2017 - Sustainability Think Connect Act

October

Attended by: Pascale Nelemans

Aetaomah School - Speech Workshop and Class Observations

July

Attended by: Élodie Guidou

National Nature Pedagogy Conference

March

Attended by: Annabel Brown, Rachel Buckley

Membership Australian Association of Environmental Education

Attended by: Jeddah Teasdale

Membership Australian Association of Maths Teachers

Attended by: Jeddah Teasdale

ACCM - Diploma of Business

Attended by: Melissa Savill

The student cohort and student achievement

Playgroups

In 2017, Playgroup ran two sessions a week for 1 – 4 year olds and their parent/carer.

The program is based on the seasonal cycles of the year, expressed through stories, songs, craft activities and festivals. The heart of Playgroup is play, the most natural and normal activity of a child. For inside play our simple handcrafted toys encourage the development of the imagination and in our beautiful outside space children can roam and discover the richness of nature.

Children learn and practise social skills as they share space, time and toys with each other. Parents participate in social activities, learn new skills and take away ideas for home life. Both children and parents contribute to the day through doing chores such as sweeping the floor, collecting eggs or firewood, and chopping the fruit for morning tea. Children love the predictable rhythm and look forward to what is coming next.

Parents are connecting, supporting each other and building community. Rich outside play, feeding the horses, sandpit, tree house, wobbly logs to walk over, leaves to fall into in Autumn (and rake up!).

Looking ahead – from August 2018 we will start 3 sessions a week, with over 30 families.

Kindergarten

2017 was an important year in the development of the Aurora Kindergarten. Just prior to the start of the school year, we had a formal opening ceremony to celebrate the establishment of our new Kindergarten space and surrounding playground. The classroom and gardens were all carefully designed through a careful visioning and planning process that involved staff, children and members of the wider school community. The new space has proved to be practical and beautiful.

Throughout 2017, Annabel Brown worked with Élodie Guidou to prepare to hand over the Kindergarten to Élodie as lead teacher for the coming years. Supported by Sandra Marques as Kindergarten Assistant and Shirley Bell as Early Childhood Mentor, Annabel and Élodie worked to create a seamless transition for children and families alike.

Other key accomplishments of 2017 in the Kindergarten are as follows:

- For the first time, we held separate Kindergarten and Primary festivals to cater to the needs of different age-groups in a growing school.
- We received our formal accreditation as a school from the Australian Association for Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education, and several members of our team represented the school at AARSECE Regional Meetings in both Sydney and Canberra.
- We provided hot morning tea and lunches for all students every day throughout the year, and overwhelmingly these were well received by parents and children alike. This brought benefits in terms of the children's nutrition, reducing environmental impact, and building a sense of community through 'breaking bread' together - in addition to all the learning benefits of the children being involved in the preparation of meals.
- During Term 3 we established separate Early Childhood faculty meetings in addition to regular College meetings, enabling regular Child Study and strong channels for communication.
- We held a Year 1 Transition Program throughout Term 4 for those students progressing to the Aurora primary school.

- Internationally renowned Early Childhood Mentor Louise de Forest visited the school to conduct classroom observations, professional development sessions, and a parent education event.
- We held a series of thorough orientation sessions for those families entering the Kindergarten in 2018.
- We went on daily nature walks to explore local surroundings, and connected with local growers through a Moonacres Autumn Harvest Excursion and a Living Earth Springtime Planting incursion.
- The vast majority of Kindergarten parents attended a number of parent education sessions throughout the year, building a sense of cohesion and a shared understanding of our approach at Aurora.

The student cohort

In total, we had twenty-two children, eleven boys and eleven girls, in the Aurora Kindergarten throughout 2017 - mainly full-time school aged children, with a small number of younger part-time students each day. Many children had older siblings at the school, and most had experienced a Steiner early childhood setting before - whether previously in our Kindergarten or at playgroups. In terms of inclusion and diversity, all students spoke English as their primary language at home, however students came from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. One student identified as Aboriginal, and six students had additional health or learning needs. It was a pleasure to teach this group of children and to see seven children proceeding to Year 1 at Aurora in 2018.

