

THE JOSEPH VARGA SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2012

for the year ended December 31, 2012

ABN: 84 002 785 775

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The information contained herein is designed to meet the school performance information specified in Schedule 2 of the Australian Government's *Schools Assistance (Learning Together - Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Regulation 2005* and the educational and financial reporting requirements for the 2012 reporting year as laid out in Section 3.10 of the *Registered and Accredited Individual Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual*.

THE JOSEPH VARGA SCHOOL

**THE ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2012**

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

*Raymond Collins,
Chairman.*

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The Annual report is a requirement of the **NSW Board of Studies** and is posted on their Web site every year. As such the following must be evident in the Report. A message from the school's key body, enrolment policies of the school, a list of professional learning undertaken by teachers, a report on average teacher attendance and the proportion of teaching staff retained by the school. Also some description of some of the actions the school has undertaken to promote respect and responsibility. Furthermore, a brief statement highlighting relevant aspects of the school's context, programmes and/or policies should be outlined. Moreover, a level of community involvement in school activities, retention of student enrolments and resolution of issues should be commented on in the Report. Student performance in State wide tests, the School Certificate and Higher school certificate should also be outlined. Adherence to Child Protection procedures should be covered and an overall financial statement about the school's financial position should be detailed in this Report.

In 2012, JVS had an Acting Principal, Michael Davis.

1.0 Mission Statement

The Joseph Varga School is registered as a special, non-profit, non-government, non-denominational school for children from 5 to 18 years of age, with a particular interest in providing educational programmes for the Individual child. The school is organised so that children in need with learning disabilities, conduct disorders, autism, and/or emotional disturbances can learn in a “Safe” and “Stimulating” environment. In many senses the philosophy of the school aims to guide individual development in the context of society through the recognisable stages of development towards perceptive understanding and responsible self-direction.

2.0 Enrolment

2.1 Policies & Procedures

The Joseph Varga School is an independent non-denominational school that specializes in working with students who have special needs.

These special needs include emotional, behavioral, intellectual, sensory, and/or multiple disabilities.

Students initially come to this co-educational School:

- on referral from other schools, intervention agencies, and/or doctors, psychologists, therapists; *and/or*
- after a recommendation by the parent/s or guardian of the child; *and/or*
- in response to press advertisements and media exposure.

The Principal of the School determines if a prospective student satisfies, and will continue to satisfy, the criteria for enrolment in the special education services of The Joseph Varga School (JVS).

Initially, assessment documentation supplied by specialists with relevant qualifications is evaluated thoroughly.

A face-to-face interview, observation, informal testing and dialogue with the parent/s and the child, are also all conducted.

Such steps help to determine if the child meets the criteria for placement at the School.

The insight of the parents (e.g. about the past history of the child; their values, priorities) and what the child wants from the School, are also important when considering the enrolment of the child.

The School thus makes an initial assessment of the child's strengths, interests and areas of weaknesses across psychological, physical, emotional and educational factors.

If the student satisfies the special education service criteria and the School can meet

the needs of the child, given the current School enrolment and resources, and all parties are satisfied, the child is offered a place at The Joseph Varga School.

At the time of enrolment it is made explicit that the child's home is expected to support the ethos, policies, programmes, rules of the school (including regular attendance), as a prerequisite for continuing inclusion and enrolment.

2.2 Placement

Before placing the child in a particular class, the Principal and Teachers consider what is in the best interest of the child in terms of:

- the chronological age of the child;
- the developmental profile of the child;
- the suitability of a target teacher's programme to the child;
- the classroom composition/dynamic

Continuing enrolment is subject to a student's adherence to School rules governing regular attendance, appropriate conduct, pastoral care, behaviour management, and the payment of school fees, where school payment has been agreed.

There were four composite classes at the School, with one class catering for Grades K-5, one class catering for Grades 5-6, one class catering for Grades 7-9, and the final class catering for Grades 8-12.

This variation exists as the needs of individuals and combinations of children are considered.

2.3 Student Population

Students enrolled at The Joseph Varga School can be drawn from anywhere in the Sydney Metropolitan Area, since it is a Comprehensive School, with an Inclusion Policy not restricted to students professionally diagnosed in particular regions.

Students thus come from a wide range of backgrounds, with more boys than girls often enrolled.

'Out-of-area' students, as far a field as overseas and NSW country, with parent support, deliberately move to the city, in order to specifically attend the School.

The number of students enrolled at the JVS at any given time throughout the School year can vary significantly due to the nature of this unique population of students with special needs.

In accepting referrals from a range of different professionals and organizations, on an irregular basis, some children in crisis with severe emotional disturbances and behaviour disorders can be admitted immediately, as the need arises.

Overall increases in enrolments are kept to a minimum, with the School's charter intent on deliberately keeping the School small, intimate and caring, as a family!

Such a priority ensures that The Joseph Varga School can use this 'homely' feeling in order to maximize the advantages of individualising and personalising instruction.

Each student is therefore made to feel welcome and valued, with the dignity of every individual respected in the School's highly Differentiated Curriculum.

Keeping in mind the School's status as a 'Public Benevolent Institution', a decision is made to, avoid where possible, declining a prospective enrolment on the basis of the limited financial resources of parent/s.

In cases where the parent/s or guardians of a prospective student have been confirmed to have limited capacity to pay full tuition fees, a placement to such disadvantaged children with special needs may be still available.

Enrolments are primarily thus a direct function of the nature and number of referrals made to the School, some of which are made on an emergency or crisis basis, with other more formal enrolment guidelines also adopted in other cases.

The pattern of enrolments at the School is nonetheless gradually changing due to the School being able to offer academic programmes at Stage 5 and the Preliminary/Higher School Certificate (2005) at Stage 6.

Throughout 2012, enrolments grew significantly at all levels of the school after a brief down turn at the beginning of 2012. JVS continues to receive predominantly boys who have had unsuccessful mainstream school experiences (due to their complicated needs and a decline in their emotional/behavioural/learning disposition), at which time families have considered other options or a referral has been made to JVS.

