

Creating a positive and engaging school culture at Cranbourne SC: Student Support Service Team Rationale

Many young students encounter some difficulty, including learning difficulties, during their schooling at Cranbourne SC. As a result of this students need to be supported by targeted strategies to address such challenges. To achieve this, the school aims to identify and intervene early when an individual student is at risk of disengaging from learning or school. Risks for students may involve individual, social, emotional or physical factors, or may be related to family or community factors.

This implies that teachers need to have the capacity to effectively respond when students experience difficulty with their schooling. This requires teachers to be supported by a planned, sequential and detailed whole school approach to student support and by professional learning to assist with implementation. Teachers at Cranbourne SC need to believe they can make a difference and have a commitment to do so. They also need to have a belief in the capacity of all students to make progress, given sufficient time and support.

The legal obligations for this responsibility are clearly legally outlined in the following relevant legislation:

- The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of protected attributes (characteristics) including race, religion, disability, sex, age, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic), which requires public authorities, including government schools and their employees, to act compatibly with human rights and to consider human rights when making decisions and delivering services. Charter decisions in schools include decisions around enrolment, attendance, responding to behaviour concerns (including preventing the escalation of behaviours), the making of adjustments for students with disabilities, preventing and responding to bullying, use of restrictive practices including restraint, and decisions to suspend or expel a student. Rights protected by the Charter include the protection of families and children (including promoting the best interests of the child), the right to equality, and cultural and religious rights.
- The Disability Standards for Education 2005, which clarify and make more explicit the obligations on schools and the rights of students under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth). The standards cover enrolment, participation, curriculum development, student support services, and harassment and victimisation.
- The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic), which states that all Victorians, irrespective of the education and training institution they attend, where they live or their social or economic status, should have access to a high quality education that—
 - (i) realises their learning potential and maximises their education and training achievement;
 - (ii) promotes enthusiasm for lifelong learning;

(iii) allows parents to take an active part in their child's education and training.

Student Service Delivery Model at Cranbourne SC

Prior 2015 - Review

The college student services program consisted of two areas:

- Student Wellbeing
- Programs for Students with Disability

At times these two areas acted independently of each other to deliver positive school engagement outcomes for students with cognitive, emotional and appropriate behavioural needs. This type of action was promoted further by: ineffective communication between both areas about students; each area operating on separate independent budgets when at times when clearly work in each program area often overlapped; and the two staff work areas being physically separate undermining team cohesion and general work practices.

Students at the College were also presenting with significant cognitive and behavioural needs and professional expertise was either not present or severely lacking. To supplement this lack of professional expertise, outsourcing was often undertaken which proved to be expensive and inefficient. It also reduced the availability of funds for:

- The effective identification of students at risk of experiencing learning difficulties and the appropriate tracking of these students from years 7 - 12. Evidence of this is reflected in the following figures.

At Cranbourne SC in 2014 27 students received funding from DE&T in its PSD and Language support programs. To access funding for students schools must ensure students meet the eligibility requirements in one or more of the following seven categories listed below. The expectancy rates of each area in a normal school population are also detailed.

School Population Expectancy Rate (%)	
➤ Emotional Disorder	0.3
➤ Hearing Impairment	0.5
➤ Intellectual Disability	2.3
➤ Language Disorder	5.0
➤ Physical Disability	0.5
➤ Visual Impairment	0.1
➤ Autism Spectrum Disorders	0.1
Total	8.8%

If we only consider the total number of students enrolled in years 7-10 at Cranbourne SC in 2014 (approx. 880 students), it would be reasonable to expect that 77 students would receive funding support in the PSD and Language Support Programs. (This does not include the school's VCAL cohort which would more than

likely have students enrolled in the program that would be eligible for funding). This figure is clearly more than the number of students funded in 2014 and would suggest a number of students eligible for funding support are not being identified.

It also needs to be stated that these figures do not include another important group of students with problems in learning (Cranbourne SC identifies these student in an umbrella list). These additional 2 categories account for up to 20% of students, most of who attend regular schools and can be classified as being:

Expectancy Rate (%)

- | | |
|---|-------|
| ➤ Slow learners, or | 15-20 |
| ➤ Students with Specific Learning Disorders | 3-5 |

In 2014 the school had identified just over 40 students. In light of this expectancy rate outlined above the number of students within this umbrella list category at years 7-10 in 2014 should have been somewhere in the vicinity of 176 students. Once again it would be reasonable to state that there were a significant number of students in 2014 who were not appropriately identified as students with learning difficulties and possibly not have reasonable adjustments made to their academic school programming.

- Some student group program delivery (eg. social skills) was initiated by student wellbeing and PSD staff. Specific programs addressing student social/emotional wellbeing and special education needs could not be delivered due to limited staff expertise and/or insufficient resources.

It is also important to note that throughout 2014 student referral servicing from the Network's SSSOs Network was restricted due to staffing issues and the demands of schools within the network. This subsequently reduced the number of students assessed for PSD or Language Support funding.

2015 and beyond – the move forward

After reviewing the delivery of both programs the School Leadership Team felt a number of actions needed to take place. These included:

- Combining the two areas and operating them under the one domain called Student Support Services.
- To improve team cohesion staff responsible for Wellbeing and PSD/Language Support program delivery would be located together in the same staff room. Appropriate office furniture and storage facilities would be sourced and located within this work staff room.
- Team meetings taking place on a weekly basis with a PCO and that these meetings would have agendas and minutes published.

- Resourcing of both areas would be reviewed and rationalised to ensure staffing and program delivery matched the needs of the students within the school. Particular areas that would be impacted by the reallocation of resources include:
 - The time allowance allocated to the PSD Coordinator would be reduced in 2015 to reflect the reduction in funded student numbers within the PSD and Language Support Programs. This time allowance reduction would be used to assist in resourcing the employment of an Educational Psychologist. (See attached sheet)
 - The employment of an Educational Psychologist to establish assessment and tracking procedures for students across the school that require educational adjustments to their academic school programming. This will include advising teachers on effective strategies to be used in delivering coursework to students requiring support within the classroom.

The Psychologist would also advise and support the PSD coordinator in student funding application preparation and provide the expertise to compliment the social and emotional wellbeing program delivery within the school.
 - Program budgets for both the Wellbeing and PSD/Language Support programs would be reviewed and adjusted to ensure spending overlap is eliminated.
- Ensuring the wellbeing team meets regularly with Year Level Coordinator teams to advise and inform on student referrals and to identify teaching staff professional learning needs.
- Improving referral and communication channels with the school's Pathways team. Many students working with Pathways team members require Student Support Service assistance.
- Resourcing the new Student Support Service team to participate in a strategic planning day at the end of 2014 to develop an agreed vision of the role of the support service and its preferred model of student support delivery. This would involve the engagement of a critical friend to guide the capacity building of the team. It is envisaged that this planning involving the critical friend will continue throughout 2015.