Student achievement

Students were assessed throughout the year based on the NESA Early Stage 1 outcomes as well as more holistic Steiner assessment tools focussing on child observation. Those students progressing to Year 1 achieved adequately on all NESA Early Stage 1 outcomes, with most students working beyond expected proficiency in certain Key Learning Areas. Our Transition to Year 1 program was designed such that all required outcomes were met within the stage, without compromising the Steiner Kindergarten experience for the wider early childhood group.

Class 1/2

The student cohort

At the start of 2017, Class 1/2 was made up of nine children, five girls and four boys. The nine students comprised three girls and two boys in Year 1, with two girls and two boys in Year 2. Four Year 1 students had completed kindergarten at Aurora Steiner School in 2016. Two of the four Year 2 students had been in the composite class the previous year. Three students joined the class from other schools. All students participated enthusiastically in our range of learning activities and classroom routines.

In Term 3, a Year 1 boy and a Year 1 girl joined our class. At the beginning of Term 4 one Year 2 girl and one Year 1 girl joined our class. Also in Term 4, one Year 1 student who was not managing in the primary class joined the kindergarten. At Aurora School in 2017, seven students completed Year 1 and five students completed Year 2.

In this composite 1/2 class, four Independent Learning Plans (ILPs) were developed for students with varying support needs. All students spoke English as their first language. Of the thirteen children that attended the class, four attended for part of the year and nine for the full school year.

In 2017 we were fortunate to be able to offer specialist classes to the students in French, Eurythmy, Library, Literacy Support and Music, taught by expert teachers, Élodie Guidou (French), Lisa Devine (Eurythmy), Jo-Anne Woodman (Library and literacy support), and Vanessa Woodhill (music). The class also attended swimming lessons at Bowral Pool and 'Book Week' at Bowral Library.

As well as this years across subject thematic main lessons, the children have had regular lessons of gardening, cooking, beeswax modelling, painting and drawing, games, peer support, restorative practice (sharing) circles and craft. Each student has had bi-weekly one-to-one literacy sessions with our specialist literacy teacher Jo-Anne Woodman.

The children have enjoyed excursions each term. We experienced the joys of harvest at Moonacres Organic Farm in Term 1. We had an experiential nature studies lesson followed by a nature walk at Minnamurra Rainforest, Budderoo National Park in Term 2. In Term 3 we attended the Opera Australia production of El Kid at Robertson town hall. In Term 4 the class visited Living Earth Farm and learnt more about organic farming. Additionally, in Term 4 the class enjoyed an overnight camping experience on the school grounds.

Here at Aurora we work together to create a sense of exploration, collaboration and unity between all the children. Special characteristics of this group were a love of language and drama, mathematics and nature. Socially, the children bonded well as a class group with each other and with Kate as their teacher.

Student achievement

Year 1 is the beginning of the class teacher period and the threshold of a new world of adventure and learning. The Year 1 children were genuinely eager to enter a wider world and experience a new and more organised group experience. The Year 2 students entered the next phase of their learning with a sense of camaraderie and enjoyment.

Twelve students completed the composite Class 1/2 program in 2017. A range of formative and summative assessment methods was used to track the children's learning and development, including main lesson books, day-to-day teacher observations and anecdotal records and tracking via regular skills and outcomes rubrics.

End-of-Year reports indicated each student's development across all six Key Learning Areas (KLAs), plus Social & Emotional Development. In most subjects, students achieved Satisfactory and Accomplished grades, with individual students exhibiting occasional areas where they achieved the Working Beyond grade and some occasionally Working Towards. In Creative Arts and also Personal Development, Health & Physical Education, students achieved similarly high levels of competence. Around Social & Emotional Development, many students demonstrated Accomplished and Working Beyond levels in relation to outcomes.

Class 3/4

The student cohort

2017 started with twelve students in the class made up of seven boys and five girls. Ten of these children had come from our own Class 1/2 and two joined the class from other schools. Enrolments grew steadily throughout the year so that by the end of the year the class had increased to 18 students made up of eight boys and ten girls.