It remains the aim of JVS that with successful behaviour management, self-regulated behavioural strategy development, and a focus on the individual, secondary students will be successfully integrated back into mainstream settings i.e. due to a reduction in the incidence of emotionally and socially inappropriate behaviours.

It should be stressed that the School population is atypical in that all students suffer from emotional, behavioural and/or learning disabilities and most have not been able to attend other schools throughout Sydney.

The Joseph Varga School, more particularly, is viewed as the final chance at schooling for children who have been unable to function in other mainstream School settings, or have been excluded from them.

There is thus a greater likelihood that more students at the School will reside in the South-Eastern Metropolitan Region of Sydney due to the proximity of their homes to the School location, with a variety of external services also involved in the ongoing management of enrolled students.

An important priority here is to eliminate risk amongst a cross-section of students (who have an array of developmental disabilities), on the spectrum of enrolled children.

With this rationale in mind, classes are inter-related, with, where appropriate, a *flow* occurring between them according to individual need, and in accordance with a ceiling of about ten pupils in each class.

Students tend to *grow* into placement in a particular stream (e.g. in the High school, Regular, Adjusted, Functional may apply) according to his or her own Academic, Emotional and/or Life Skill profiles.

3.0 Student Welfare Policies

A key reason a child is enrolled at The Joseph Varga School concerns the genuine care the School Staff has about the **welfare, safety and well being** of each child.

This *duty of care* and *advocacy role* includes voicing the rights of the child and involves equally assisting each child to become a contented, caring, whole human being able to function successfully in the community.

Such an objective underlies the School's Pupil Welfare policies, as well as the School's total Curriculum, including its pastoral role in terms of resolving problems.

In this holistic sense the School seeks to provide a personalized environment that:

- minimizes risk of harm and ensures individual students feel secure;
- supports students' physical, social, academic, spiritual, emotional growth;
- provides welfare that develops a sense of self-worth, dignity, development.

The School believes that child (and home) needs can be met by the School and its teachers primarily being informed, caring, sensitive and supportive.

This intervention aims to be both positive and constructive, with moves made to eradicate any form of prejudice, discrimination, abuse by any child upon any other person.

All children are constantly made to feel wanted, and valued, as members of "one big, happy family".

The School's Pupil Welfare policies embrace:

- (i) Child Protection;
- (ii) Security;
- (iii) Codes of Conduct, Behavior Management and Discipline;
- (iv) Pastoral Care;
- (v) Personal Development;
- (vi) Communication;
- (vii) Complaints and Grievance Resolution.

The policies in these areas are being continuously refined to enhance their effectiveness.

Welfare policies are also addressed as components in the Functional Skills, Personal Development and Behavioral aspects of the School's Curriculum, with the full text of such Policies and Curriculum accessible, or obtainable, on request to The Principal.

3.1 Child Protection

The most important priority in the ethos of the School is to provide a '**Safe** and **Supportive Environment**' for enrolled students, from Curriculum, Procedural and Legislative points of view.

Guidelines from three key pieces of child protection legislation in NSW have helped to shape the development of school policy and codes in this area. The three acts comprise:

- ▶ Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- ▶ Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- ▶ Ombudsman Act 1974 (Part 3A)

Implicit in these standards is the mix between the School's mission statement, philosophy, status as a '*Public Benevolent Institution*' and its Duty of Care.

As such, the policy addresses areas that impinge on all kinds of material and psychological safety, embracing the likely impact of all kinds of Neglect and Abuse, including physical, emotional, verbal, financial, and so on.

In *advocating* and *following through* on such policy, both a Preventative and Response focus is incorporated into its ambit.

The definition of the policy's term's of reference, implicating such areas as 'allegation', 'reportable conduct', 'mandatory reporting', 'misconduct', and 'procedural fairness' are subject to scrutiny, on an ongoing basis, by experts both within the school community, and independent of it.

The context for such considerations is always, however, predicated on the School's own Risk Assessments of all inputs that are carried out to the highest standards.

It is considered incumbent upon all teachers employed to firstly report children 'At Risk' of neglect, harm, abuse to the Delegated Authority, being The Principal, 'Head of Agency', or their Nominee, as specified legally.

The Principal then ascertains whether there is sufficient grounds to 'Notify' the NSW Department of Community Services and/or other Outside Agencies.

In order to guarantee the safety of children, it is important to state that Child Protection includes what occurs in the Home, as well as in the School, so that the

appropriateness of parent and teacher or employee behaviours is caught in this net.

Employee conduct that is considered appropriate, in the process of managing and caring for children at The Joseph Varga School, is carefully defined.

Such a decision ensures that all parties involved understand their obligations with regards to the above, and feel comfortable and secure with the relevant code of conduct.

There are also procedures in place to augment professional development in this respect, and, if necessary, to internally and externally investigate allegations of any nature of teacher conduct, according to established protocols, with explicit consequences.

In this respect, Child Protection issues arise as ‘Key Elements’ in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum area, where they are treated as aspects of Prevention, with the goal, Self-Help.

This impacts on such themes as ‘recognizing abuse, power in relationships, protection strategies, the right to say ‘no’ and techniques of communicating.’

Informing interested parties that copies of all relevant policies are available for perusal further raises awareness of Child Protection in the home and in the community.

Such a decision ensures the policies remain demystified and transparent to all of the parties involved.

Any concerns about such issues can be clarified by contacting The Principal.

Contingency arrangements are in place too, through the School’s own support network of specialists.

This further helps ensure policies continue to remain subject to scrutiny by keeping them current, relevant, alive, flexible, and transparent so as to accommodate children who display a diverse range of behaviours.

3.2 Security

It is one thing for the School to provide a Safe learning environment; it is another thing to make sure that this learning environment is Secure for all students.

The implications of this statement entail that both students and teachers need to interact in a work-place environment that safely enables mutual support, respect and trust, so that the optimum well-being of all involved can prevail.

The School facilitates the security of this interaction by implementing certain measures that, in its professional judgment, will provide the confidence both students and staff require.

