

SPIRIT OF PLAY ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Tabled at the Spirit of Play *Annual General Meeting*, held 28 March 2018.

OVERVIEW

Spirit of Play Community School is a not-for-profit registered charity that offers an important service for the Denmark community, providing a popular alternative education model that follows the Western Australian Curriculum.

We value a nature-based holistic approach to Education that is creative, playful and connected to the community and environment of Denmark and surrounds. Children are encouraged to explore and grow their physical, intellectual and emotional capabilities. Each individual child is unique and learns in their own way. We endeavor to support each child to explore their potential in a safe and supportive learning environment.



2017 was an important year for Spirit of Play Community School, with the emphasis remaining on delivering high-quality educational outcomes for our current students, while working to secure the future of our organization for years to come.

We started the year with a bang with our new full-time principal Rance Boog in the cubbyhouse, and our brand new Treehouse classroom completed just in time for the start of the school year. The rest of the year rolled on at a similarly productive pace, with some of the priorities for the year including:

- Securing registration to deliver Years 5 and 6, starting in 2018
- Increasing classroom space for 2018 to accommodate increasing student numbers
- Developing a whole-of-school approach to our educational curriculum, to ensure that our curriculum is consistent from Pre-kindy to Year 6
- Securing a long-term school site for the future stability of our organisation

These areas of emphasis were driven by our Strategic Plan 2017-2020, which was adopted at the beginning of 2017.

As part of clarifying our School's strategic direction, the Spirit of Play Council adopted our *Strategic Plan 2017-2020* early in 2017, and this informed our work throughout the remainder of the year. This document articulated five key goals:

KEY GOALS (2017-2020)

1. A secure and growing School
2. Clearly articulated vision for a best practice nature-based school
3. Dedicated leadership
4. Inspirational pedagogy
5. Strong relationships with broader community

As much as these goals were discreet strategies (as discussed below), they were also embedded in the daily, weekly and seasonally-driven calendar of regular school events.

WHAT WE GOT UP TO

The school year was full of many activities, and in line with our seasonal emphasis many of our celebrations highlighted seasonal cycles, the beautiful environment of Denmark, and connections to our diverse community.

Some key events in the school year included:

- On-entry Assessments (week 3-6)
- Crazy hair day 23rd February
- National Clean-up Day 3rd March
- AGM 15th March
- Harmony Day 21st March
- Bunuru Festival 23rd March
- Surfing Lessons for Possums 10th March - 31st March
- Wombat Stew performance 4th April
- Beach Carnival 5th April
- Last Day of School Term 6th April
- All staff: protective behaviours Professional Development 7th April
- School Holidays 8th April – 26th April
- NAPLAN May 9 – 11
- Singing Possum Sleepover May 19th
- School Council: Albany governance session Saturday May 20th
- Small Schools Collegiate meeting to discuss Federal Funding May 19th
- Gymnastics sessions with the Quolls 18th May – 22nd June
- Yirra Yaakin theatre group incursion June 1st
- Festival of Voice performances June 2nd - 3rd
- Nocturnal day June 7th



"I went along on the Bibbulmun track maintenance walkabout with Regi and I was amazed by the students' knowledge of bush tucker. They all have a deeply embedded sense of care and respect ethos for the environment which is a credit to Regi's teaching. It was particularly pleasing to see a parent volunteer actively trying to get their son involved in physical activity by positive role modelling."

- Rance Boog, May Principal's report

- Winter Solstice celebration June 18th
- World Refugee week June 18 – 25th
- Semester 1 Reports distributed June 22nd
- Parent-Teacher meetings June 29th -30th
- August Quolls Gymnastics sessions 17th -31st
- Children’s First Aid workshop 18th August
- Book Week celebration 24th August
- Wilson Inlet Bar Opening excursion 24th August
- Music Aviva incursion 25th August
- Shared lunch with Woodbury Boston 25th August
- Visit from Valerie Gould (AISWA) 14th September
- Bibbulmun track busy bee 16th September
- Spring Festival 21st September
- Last day of Term 3 - 21st September
- Possums to the Blue Wren Xmas party 1st December
- School Council: Strategic Briefing with Shire 12th December
- Birak Celebration 14th December
- Last day of School 14th December



“The Festival of Voice was enjoyed by all parties - the kids enjoyed it very much, and the parents gave positive feedback.”

- Rance Boog, July Principal’s report

KEY GOAL 1: A SECURE AND GROWING SCHOOL

STUDENT NUMBERS

Our student numbers remained steadily strong in 2017, with room for growth in 2018.

We started 2017 with 54 students attending in term 1, and gradually increased to end the year with 60 students. With the addition of years 5 and 6 in 2018 and a thriving pre-kindy program, we anticipate a cohort of approximately 72 students to commence at the beginning of 2018.

The student enrolment by class at the beginning of 2017 was as follows:

- Y4: 8
- Y3: 6 (7 to start year)
- Y2: 7
- Y1: 9 (8 to start year)
- PP: 6
- K: 14
- PK: 6 (4 to start year)



Total: 54 to start Term 1 2017

REGISTRATION

In 2017 Spirit of Play successfully obtained registration for Years 5 and 6, which enables us to become a full primary school offering pre-kindy to Year 6 in 2018.