Student achievement

Students were involved in many educational programs during the year focussed on quality learning in each KLA supplemented by practical activities, excursions, and a camp. Specialist lessons in Recorder and Music Theory, Violin, Library, Eurythmy, Handwork and French were part of the weekly curriculum for 2017. Additional academic support was offered to students who required one on one specialist assistance.

Main lessons included: Grammar House; Length; Money; Time; History of Writing; Human and Animal, Fractions, Building and Norse Myths. The Building main lesson was used as a springboard for a term of afternoon practical activities. With the help of parents, the class was engaged in small-group building

projects. Also visiting speakers enriched the experience of the building process as they shared the story of how they built the special house that became their home. One of the stories from the Norse Myths main lesson was further developed. The class worked in developing the characters of the story into a drama production. At the conclusion of this process the classroom was transformed into a theatre. The class performed the play 'Iduna and the Golden Apples' in front of an appreciative audience.

Farm visits were enjoyed, with visits to Moonacres Organic Farm at Fitzroy Falls and Living Earth Farm at High Range. The students learnt more about the animal kingdom in the excursion to Symbio Wildlife Park. There was also a visit to Bowral Library for Book Week and a week of swimming lessons at Bowral Pool. The highlight of the year was undoubtedly the camp to the Yurt Farm near Goulburn, where the children enjoyed a farm stay focussed on practical back to basics activities.



Class 5/6

The student cohort

The 2017, Class 5/6 comprised of nine students in Year 6 and one student in Year 5. During the year this number fell to eight students, with all graduating at the end of the year. Four students from the Wiritjiribin Aboriginal program were in the graduating cohort.

Students Achievements

The students enjoyed a wide variety of achievements over the year in academic studies, sport, art and craft and they participated in a range of excursions and camps designed to enhance their at school program.

Excursions included the Orienteering Gala Day, Nan Tien Temple, Touch Football Gala Day, the Science and Engineering Challenge Day, Wingecarribee Schools Environment Day, bushwalks in the local area, Moonacres Organic Farm, Book Week at Bowral Library, Sydney Writers Festival and Minnamurra Rainforest.

Camps included Jenolan Caves, a local overnight farm stay for astronomy main lesson, meet and greet with Clinton Justice Walker on his Welcome Walk to Canberra and the Greek Olympics, hosted by Orana Steiner School and in conjunction with other Steiner Schools. A graduation ceremony was held for Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School's first graduating class. This is an important milestone for the school.



Students showed progress across all KLA's and were well supported by our Student Support Teacher. A range of formative and summative assessment methods were used to track the children's learning and development, including main lesson books, day-to-day teacher observations and anecdotal records and tracking via regular skills and outcomes rubrics. The Social & Emotional Development markers for this group showed remarkable growth over the time at Aurora.

NAPLAN

In 2017, only two students in Year 3 participated in the NAPLAN assessments in May. One of the two students performed well above average in all areas. As there were less than five students included, there was not sufficient data to calculate a statistically reliable school average to post on the *myschools* website.

Eurythmy

Eurythmy in Kindergarten in 2017 was focused on developing beautiful archetypal movements in the children through imitating. We are shaping the sounds that live in the words with our arms and feet. These sounds work back into the physiology as their bodies are growing and forming in a healthy and harmonious way. We use stories which mirror the journey of becoming a human being on the earth where goodness is enjoyed. We moved the story of a floppy floppy pancake who ran away and after refusing to be eaten by a number of characters feeds three hungry children. We also moved the story of three billy goats gruff.

Eurythmy in the primary class was focused on creating beautiful archetypal forms as a group. The individual children are working on both fine and gross motor skills and learning the language of Eurythmy where the sounds of speech become alive and work into the physiology of the children to bring balance to their development. For example; the L lifts heaviness into lightness and the S brings chaos into form. The class learned to walk to tricky counting rhythms that take full concentration and bring a sense of joy when they are achieved; they crept silently to take back the gems from the blindfolded lion; they jumped the vowels in their feet with Griselda; they flew the Cassini Curve as falcons and hawks; they polished copper rods which were used for developing nimble feet with 'Jack be Nimble', the 'dragon's ladder' and the 'seven-fold rod exercise'; they stamped as 'robbers' and faced the 'dragon' with forms in arms and feet that bring certainty and confidence; and they told the tale of Bridget through movement. Together we remembered what a pleasure it is to move our body in ways that nurture our soul and spirit.

Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives. The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility—these three forces are the very nerve of education.

Rudolf Steiner

Looking back at Aurora in 2017

Priorities as outlined in *Mapping Aurora's Future*

Financial Sustainability

- As projected, enrolment numbers grew by approximately 25% in 2017.
- Marketing was targeted to a few appropriate local media advertisements, open day, tulip time festival, ongoing development of the school website and regularly updated school Facebook page.

Professionalism

- Professional learning was prioritised with whole staff training in Strengths Based Schooling and Restorative Practices as well as other individual staff professional learning especially in First Aid, Child Protection and teaching improvement.
- Class teachers continued studying Diploma of Steiner Education through Sydney Rudolf Steiner College, Glenaeon Class Teacher Intensives and, in one case, commencement of Master of Steiner Education program.
- Board and management continued with AIS governance and compliance training.
- Upgrading of NESA teacher accreditation from provisional to proficient teachers.
- Development of high quality, structured parent education program including parent coffee morning discussions each fortnight, parent evenings each term and regular written communication from class teachers and management.

Child Focus

- Development of a structured student support program with a focus on literacy improvement with the employment of a part time student support teacher working in conjunction with class teachers.
- Restorative practices program refresher with the development of a student leadership program.
- Expansion of outdoor education program including more camping and excursion opportunities.

Priority areas for improvement

- Development of a master plan, supporting an application for capital funding to build two new classroom spaces.
- Further develop skills and qualifications for support and administrative staff, as well as continued involvement in conferences, short courses and other learning opportunities as they arise.
- Expanded student support programs to cater for all students in need of individual learning plans.
- Further expansion of the Kitchen Garden program.
- Expansion of early childhood education, specifically in the Kindergarten and playgroups.
- Ongoing development of parent education programs.
- Focus on raising the profile of academic standards.

Mapping Aurora's future

A strategic plan and business plan for Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School 2017-2019

Background and rationale

Mapping Aurora's future is a process and a working document, led by Aurora's Principal, James Goodlet, in consultation with members of the school community including: the Business Manager (Melissa Savill-financial), the College of Teachers (educational), Board members (governance), parent representatives, Business Management Consultant (Steve Klipin - professional partner), Koori Kulcha and Kazcare (community partners).

From the beginning of 2015 there was a recognised need by the School Board and management team for a comprehensive business plan. With Aurora being a new school it had been challenging to develop an accurate business plan as we didn't have an established pattern of income and expenditure, especially in relation to government funding. As the school has progressed there has been greater capacity to plan due to more reliable data being available. Thanks to careful financial management and commitment from the School Board, staff and parent community, the school is currently in a very solid financial position. The establishment of the Statement of Purpose in early 2015, with the whole community invited for input, helped us set a path for our school vision but there was an increasing need for us to be able to plan financially for this vision.

In October 2015, business planning discussions started between management and the Board and then with Steve Klipin, Business Management Consultant. A working group was established in March 2016 consisting of Business Manager Melissa Savill, Board Chair Jane Button, Treasurer Chris Cloran and Principal James Goodlet. It was at that time that we established the three main identified areas/values of the school that underpin current practice and will drive planning in the next three years. These are: financial sustainability, professionalism and child focus. It also became evident that the business planning should be expanded to include another layer, broader school strategy and vision. It was identified that priorities for spending are linked to the values and vision for the school. The name for the overarching plan was suggested: Mapping Aurora's Future. In August 2016 a stakeholder meeting took place with representatives from the school community and other interested groups. The participants were asked to discuss and list priorities for the school's future.