These measures continue to include:

- appropriate levels of supervision;
- security of buildings;
- procedures in case of fire;
- use of grounds and facilities;
- travel on School-related activities.

The detailed requirements and procedures involved in implementing these measures are regularly evaluated for their compliance with the School's protocols in these areas.

Clearly, in an area, such as Supervision, School staff will ensure all students are adequately cared for and supervised while undertaking both on-site and off-site activities.

Although the nature and amount of the supervision will vary according to the type of activity, the profile of the students, and the degree of safety involved, teachers are expected to be perceptive and vigilant, as well as preemptive in their management.

Routines have also been clearly established in cases of fire with two fire drills per year for fire and other emergencies, as well as during travel, so students and staff can internalize the procedures involved.

Initiatives in 2012 included a review and examination of supervision protocols by the Work Health and Safety (WHS) committee whilst on sport, excursions and term camps, with recommendations being approved by the Acting Principal and consequently, improvements being implemented.

3.3 Codes of Conduct, Behaviour Management and Discipline

The School has in place a 'Code of Conduct', incorporating specific rules and directives that regulate the rights and responsibilities of students and staff within The School Community.

These implicate the Management of Behaviour, and Discipline, as much as Serious Incidents.

Behaviour Management

Students are required to abide by the School's Rules and to follow the directions of teachers and other people with authority, delegated by the School.

The behavior of individuals in the classroom and in the school is managed in accordance with specific principles and outcomes.

These are continuously monitored through the Individual Education Programme for each child.

Maxims include:

- (a) Inappropriate behaviour is symptomatic of interrelated underlying factors.
- (b) Aberrant behaviour may well be a means of communication.
- (c) Maladaptive behaviour may be a response to underlying learning problems.
- (d) All behaviours have consequences that can be used to modify behaviours.
- (e) Therapies must try to be positive in nature and encourage self-management.

The school programme, put differently, is concerned with using personal social skills, including self-concept, self-esteem to help manage values, attitudes, and behaviours.

Such highly individualized programmes depend on the collection, analysis and use of data to help formulate suitable intervention techniques.

Obedying school rules, respecting others, and more serious issues such as bullying, abuse, also fall under the umbrella of such school's welfare policies.

The School engages a Behavioural Specialist, as Principal, to Coordinate and Implement its Policies and Procedures in this key area of functioning within the administration and teaching roles of the School.

Matters of student School leadership are also instigated and monitored as an integral component of this responsibility, with all students given the opportunity to directly participate in this system, equally!

Discipline

In 2012 the Joseph Varga School was committed to consistently and positively caring for whole individuals in need.

There is only ever a need for discipline, if this programme breaks down, or the level of stress that individuals exhibit, becomes overwhelming, undermining the School ethos.

The School, in essence, strives to provide a *stress-free*, family-oriented educational environment that avoids the need for discipline.

The ultimate goal becomes 'Self-Discipline' through self-control, self-regulation and the development of the skills required to self-manage and self-monitor.

It is School policy, to reiterate, that the virtues of orderly conduct and polite manners are also at all times upheld.

Discipline problems can frequently be pre-empted, redirected or rectified before they occur within classrooms and the school generally, by a firm, sensitive, consistent approach.

This ensures disciplinary matters can be dealt with quickly and effectively in a positive and productive manner, as they may arise naturally in real-life situations, both within and outside the school.

In this mix, it is also not unusual for 'Negotiation' and 'Conflict-Resolution Techniques'

to be implemented by the trained teachers and/or specialists, according to need.

Such School staff also work as active listeners and can be humorous to help diffuse volatile situations.

Where a student nevertheless consistently disregards rules, disobeys instructions, or otherwise engages in conduct which causes or may cause harm, discomfort, inconvenience, embarrassment to the School, staff members or other students; the student may be subject to disciplinary action.

The disciplinary procedures undertaken by the School will vary according to the seriousness of the alleged offence.

In relation to all matters to be investigated, and if necessary, disciplined, students will be informed of the nature of the allegation and given an opportunity to respond to the allegations.

This primarily involves 'The Right To be Heard', as an aspect of 'Procedural Fairness', yet does not necessarily involve 'The Right To Appeal' over all matters.

For more serious incidents, the parents are again informed of the procedural steps to be followed in dealing with the matter.

In dealing with a spectrum of inappropriate behaviours, consequences can vary *from* the deprivation of privileges (such as 'break or recess time') *to* being 'Conferenced' by a teacher panel, *to*, in more serious cases, a time-determined discourse between the Principal and a student's family which will require a student to have a break from school while strategies and consultation takes place between stakeholders.

'Corporal punishment' is illegal and is not condoned or supported in any school documentation or practice.

The nature of Penalties associated with any disciplinary action are determined and imposed using the Profiles and Prior Record of the student/s involved, on that scale from admonition, detention to suspension.

The Principal in consultation with the behaviour specialist and classroom teachers, work together to best ascertain Disciplinary measures and their implementation.

Following the introduction of Child Protection Legislation, certain forms of teacher behaviour are considered appropriate and inappropriate.

In this respect, in comforting, managing, disciplining, interacting, when it comes to managing children with special needs, certain classes of conduct, and trivial or negligible contact, are considered appropriate.

This caring contact is deemed integral to carrying out the curriculum of the School.

In 2012 no major changes were made to the school's discipline policies, though

changes were made to the Staff 'Code of Conduct' with regards to Child Protection and Duty of Care. Staff continue to explore subtler ways in which to redirect, manage and discipline inappropriate behaviours.

In addition, initiatives implemented for Anti-Bullying continue, with students themselves able to report any such instances anonymously without fear of reprisal. Staff explored issues associated with 'Cyber Safety' from which policies and procedures were developed to be ratified in 2013.

The full text of the School's discipline policies can be accessed, or obtained, on application to The Principal Team.

3.4 Pastoral Care

Students are made aware of, and have access to, appropriate pastoral care Support Services.

This involves access to the full range of Specialist services within the School (e.g. emotional, behavioural, expressive, academic), as well as Therapeutic and/or Specialist services outside the school, including medical, speech pathology, occupational health, and so on.