It should be noted that this is one year ahead of schedule, and is a significant step in securing a stable and long-term future for our school. Well done to the whole Management team for the enormous amount of work that went into finally making this aspiration a reality!

At the end of 2017 we were also notified that we will receive Registration as a school for the next two years, (instead of annually as has been previously required) which is an important endorsement of the school and will free up considerable resources in the Management team next year.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

After successfully constructing the Treehouse classroom for the 2017 school year, both the Council and Management team continued to focus on securing the immediate and long-term physical premises for Spirit of Play. This effort focused on three primary goals:

1. Securing the lease at our current site until 2019
2. Extending the Treehouse classroom
3. Securing a long-term site for the future of the school



EXTENSION OF CURRENT LEASE

For most of 2017, Spirit was working on an assumption that we would be moving to a new site (discussed in more detail below) by the end of 2019, and as such needed to secure an extension of our current lease which was due to expire at the end of 2018. To this end we put forward a formal application to the Shire to extend our lease, which was granted at their Shire Council meeting on the 18th of July on a month-by-month basis.

EXTENSION TO TREEHOUSE CLASSROOM

In order to accommodate the addition of Years 5 and 6 in 2018, it was necessary to add an additional classroom to the Spirit of Play campus. This was done by extending the existing Treehouse classroom, scheduled for construction over the Summer holidays and ready for use at the beginning of first term in 2018.

Spirit of Play has operated from the Old Post Office Building on the Heritage Precinct since 2003, and has been supported in operating at this site by the Shire of Denmark as landowner. Five years ago, we were told that our lease would not be renewed, and the Spirit of Play School Council actively sought a new site for the School to comply with this directive to move location.

In 2016 we found a site within Heath Development's "Denmarque" development, and with the support of the Shire, actively pursued a contract to purchase land with a view to move to the new school site at the end of 2019.

Throughout this process the School invested considerable time, energy and approximately \$10,000 in consultant's fees in advancing our interests to create a new school site. At the end of November 2017 we were informed that due to circumstances beyond our control, the Denmarque development would not be proceeding in its current form, and we had to completely go back to the drawing board.

While it was incredibly disappointing to have so much work amount to naught, it also provided us with an opportunity to rethink the best future of the school, and to engage directly with other stakeholders in the area such as the Historical Society, the Machinery Restoration Guild, the Lions Club, the Woodturners, and the Men's Shed.

As articulated in our Key Goal 5: Strong Relationships with the Broader Community, this engagement with the broader Denmark community has always been a priority for us, and this situation gave us the opportunity to start speaking with them more quickly and comprehensively than we might have otherwise.

In December 2017 the School Council approached the Shire Council to inform them of our changed circumstances, and to request a 21-year lease which would provide long-term stability for the Spirit of Play Community School.

This petition is still in its early days, and the Spirit of Play Council is committed to working with the Shire and all stakeholders and co-tenants within the Historical Precinct to find a stable and positive solution for all parties. A longer-term lease would provide the School and our families with security and free up resources that could be invested in the school or potentially allocated towards collaborative projects with other groups in the Heritage Precinct.

We would like to express our appreciation for everyone who has already worked so hard to secure the long-term future of the school, including Zoe Car, Rance Boog and the wonderful Spirit Management team, the Shire of Denmark staff and Council, Heath Development, Denisia Menglet, H and H Architects, and Sam Williams.

As mentioned above, one of the first important undertakings of the School Council in 2017 was to ratify our *Strategic Plan 2017-2020*. This document clearly articulates our vision for a best-practice nature-based school, and informs the rest of our school activity.

One important element of ensuring that our school vision is embedded in everyday practice is to review school policies on a regular basis. In 2017, the Spirit of Play School Council and management specifically reviewed, and amended as necessary, the following policies:

- Spirit of Play Strategic Plan
- Enrolment and Attendance policy
- Risk register
- Duty of Care policy
- Induction process for the induction of new councillors
- Curriculum evaluation policy
- Bullying and harassment policy
- Play spaces risk register
- Risk Management for rest and play spaces

KEY GOAL 3: DEDICATED LEADERSHIP

At Spirit of Play we value our human capital and aspire to the following attributes:

- *Responsible governing body members*
- *Enthusiastic and experienced teaching staff*
- *Caring and involved support staff*
- *Dedicated administrative staff*
- *Engaged parent body*
- *Inspired students*

GOVERNING BODY

Throughout 2017 we had a number of people serve as on our School Council, including:

- Jeff Atkinson
- Fred Coombs
- Sabine Sommerhalder
- Xanthe Bourne
- Carl Heslop
- Jen Mitchell
- Ellen Fryar
- Jason Young
- Rob Castiglione

- Diane Harwood

We would like to acknowledge the hard work of all of our School Council members who are dedicated to the strategic direction of the school and to working for the good of the organization as a whole.

We always look for ways to improve our strategic governance, and in 2017 focused our professional development on increasing our financial literacy. We also developed a formal process for inducting new members of council to ensure that they have all the information needed to make sound decisions on behalf of the school.

TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF

In 2017 the School employed 19 staff, and staff wages represent the vast majority of the School's operating budget.

The teaching staff are the beating heart of a school, and we are very fortunate to have such skilled and passionate teachers at Spirit of Play.

In 2017 we had the following classroom teachers:

- Early Childhood: Sarah Pozzi
- Lower Primary: Melanie Trenow
- Middle Primary: Olly Watkins

Regi Peppin continued to take Music and Walkabout sessions with the classes, and all teachers were supported by our wonderful EAs: Serena Kirby, Kanae Jones, Angela Dickenson and Jess Dyer.

In 2017 we added specialist teaching staff for Art and Woodwork, which was undertaken by Jess Dryer (Art) and Justin Chester (Woodwork), and our playgroup was led by Nikki Green, Merome Darvill, and Rieka Bosman.

At the end of 2017 the School Council chose to add two additional teachers, a specialist teacher in Physical Education, and to significantly increase EA time for 2018. These decisions were made in order to keep class sizes small and student to teacher ratios low. This structure is as follows:

- Early Childhood (PK and K): Melanie Trenow
- Pre-Primary: Sarah Pozzi (1 day with Mel Trenow)
- Lower Primary (1 and 2): Claire Flottmann
- Middle Primary (3 and 4): Olly Watkins
- Upper Primary (5 and 6): Natasha Rubie

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

2017 was our first year with Rance Boog as our full-time principal, and we appreciate all his hard work in leading the smooth running of our school.

We also recognise the tireless and dedicated work of the rest of the Management team, including Zoe Car, Katie Bewley and our Bursar, Oona Mansour.

Thank you.

KEY GOAL 4: INSPIRATIONAL PEDAGOGY

SEASONAL EMPHASIS

The School continues to emphasise seasonal rhythms in our educational approach, and we are continuing to look at ways in which we can integrate this into the WA curriculum.

WHOLE-OF-SCHOOL APPROACH

In 2017 Rance and the teachers at Spirit discussed our approach to curriculum delivery and developed a whole-school approach to our curriculum to be implemented in 2018.

Writing

For children who are ready to write the program we use is called “Talk for Writing” which is conducted by the Dyslexia Speld Foundation. This is for children who have a sound understanding of phonics and are ready to write.

Children not yet at the point of writing will be using the “Sounds Write” program.

Our current teachers undertook Professional Development in each of these methods as appropriate, and new teachers will be offered PD in these program.

Reading

Currently we use the “Sharp reading program” as our whole school approach to reading, and teachers have trained in this methodology. New teachers will be offered PD in this program.

We also had a successful trial of the ABC Reading Eggs’ app in the Quolls room, and decided to continue with this online literacy and reading program to support students learning at home. After the trial, the school purchased a subscription for all the Quolls for remainder of 2017.

Numeracy

The whole school staff have received PD with David Dunstan from AISWA on hands-on maths activities.

Assessment and Reporting

On-entry assessments continue to provide an important insight into strengths and areas for improvement.

Our Year 3 students became the inaugural cohort to undertake the NAPLAN examination in 2017. A number of parents opted to withdraw their children from the exam but those who did participate were positive about the experience.

The students were assessed on components of the Numeracy and Literacy curriculum. School results are as follows:

Numeracy

School Mean 483 (outperforming State Mean 402)
Band 5 to Band 7 results (State average Band 4)
Band 2 is the minimal benchmark standard

Reading

School Mean 544 (outperforming State Mean 420)
Band 5 to Band 8 results (State average- Band 4)
Band 2 is the minimal benchmark standard

Writing

School Mean 448 (outperforming State Mean 410)
Band 4 to Band 5 results (State average- Band 4)
Band 2 is the minimal benchmark standard

Spelling

School Mean 432 (outperforming State Mean 409)
Band 4 to Band 6 results (State average- Band 4)
Band 2 is the minimal benchmark standard

Grammar and Punctuation

School Mean 509 (outperforming State Mean 429)
Band 4 to Band 8 results (State average Band 4)
Band 2 is the minimal benchmark standard

These are outstanding results as it indicates students are achieving within the top 40% of the National Average with some students obtaining results within the the top 20% of the Nation.

KEY GOAL 5: STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE BROADER COMMUNITY

The walkabout program continues to provide many opportunities for students to connect to the broader community, including visits to the frail and aged care home, the library, the recreation centre, and community events such as the Denmark Festival of Voice.

On a broader strategic level (as discussed above), the School Council and Management have also begun conversations with a number of community groups in Denmark and look forward to continuing these conversations in 2018.



THANKS

The Spirit of Play School Council would like to heartily thank all the many individuals who devote their time, passion, energy and effort to make this school possible.

These include all the

wonderful kids,

passionate parents and families,

inspired teachers and EAs,

dedicated staff and management,

diverse community groups,

the Shire of Denmark, and

committed volunteers...

... who all make our school so great.

It truly takes a village to raise a child, and we are fortunate and grateful to have the beautiful community in Denmark to help raise our next generation within the Spirit of Play Community School.