Summary of school priorities from stakeholder meeting August 2016 - collated by Annabel Brown

Financial sustainability

- Developing a long-range vision for the school's year levels and size
- Planning for premises to accommodate that vision
- Diversifying funding streams
- Creating structures that feed enrolments into the school and accommodate students when they leave
- Building community awareness of our school - marketing and promotion that reflects what we're about

Professionalism

- Valuing staff by investing in their development, drawing on their expertise and passions, and creating opportunities for staff to learn from one another
- Connecting with current educational discourse and best practice, and making these our own as we apply them in our setting
- Deepening our engagement with Steiner's indications and their application in our contemporary Australian context

- Creating excellence in our Wiritjiribin program
- Building a culture of free and inspired teaching

Child focus

- The integrity of the Steiner curriculum and its expression to suit the needs of our students in this time and place
- Environment as teacher - creating environments indoors and out that represent what we're about, including our links with Aboriginal culture
- Literacy and numeracy as a foundation for a life of learning
- Food production, gardening and outdoor education as focus areas in our school
- Parent education and early childhood experiences as a foundation for ongoing student success

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School Business Plan (2017 – 2019)

From a business perspective, 2017 heralds a somewhat different set of factors than what we faced 12 months earlier.

Key assumptions

- As with the last three years, there is a projected budget surplus in 2016. It will be larger in 2016 due to a significant increase in student numbers with minimal increase in outgoing costs. This surplus will assist in funding significant extra costs in 2017.
- Although our enrolment numbers have doubled in 2016 our plans will be based on a more conservative 25% increase per year 2017-2019.
- In the last three years there has been uncertainty surrounding both state and federal recurrent funding which has made planning challenging. This funding accounts for approximately 75% of our income. There is now a greater understanding of funding arrangements but this will only last until the end of 2017 when new arrangements will be in place.
- Aurora school will undergo statutory Years 5 and 6 registration in 2017 and whole school registration for K-6 in 2018 from BOSTES (soon to become NESA). Arising out of the preparation for our inspections a number of policies and practices are being revamped and will become current practice in 2017. The impact of these changes requires changes to some administrative matters. This will be done with a slight increase in the admin FTE load in 2017.
- In 2017 there will be a new class (Middle School 5/6) with a new teacher employed along with increased load for some specialists and room rental costs.
- Aurora school has a new Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2017+. This will bring employees into line with the vast majority of other independent schools in NSW. It will have implications for salaries and conditions.
- Aurora school will remain on the current site (Kazcare) for 2017-2019.

This business plan format has layers associated with it. These include: the 2017 budgets (wet and dry), educational offerings, the marketing strategy and the place in which this sits as part of the strategic vision of the school. The business plan along with additional documents will form part of the adopted 'Mapping Aurora's Future' in February 2017.

Three focus areas

The following key areas address the Business Plan for the start of the triennial 2017–2019. These areas are the drivers for the school plan.

- **Financial sustainability**
 - a. A budget surplus (excluding depreciation) is a requirement.
 - b. Aurora continues to seek opportunities for expanding student numbers and protecting financial sustainability.

- **Professionalism**
 - c. Ongoing staff mentoring and support is the highest staff priority.
 - d. Professional development courses such as: Diploma of Steiner Ed, Glenaeon Class Teacher Intensives, Vital Years conference, SEA conferences and AIS courses will continue.
- **Child focus**
 - e. Meeting the needs of children and developing healthy relationships are the highest priorities.
 - f. Literacy, music, Eurythmy, language, creative arts, Aboriginal education, environmental and outdoor education are priority areas.

External matters

- BOSTES (NESA) Years 5 and 6 registration March 2017
- BOSTES (NESA) teacher accreditation will be a compulsory element of teacher development from 2017 onwards including minimum professional development hours, application for/retention of proficient teacher level and professional profile.

Recommendation

That an allocation equivalent of 0.1 FTE administrative workload be budgeted in order to support the teachers and Principal comply with the registration requirements for the NSW Board of Studies inspection

Methodology

Hire extra administration staff as required to assist in the compilation and organisation of the documentation for the NSW BOSTES inspection and teacher accreditation process in 2017.

Internal matters

- **Financial sustainability**

Recommendations

- a. That a budget surplus of minimum 5% per year be achieved over the life of the 3-year business plan.
- b. Aim in 2019 to have full classes of 25 students in Kindergarten, Class 1/2, Class 3/4, Middle School Class (5-8). Financial planning is geared more conservatively with an anticipated 25% growth in enrolments each year.