Given the School is established for students with Special Needs, the Resources available are made particularly explicit to students, to ensure that they understand the comprehensive range of what is on offer, as the School does too with their parents.

An appropriate level of support is implemented in such a way that it does not unnecessarily disrupt the in-class education of the students involved.

Students requiring Health and/or Medical services, such as Emergency and regular Medication, are assisted to access these in an appropriately unobtrusive manner, with all such regimes systematically logged by delegated personnel.

The Bursar implements Sick Bay procedures which in 2012 were further refined to make them run more smoothly. A Critical Incident log is kept with the Bursar for which entries are also discussed at regular WHS meetings as part of reviewing and refining first aid and emergency procedures.

Individual class teachers administer their own Homework policies, bearing in mind the individualized needs of the students involved.

The full text of the School's pastoral care policies can be accessed, or obtained, on application to The Principal.

3.5 Personal Development

The emphasis in 2012 was on the respect individuals have for themselves as a

prerequisite for learning to respect, relate to and care for others.

Such a focus concerns: (i) self-esteem, self-concepts, (ii) social skills, relationships, (iii) crisis care, and (iv) *transition* to mainstream schools, workplaces, leisure, living!

It is the interaction between these four areas that help to determine the extent of a child's overall personal development.

Self-esteem

The School is founded on the belief that children can and do learn if they feel positive and good about themselves; with good things coming to good people!

Much effort and time is assigned to fostering the self-esteem of individuals through various initiatives, ranging from small groups to the '*Special Person Of The Day*'!

If a child is confident about his/herself and one's persona, then the child is more able to develop suitable social skills and relationships.

Relationships

Due to the size of The Joseph Varga School, 'Interactions' are a very important aspect of the children's daily routine and life-skills education.

The ability to socialize with and relate to others, both inside and outside the School is, therefore, an integral part of the School philosophy.

The School actively encourages the development of friendships and relationships among children, with the quality of teacher/pupil relations exerting a powerful influence here.

It likewise shapes outcomes in such sensitive areas as 'bullying', 'abuse prevention', 'sex education', 'discrimination'.

This focus on Personal Growth is of course not a separate area of the teaching programme; all subject areas incorporate factors of feeling and interacting in their teaching/learning processes.

The scope of the School's commitment to this area of welfare is evidenced by JVS relying on, for instance, the effectiveness of personal development camps, for every child each term, in order to help implement measurable outcomes for individuals.

These involve learning more about how to care about other children, adults, the community, the environment, in a very constructive, practical, useful, hands-on way, while learning to be more adaptive and flexible in a different context.

In essence the camps enable students to 'Integrate' and apply what they have learnt and Internalized about their own welfare and that of others in purposeful ways!

As children develop control of particular social roles, skills and relationships, each child's repertoire is gradually increased, using a greater variety of everyday situations that may require more demanding or complex roles, skills, language, and so on.

For most of the children at The Joseph Varga School, the hallmark of personal development is thus *the transition* to mainstream options.

Crisis care

Unfortunately, in the case of some of the children enrolled at The Joseph Varga School, this is not always possible, since individuals can be 'In Crisis' or desperately in need of *care!*

In its advocacy role, the JVS in its comprehensive programme may undertake to conduct additional counseling and arrange for the provision of meals, clothing and/or respite care, as support for children.

Underlying the strategy is a network of other professional services that can stabilize the overall ecology of the child's predicament, with a view towards neutralizing and extinguishing feelings of mistrust, alienation, loneliness, lack of love, insecurity!

As a baseline, children must feel good about themselves, feel cared about, with food in their stomachs, before they can reasonably be expected to learn or do anything!

With such essentials in place, alongside regular School attendance and ongoing care, the transition to mainstream education, employment and the community becomes more realistic.

Transition

The School believes that this objective is attainable for all children at the School, even when distinct learning, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties are present.

At this stage, the School adopts certain procedures (e.g. visiting target schools, explicitly teaching to-be-used skills) in order to facilitate this transition.

Uppermost in the thoughts of the JVS is that its students will be able to function, survive and thrive in such settings, academically, behaviourally and emotionally!

Initiatives include fine-tuning the interdisciplinary nature of the Curriculum addressed in the *Personal Development Camp Programmes*.

The full text of the School's personal development policies can be accessed, or obtained, on application to The Principal.

3.6 Communication

In 2012 the School provided both formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate communication between those stakeholders with an interest in student education and

wellbeing.

These may include communications between some or all of the following:

- student;
- parent or guardian or other significant family member/s of the student;
- teacher/s;
- counselor;
- The Principal and The Board of Directors;
- internal school and external specialists;
- representatives of appropriate government education, welfare, health departments;
- work-place stakeholders.

The School's policies in this area are continually being refined in order to enhance case management outcomes for the students involved.

Given that the School works in partnership with Sydney Distance Education High School (SDEHS), for instance, in some aspects of its Curriculum, The Joseph Varga School's (JVS) welfare policies are still in place for all students.

The integrity of the priority of Pupil Welfare, is, in other words, not compromised by whether the students participate 'at a distance', or on-/off-site, in any form of their teaching/learning!

All such outside personnel who work with students enrolled at the School are, furthermore, subject to the same Child Protection Legislation Regulations, as if they were working fulltime, at the School, on-site, with the students involved.

Therefore such students, be they studying *via* Distance Education, or participating in some other activity, off-site, will have equal access to all Welfare and Counseling Services, as any other student does!

In 2012, such policies have been reviewed and remain unchanged, with the full text of the School's policies and procedures, including relations between SDEHS and JVS, accessible, or obtainable, on application to the Principal Team.

3.7 Complaints and Grievance Resolution

In 2012 there were policies in place so that matters of concern identified by parents, students, and/or community members can be raised with School authorities.

Such matters of concern are channeled through The Principal.

If a student, parent, teacher or employee of the School is, for instance, in any way dissatisfied with a specific aspect of the School's operation, he or she is encouraged to provide feedback, on a strictly confidential basis, to The Principal.

This information can be communicated in person, in writing, or electronically, with any complaint or grievance, in most circumstances, not to be provided through the agency of another person.

The policy, as a general rule, includes a sequence of steps in its protocol.

After any complaint or grievance is tabled, The Principal will initiate a formal series of actions designed to quickly resolve the issue to mutual satisfaction.

A '*Negotiation*' strategy compatible with the rights and principles of '*Procedural Fairness*' is adopted in order to achieve this outcome.

In '*Being Heard*' and the '*Right To An Unbiased Decision*', those making the complaints need to feel and know that Equity and Justice prevail.

In situations, where an allegation is made against another person, the latter has the right to:

- * know the basis of the allegation,
- * know what information will be taken into account,
- * know the process used to consider the matter,
- * know how to respond to allegations, and
- * know how to seek a review of the decision, if deemed necessary.

Such principles hinge on the contribution of impartial or unbiased evidence and decision-making related to the substance of the grievance, in terms of substantiating or justifying the complaint.

In order to expedite the matter, the procedure can involve:

- * nominating an objective person to conduct the investigation without delay;
- * ensuring that the person does not decide a case in which they have a conflict of interest;
- * acting fairly and without bias;
- * informing those involved of the substance, with as much detail as possible, of the allegation(s) or complaint(s) made against him or her;
- * providing those involved with a reasonable opportunity to respond or put his/her case, either in writing or orally;
- * genuinely considering the responses of all involved;
- * making reasonable inquiries or investigations before providing any feedback to The Principal;
- * considering all relevant available evidence, including evidence that supports the allegation as well as evidence that does not support the allegation;
- * providing a preliminary view and the intended likely action to the person/s under investigation;
- * informing the student, parent/s and significant others that the preliminary view can be commented upon or appealed to the school;
- * allowing submissions from the complainant, student, parent/s and/or significant others before all such information about the above matter is conveyed to The Principal;

- * The Principal, after objectively considering all such information, makes a final decision about the complaint or grievance, and the follow-up action to be implemented by the School.

If the person making the complaint, or the one, where appropriate, against whom the complaint is made, is not satisfied with The Principal's decision, he or she may directly appeal, in writing, to the Chairperson, of The Board of Directors for The School, in order to try to reach a more satisfactory outcome.

The rationale behind the procedure rests on resolving the matter so all issues are aired.

In this procedure, the value of each specific complaint is confidentially respected.

In specific cases of grievance, involving say, a student's inappropriate behavior or attitude; in extraordinary circumstances, as mentioned elsewhere, a student may be required to have a 'time-based intervention' after other strategies are employed i.e. time away from school in which to change the pattern/context/scene contributing to the inappropriate behaviour. The duration of this is determined by the level of resourcing/preparation required to support the intervention.

The target student is nevertheless welcomed back after serving such a period, with a conditional contract usually in force for a designated period of time.

In cases of time-based interventions, the elements of *Procedural Fairness* are again invoked, before The Principal, and/or The Board of Directors, takes such a decision, after consultation with a panel of experts.

In 2012, there have been no changes to this *Grievance and Complaint Resolutions Procedure*.

The full text of School policies associated with complaints and grievance procedures, are accessible, or can be obtained, from The Principal.

Summary

In summary, the School's Pupil Welfare Policies, work hand-in-hand with children's well-being and school academic/behavioral/transitional curriculum.

Ultimately, eclectic programmes of this nature will determine how successfully children will develop as contented, caring, whole human beings.

For such reasons, the full text of all relevant policies in the areas of, for example, ***Child Protection, Security, Supervision, Codes of Conduct, Pastoral Care, Communication*** and ***Grievance***, are issued to all members of staff, as part of **The Staff Handbook**, with parent/s able to access such management policies.

As school and home work together, children will develop a better understanding of the self, so that these same children will in turn learn to respect, comprehend and even change the world, of which they are a part.

In this process, The Joseph Varga School believes that children learn from both teachers in the home and in the School, with dialogue between both settings vital!

4.0 School Performance in Statewide Tests and Exams

The Joseph Varga School has an unusual status as a School, being academically registered (K-12), and accredited, to offer the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate. JVS is accredited and registered from 2009 to 2013 after successfully going through a full NSW Board of Studies inspection in 2008.

At the same time, the Minister for Education in New South Wales has designated JVS as a Special School for children with emotional and behavioural needs.

With respect to the academic performance of the School in National tests, the incongruity of the foregoing status can confound reporting.

This occurs because students can be exempt from such testing, since they attend a school for children with special needs.

Given the above, and the small cell sizes involved, no tables are included in this report about School performance.

In 2012, the majority of students in years 3 - 9 took part in the National Assessment program – Literacy and Numeracy tests, known as the NAPLAN test. Several of our students performed above the state benchmarks, but the majority of our students have learning and emotional needs which have resulted in significant delays in their learning and achievement. The consequent results do however supply JVS with valuable information in which to inform short/long term planning and programming to meet student needs.

Summary

In general, the small sample of School students performed similarly when compared with the cohort of students in the previous year 2011, and with students who attend Regular schools. It should be noted however that this was a very small sample of students whom differ greatly from the previous cohort, and therefore determining trends or conclusions about achievement at JVS, would be statistically invalid. Very few of the students at JVS have attended it for the majority of their schooling life, therefore determining the impact of JVS teaching/learning programs on their academic 'growth' or alternatively, accounting for 'gaps' in their conceptual knowledge and understanding, is fraught with difficulty.

Joseph Varga School students are in no way disadvantaged by attending what is often perceived to be a school for challenging and high-support need children. Though not required to participate in these benchmark tests, we do carefully analyse the students' achievement in these tests with regards to those learning outcomes that have been explicitly taught to them at JVS to ensure as an educational institution we are maintaining high standards and expectations of student achievement.

The curriculum of the School is able to function in a manner that enables it to individualize the educational, behavioural and transitional programmes of its pupils, so that they are more able to fulfil potential that they could not display elsewhere.