Methodology

- Develop a wet budget for 2017 in Dec 2016 and a dry budget in Feb 2017 reflecting actual enrolment numbers.
- Identify areas that can be contracted in the event of a decrease (or less increase than anticipated) in student enrolment numbers.
- Develop a formal marketing plan in 2017 to be implemented in 2018 to continue enrolment growth.

2. Professionalism

Recommendations

- a. That ongoing professional development including mentoring and supervision be enhanced and included in Mapping Aurora's Future developed and implemented commencing 2017.
- b. That the BOSTES teacher accreditation process is accounted for with teachers moving to proficient teacher level, developing a professional profile and completing required professional development hours.

Methodology

Allocate up to 200 hrs towards the development and implementation of a school wide professional learning plan for staff including mentoring, appraisal, professional development, staff profile development in alignment with BOSTES Teacher Accreditation and Aurora Map

3. Child focus

Recommendations

- a. New kindergarten classroom and playground establishment
- b. Greater support and supervision needed in the Kindergarten
- c. Learning support program
- d. Separate classrooms for each class (Playgroup will be off site unless we can find a separate space on campus)
- e. New resources needed for new Middle School Class students including IT
- f. Consolidation of Wiritjiribin Program including language and culture specialist teaching and provision of four new scholarships for Aboriginal students in 2017
- g. Specialist lessons in music, Eurythmy, language, craft.
- h. Continuation of 2016 literacy review and implementation of program 2017-2019

Methodology

- Staff and parents set up working group. Employ landscape gardening contractor and handyman/builder, to help set up Kindergarten classroom and playground
- Employ Kindergarten assistants (1.6 FTE) for 2017 to cater of the range of students
- Employ part-time LS teacher (0.6) coordinating resources, volunteers, administration and literacy program implementation.
- College to recommend the best spaces for age levels and resources for new spaces by December 2016
- Work with Koori Kulcha to welcome new Aboriginal students; continue to pursue options for financial support from Koori Kulcha.
- Continue with specialist teachers with a small increase in time allocation to allow for the new class in 2017.

Changes for Term 4 2016

1. Employ Kindergarten assistants (1.6 FTE) to assist with cooking and supervision of students (in the light of growing numbers of students with special needs and an increase in pre-Kindergarten student enrolments). Three educators present at busy times.
2. Establish a working group to design new Kindergarten.
3. Start the learning support program on a small scale (0.1) in readiness for 2017 (0.6) position.
4. Start purchasing IT resources for Middle School (5-8) Class 2017 in consultation with the Middle School Teacher.

To be decided by January 2017

1. Whether to apply for BOSTES (NESA) registration for Years 7 and 8 for 2018. Application needs to be submitted by 31st March 2017.
2. Whether to purchase a school bus for 2017 and beyond.

This Business Plan (2017-2019) comes to the Board with the support of the Business Plan Working Group. Although the Principal has led this process, it has involved the input of many members of the school community. The Business Manager has developed and provided consultation and supporting documents, such as financial statements. I believe it is a cohesive document which fits our current and strategic plans and aspirations. In December of each year the Business Plan will be reviewed and altered to suit the current conditions.

Attendance and retention rates

Attendance

The average student attendance rate in 2017 was **91%**

FORM	OVERALL	MALE	FEMALE
Kindergarten	93%	92%	94%
Class 01	96%	92%	98%
Class 02	91%	85%	96%
Class 03	88%	88%	89%
Class 04	90%	95%	88%
Class 05	95%	n/a	95%
Class 06	88%	88%	89%

How the school manages non-attendance

The school recognises that a child's school attendance is compulsory. Parents are provided access to the school attendance policy at orientation or soon thereafter and this is also discussed with the parents at the child's enrolment interview.

The school has in place a policy, reviewed annually, regarding non-attendance. An attendance register is maintained on a daily basis.

Parents of students are required to report their child's absence as soon as practicable after the absence is known. Where absence has become frequent, meetings are conducted with parents to ascertain whether any difficulties have arisen that the school and parents can work through together.

Mandatory reporting procedures apply where absences are extended or the student may be at risk of significant harm through school absence.