Senior High School Students

Of the four students enrolled in Year 10 programs in 2012, all successfully achieved the required outcomes to move onto Year 11 programs. Two of these students have moved on to adjusted curriculum programs including TEVET courses, and the other two students have moved onto regular Year 11 studies aided by Distance Education. Of the three Year 11 students in 2012, two successfully achieved the required outcomes, with one student transitioning from JVS and beginning Year 12 studies, one beginning Life Skill studies units including a TEVET course in 2013, and the remaining Year 11 student successfully passed his allocated Life Skill Units and has moved onto other Life Skill units in 2013.

As evidenced in 2012, JVS students can be successfully reintegrated into mainstream settings, be they regular schools, TAFE programs, and/or work placements, and complete academic qualifications within the JVS context i.e. if unready to be reintegrated back into Mainstream settings.

It is clear that JVS students can be successfully reintegrated into mainstream settings, be they regular schools, TAFE programs, and/or work placements.

The Joseph Varga School also maintains high academic expectations for students, who if unready to be reintegrated back into Mainstream settings, can still achieve qualifications at JVS.

The evidence strongly supports the school's belief that challenging students, with the support of The Joseph Varga School, can and do make a successful Transition back into the community.

Conclusions

When the overall performance of Joseph Varga School students is therefore considered in terms of State-wide and National Benchmarks during their time from first enrolment in JVS to the present day, it is plain that the individualized programs of *continuous learning* at the School do indeed work! Significant gains in students positive emotional states and consistent expectations of their behaviour and interaction result in students being able to discover the joy of learning i.e. academically, emotionally, psychologically and socially.

The distinctive family-oriented ethos of the school would seem to work particularly well by creating meaningful opportunities for students who were once seriously 'at risk' in the community.

It is beyond the scope of this report to detail how such Behavioural/Emotional growth works with Academic and Life skills, as reflected in specific outcomes in each of the Key Learning Areas of the School curriculum.

Suffice to say that students who were once 'at risk' academically and psychologically, are no longer 'at risk', with clear evidence of the Reduction in the Incidence of Socially and Emotionally Inappropriate Behaviours.

Remember, that it was such inappropriate attitudes, skills and behaviours that frequently caused the target students to be enrolled at JVS in the first place.

It is also important to note that JVS utilizes an array of standardized psychometric tools/assessments to ascertain each student's emotional, educational, intellectual and psychological needs (i.e. WIAT, WISC, and CARS), which take place annually or biannually. These help us in developing programmes that focus on the 'whole' child.

5.0 School Attendance, Retention Rates and Post School Destinations

Being a Special School, the charter of The Joseph Varga School, with respect to school attendance and retention rates, works in a manner that could be different to one that may apply in a regular mainstream high school.

JVS attracts students who often already have professionally diagnosed emotional disturbances, psychiatric illness, behaviour disorders, among other multiple disabilities. In many cases students have more than one diagnosis (co-morbidity).

The nature of the specific problems presenting within the School population thus have a wide array.

Some problems maybe quickly resolved, as in the case of attitude towards attendance at school, where previously there might have been school phobia or truancy.

Other problems, on the other hand, may take a long time to resolve, whilst in some other cases, the problems are intractable!

School Attendance

Given the diverse nature and severity of these problems, the attendance rate at the school is quite astonishing. Approximately Ninety five percent of students enrolled at the School in 2012, attended School on Average each School Day in 2012.

This rate of attendance is marginally higher than it was for 2011, but this still shows that both the School curriculum and the School's enrolment policy are working successfully.

The school reinforces the importance of attending school on a regular basis at enrolment, to parents and children, regardless of the nature of the enrolled child's disabilities. It is important to note however that due to the small roll at JVS (40 students maximum), attendance variation for even one student can have a stark impact on the overall average attendance figures.

Accepting responsibility for school attendance, and to some extent, one's own independent learning, wherever appropriate, to put it simply, are regarded as key

components of the child's personal contract with the school at enrolment.

Retention Rates

In view of this spectrum, some students may, in the longer-term, be re-integrated into mainstream schools, in no less than two years.

The problems however expressed by other students may necessitate ongoing enrolment at the JVS, even, at times, for the remainder of their formal schooling.

Rationale

Retention of students at The Joseph Varga School is not necessarily an indication of the success or failure of the School curriculum, but can rather be a product of the severity of the particular child's problems, and the transient nature of some families, due to work or other mitigating circumstances.

The duration of the enrolment can thus be interpreted as a product of a combination of pertinent factors.

These can and do include the diagnosis, prognosis and the Individualized Education Programme (IEPs) formulated by a team of doctors, parents, therapists and school staff.

The School plays a key coordination and monitoring role in this process because if a child is prematurely integrated back into an alternative (mainstream) setting, other difficulties can arise.

These can involve regression, loss of skills, and a diminishing self-esteem.

Part of the readiness for the mainstream will be the ability of the student to *let go* or *grow out of* the accepting, nurturing care environment provided by the JVS.

By doing so, the student will be able to *generalize* attitudes, understandings and skills, thereby being more prepared to embrace the mainstream.

A consideration of the data associated with the Actual and Apparent retention rates in secondary school sheds light on this interpretation.

Actual Rates

On Actual rates, in the year 2012, 5 high school students have transitioned back to mainstream high schools i.e. 2 year 8, 2 year 7, and 1 Year 12 student. The family of another year 11 student has chosen 'home schooling' for his HSC year in 2013.

The length of time these students remained enrolled at the School can be represented in the form of the following table.

Time Enrolled

Number of JVS Students

More than 4 years	1
3-4 years	1
2-3 years	2
1-2 years	2
Up to 1 year	0
Total	6

The picture to emerge suggests that 2012 demonstrates a successful transition for students who have spent a significant time at JVS. The small sample and diverse nature of needs amongst students makes conclusions unreliable however. The environment does generally retain these students for reasonable periods, before being integrated into other settings.

Apparent Rates

On Apparent rates of enrolment at the Primary and at the High school levels, in the years 2002-2012, according to Age, a table, applying at the Annual Census date, can be formulated.