Student Retention

Year	Start Year	Finish Year	Out during Year	In during year
2017	36	46	2	12

Respect and responsibility

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School intends that all students feel they are valued. Parents and teachers work together to provide care and support, thus engendering self-esteem, mutual respect and responsibility.

The School Board has developed policies and procedures within their 'Safe and Supportive Environment' and 'Student Welfare' goals, to ensure that respect and responsibility comes through clearly for students, teachers, parents and the community in which the school resides. These policies are publicly available to parents and are reviewed annually.

In addition to regular parent teacher meetings, the Board and College of Teachers hold regular meetings for parents to discuss the basis for these policies and the framework in which the policies have been created, so as to educate the school community in how these are to work. These policies are developed with the aim of promoting respect and responsibility among students, parents, teachers and the wider community.

Key school codes, policies and procedures

Student wellbeing

Pastoral care at the Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School is based on the philosophy and core values underpinning Steiner education and the school. It is holistic in nature, recognising that the social and emotional wellbeing of young people needs to be addressed along with intellectual and physical wellbeing. The promotion of wellbeing is integral to young people's schooling outcomes, their social development and their capacity to contribute to their families, the community and the workforce. The creative, artistic and imaginative aspects of Steiner education provide opportunities for participation, communication, engagement and expression that can increase student's self-esteem and build a protective connectedness to the school community.

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School seeks to provide quality education for all students taking account of their age, background, ability and interests. As a Steiner school, we believe:

Our highest endeavour is to develop individuals who are able out of their own initiative to impart purpose and direction to their lives.

Rudolf Steiner

We follow the 'Three Golden Rules for Teachers' to:

Receive each child in gratitude from the world they come from; educate each child with love; lead each child into the true freedom that belongs to human beings.

Rudolf Steiner

A comprehensive body of formal documents serve to guide many aspects of school life. All are available on the school's website. Each year, they are reviewed and updated to ensure that they are in true alignment with the school's values and practices. Below are excerpts from a range of key documents relating to student wellbeing, the conduct of all school community members, complaints and grievances, and enrolments.

Student Rules and Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure

This policy provides a framework to guide students and parents on the school's approach to acceptable behaviour to ensure that a positive and productive learning environment is maintained for all students. Descriptions of behaviours that are acceptable and not acceptable are provided in areas such as respect towards others, completion of homework, care for the environment, care of personal belongings and public behaviour. School rules are also set out in this policy.

Policy and Code of Conduct for Parents, Guardians, School Community

In addition to the Code of Conduct for Students, a Code of Conduct has been developed to encompass all community members who may contribute to the development of the child's education or be associated with the school. The Policy and Code of Conduct for Parents and Guardians is developed on reasonable community expectations of behaviour encompassing mutual tolerance, respect and personal safety of all with the goal of making the school a safe and pleasant environment for all our community.

Promoting Positive Behaviour and Discipline

Bullying conduct is not tolerated in our school. Anti-bullying policies concerning staff are located within the Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement for Employees, Contractors and Volunteers.

Anti-bullying policies concerning students are located within the Behaviour Management and Discipline Policy as well as the Codes of Conduct for Students, and for Parents, Guardians and the Community.

Discipline Policy

Under the school's Discipline Policy, students are required to abide by the School Rules and Codes of Conduct and to follow the directions of teachers and other people with authority delegated by the school.

Where a student disregards rules, disobeys instructions or otherwise engages in conduct, which causes or may cause harm, the student may be subject to disciplinary action and required to engage in considered restorative practices.

The disciplinary procedures undertaken and restorative practices required by the school vary according to the seriousness of the alleged offence. When advised of an allegation the student and parents will be informed of the procedural steps to be followed in dealing with the matter. In relation to all matters to be investigated, the student will be informed of the nature of the allegation and given an opportunity to respond to the allegations.

The School's Complaints and Grievances Policy

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School is committed to providing a work and study environment that is safe, fair and free from discrimination for all members of the school community. The school has a responsibility under state and federal legislation to ensure staff and students are not subjected to behaviour that may constitute discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimisation. An essential part of developing that environment is ensuring that students and parents are encouraged to come forward with their matters of concern and grievances in the knowledge that the responsible staff will take prompt and effective action to address these concerns. Grievances that are not addressed have the potential to grow into major problems that can cause tension, low morale and reduced learning and academic achievement.