	Year										
	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12
11 years & less	7	4	7	10	13	15	14	11	12	9	18
12 years	4	3	5	5	3	4	3	6	6	4	6
13 years	1	5	6	5	5	5	7	6	4	6	5
14 years	4	2	4	5	8	4	3	3	3	4	6
15 years	3	13	2	4	5	7	2	3	4	2	3
16 years	2	2	8	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2
17 years	3	2	1	6	2	1	4	4	1	2	2
18 years & more	-	2	2	-	-	2	2	1	1	1	-

The cell numbers imply that the School has retained, on average, a similar total gross number of students i.e. of around 36 students, regardless of whether old students leave and new students are enrolled.

The number of students, over this Ten-Year Period, in each cell has been relatively stable, with significant growth in the Primary School between 2011 and 2012, due to an influx of referrals, advertising, and other factors including changes in government funding policy for mainstream schools.

With respect to the retention of high school students from Years 9 to Years 12, approximately covering the age groups of 15 years to 18 years+, it is frequently the case that students do not sustain their enrolment at The Joseph Varga School long enough to complete the Higher School Certificate at the school. In 2012 there has been a continued trend of students completing their Year 10 courses and moving into Year 11 studies at JVS.

Post-School Destinations

Historically the entrenched nature of the psychological/cognitive difficulties students face has resulted in significantly interrupted educational pathways, learning problems

and considerable conceptual gaps in understanding. It is therefore difficult for many students to progress to higher school qualifications in the academic domain.

At The Joseph Varga School, It has been a very positive development in the last few years that more and more students are seeking further academic attainment as a viable option rather than a straight transition to work, despite changes to government policy regarding the raise of 'leaving age' and an academic transcript being offered now at the end of Year 11 if not further study is considered.

The school offers academic, life skills, and transition to work programs in consultation with families, but it must be noted that the behavioural and cognitive capabilities of any given cohort from year to year determines the levels of enrolment and achievement of students in each of the aforementioned programs.

Alternatively, students can accept Full Apprenticeships, TAFE training, or alternative full-time learning programs which are also very important outcomes for students whose skills lie in non-academic pursuits, but still fit within the requirements of students being required to be in a recognized education program until the age of 17.

Conclusions

Despite changes in the school's demographic, government funding changes, and maximum roll size restrictions, the overall comparative attendance and retention numbers continue to demonstrate the stable profile of The Joseph Varga School in the community.

Opportunities for growth are limited by the family-oriented ethos of the School, and by the size of its premises.

When all foregoing data is therefore combined, it is clear that the School has carried out its charter in terms of providing a balance between appropriately Retaining School students, and Integrating students, given the severe special needs of the individuals involved.

6.0 Teacher Qualifications and Standards

At the end of 2012, 7 teachers working in the school environment are 'responsible for delivering the curriculum as described by the *Education Act 1990*'.

Each of these teachers has as a minimum, a formal teaching qualification as a graduate and has a **minimum** of four years' training at a higher education institution within Australia, or as recognized and registered with the NSW Institute of Teachers.

In fact, two (2) of these teachers have an additional postgraduate and honors degree in a specialist area related to more than one Key Learning Area or Subject Area at the high School level. Another teacher has a Masters' degree in Language Teaching.

There are nil (0) teachers who have 'qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia, or whom lack a formal teacher education qualification', and who are not registered or provisionally registered with the NSW

Institute of Teachers.

With regards to accreditation, two staff members have completed accreditation with regards to the NSW teaching professional standards framework, and all other JVS teachers are working towards the accreditation required of them as teachers who have been trained overseas in New Zealand and United Kingdom.

There is also one (1) fulltime Principal who is also a qualified school counselor working at JVS.

7.0 Professional Learning

In 2012 all teaching staff undertook professional development activities in order to *continuously* improve their standard of teaching competence and effectiveness with respect to catering for the Behavioral/Emotional needs of students and Transitional areas. This represented the main focus for 2012 Staff Professional Development.

Professional learning is defined as '*activities designed to develop the skills and understanding of personnel currently teaching in/and or leading schools to improve school performance/student outcomes and for which direct cost is incurred*'.

The School Executive Staff participated in training conducted by the *Association of Independent Schools*, covering relevant areas such as child protection and the Board of Studies review procedures and processes for 2013.

The School in 2012 consisted of 10 staff, including one teacher's aide, in *an intensive professional learning programme* for three days, to enhance classroom practice and psychotherapeutic intervention, including methodologies, resources, tests, organization and evaluation.

Other professional development activities undertaken by staff throughout 2012 included a series of workshops conducted by the Black Dog Institute in Sydney covering mood disorders and adolescent psychological needs.

8.0 Teacher Attendance and Retention

In 2012 the average daily staff attendance rate was 97%.

The proportion of staff retained from 2011 to 2012 was approximately 57% (8/14).

9.0 School-Determined Improvement Targets

The School Achieved certain Priorities identified in different Areas of the School's 2011 Annual Report, including:

Teaching and Learning - In-house specialist services; Increased the intensity of their intervention so that the Behavioral and Expressive Curricula works more effectively in terms of Academic and Life-Skills Curricula;

Teaching Programmes: Revision of programmes and a new Community Living skills programme and new Evaluation procedures;

Student Welfare - Child protection; Refined definitions, code, procedures, so staff are more informed about them, including their consequences for teaching/learning; staff were inserviced with regards to Child Protection and signed of a staff 'Code of Conduct'.

Resources - Revenue base; Increased rate of fee income for the School in order to help fund the purchase of more materials and facilities;

Teaching & Learning/Public Exposure - Arts programme; Formulated, implemented, installed and exhibited an arts programme including an end of year play that enhances the students' self-esteem and sharing of their talents, and an Art Exhibition displayed at the Botanical Gardens, so that the community could enjoy their works.

In the 2012 Annual Report, the Areas and Priorities identified for Improvement are ongoing and the same as for 2011, which include:

Teaching and Learning - Improve literacy intervention strategies and related learning outcomes across the school; ensure students develop strong basic facts and key knowledge and understandings in Mathematics.

Developing Curriculum: Looking at innovative ways to present the Community Living Skills Programme.