In line with this aim, the school has developed a Grievances Framework, which is downloadable from the school website. This Framework was developed so that parents, students and other members of the community know to whom to take their particular concern and how they can expect their concern to be addressed.

Enrolment policies and prerequisites for continuing enrolment

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School is a co-educational primary school providing an education based on the philosophy and values of Steiner education and, like all NSW schools, we are approved by the NSW Education Standards Authority. All applications will be processed in order of receipt and consideration will be given to the applicant's support for the ethos of the school, siblings already enrolled in the school and other criteria determined by the school from time to time. To maintain their enrolment, once enrolled, students are expected to act consistently with the school's ethos and comply with the conditions and terms of enrolment. Parents are also expected to be supportive of the ethos of the school.

Enrolment procedures Information

We offer all prospective parents the following information by email or mail:

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School Prospectus

Relevant handbooks and/or access to school policies

Current newsletter

An invitation to attend a school tour

Enrolment procedures for Kindergarten – Year 6

Application for Enrolment

Parents are to complete the Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School Application Form.
Receipt of Application Form, Documentation and Application Fee

Receipt of the Application Form, Application Fee and attached documentation will be acknowledged by telephone, email or mail. If a place is available, the school will forward an invitation to attend an interview with the Class Teacher and Principal or their nominee. If a place is not available, the child's name will be added to the Waiting for Interview List. Prospective parents will be informed of this, and contacted for an interview once a place becomes available.

Interview with Class Teacher and Principal

Both the parent/s or guardian/s and the student are required to attend an initial interview with the Class Teacher and Principal or their nominee at which all aspects of the student's education at Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School will be discussed including the financial requirements of the school, fees and charges. It is expected that parent/s or guardian/s and the Principal or their nominee will have some private time during the interview. Parents are to make arrangements for younger students to be cared for while this happens. During this interview a start date may or may not be nominated and subsequent interviews may be requested.

Letter of Offer

If a place is available for the nominated start date, a letter of offer will be forwarded to the applicant.

Acceptance of Offer Form and Acceptance Fee

The Acceptance of Offer Form together with a non-refundable enrolment fee of \$625 must be returned to the school within 14 days of receipt of the offer. Payment of this fee reserves a place for the applicant's child to commence at the nominated time. If the offer is not accepted, then it will lapse. Upon receiving the Acceptance of Offer Form, parents will be required to read and accept the school's Policies and Procedures. After reading the policies parents will need to fill in the Conditions of Enrolment Form to indicate that they have read and understood the school's policies, and return this checklist together with a non-refundable Enrolment Fee of \$625.

Payment of fees and charges

The first term's fees, consolidated charges and other charges are to be paid prior to the student's first day at school. For families with children already enrolled in the school, the required fees, consolidated charges and other charges for the newly enrolled child will be added to their existing account and invoiced accordingly.

Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

Parents, teachers and students are involved in many aspects of school life. This involvement is welcomed and encouraged. A host of parent and student initiatives occurred throughout 2017 including market days, cultural days, fundraising events, marketing and communications, parent information and education, parent involvement in classes and more.

Responses to the question 'What did you value most about our school in 2017?'

- How we were supported to gently ease our kids into the school regime, the nutritious food program, and excellent after school care.
- ability to be dynamic
- Community and great teachers

Responses to the question 'From your perspective, what values does our school represent?'

- Nurturing the whole child, particularly their emotional needs when they are very young. Fostering creativity, Independence, free thinking and compassion.
- Each child is an individual
- First and foremost what is in best interests of children
- Equality, compassion, excellence
- holistic education, inclusiveness, an alternative to the norm, meeting the child at their level

Responses to the question 'What was the highlight of the 2017 school year?'

- The boys birthday - it was a really beautiful introduction into the Steiner approach, and how elements of 'magic' are incorporated into the everyday.
- school camp ♥
- Jenny's knees up!
- Too many

Financial Summary