Student Welfare – Review and fine-tune the cross-curricular nature of the term camp programmes to *augment their personal growth function, and build on the positive outcomes of peer group* influences. Consolidate and reinforce anti-bullying programmes/expectations with children, including Cyber Safety.

Student Integration Programmes: Continue to examine and implement ways in which students can be more easily reintegrated into mainstream settings.

10.0 Initiatives Promoting Respect and Responsibility

The School places much importance on fostering mutual respect and a sense of personal, school and community responsibility through personal experience.

It does this primarily through a class and school-based programme in which students learn to care and share with a variety of living things, including other children, from different multi-cultural backgrounds, as well as animals and plants.

In learning to accept direct responsibility for their own actions with respect to their attitudes and actions towards other peers, as well as directly caring for the members of the school zoo, including reptiles, birds, fish, and the school garden, they are better equipped and more able to assist others in the community.

In addition, students are actively encouraged and expected to participate in 'hands-on' school-based activities (e.g. cooking) to help others. Where appropriate, peer-support is actively encouraged and developed between students.

Many of these initiatives are further consolidated through curriculum work (e.g. on

stereotypes) that serves to reinforce the role of tolerance, respect and responsibility, in order to foster the growth of intention that leads to respectful actions. To support possible transition back into mainstream settings, 'resilience' teaching/learning is an important component in the classroom programme.

It is the internalization of such caring attitudes that motivates students to, for instance, want to act, or support those who may be disadvantaged, or treated inappropriately, as intention is the key element to understanding and acting out accepting behaviors.

High-school students, as part of their Distance Education programs, also learn to come to this realization of respecting individuals, and the rights of others, as they mix with a diverse range of other students, as part of inter-school outings.

11.0 Parent, Student and Teacher Satisfaction

In 2012 the School encouraged all members of its 'family' of parents, students and teachers to be actively involved in certain aspects of the School's life.

Parents, for instance, are encouraged to attend regular Parent Committee meetings, through which they are able to express their levels of satisfaction, as well as contribute recommendations that are in turn passed on to The Principal.

During 2012, the extent of parent involvement in such meetings was marginal, despite ongoing promotion at parent/teacher interviews, annual art exhibition and drama production, school website, and school newsletters. As many of our children come from geographical locations far from JVS, it has been difficult for them to coordinate activities. There has however been a commitment established by parents to become more active in supporting the school, through active fundraising and community events.

In late 2012, the Principal distributed a survey to parents, and after collation and analysis of the feedback, was able to ascertain Parent sentiment and satisfaction, which on the whole, was very positive, especially given parents' own first-hand knowledge of just how problematic their own child is, from both a behavioural and management point of view, notwithstanding academic learning issues.

Parent feedback is also utilized to inform Behavioural, Emotional and Academic curriculum, and parents are able to seek out specific advice about how to assist an individual child in the home.

12.0 Financial Information

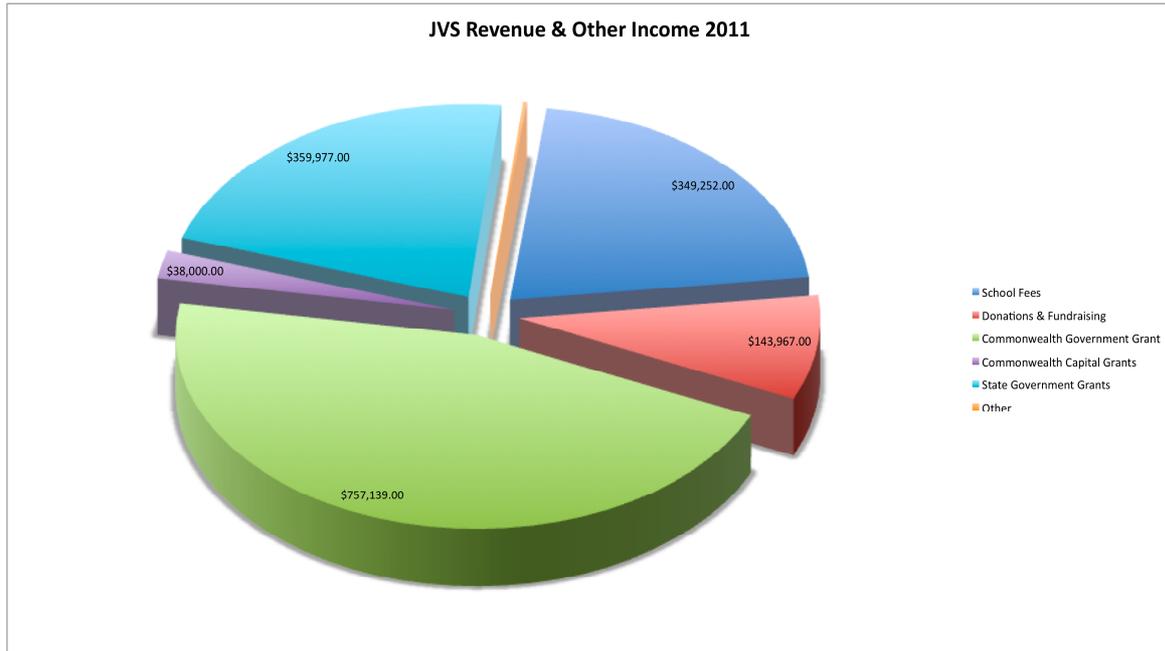
The Joseph Varga School is a Non-Profit Organization, being a Company Limited By Guarantee, Exempt from Income Tax and classified as a Gift Recipient by the ATO.

The financial information for 2012 indicates that The Joseph Varga School is solvent and has a strong, sound, solid net asset base, after Liabilities are offset against Assets. As a non-profit organization JVS endeavours to achieve a zero balance budget by the end of the financial year.

Revenue

The Total Operating Revenue of the school remained consistent with 2010 figures with regards to non-capital grant income. A surplus in capital grant was recorded for 2011 as a result of the BER grant funding for capital developments being carried over i.e. until the final building 'sign off' in March, 2011.

The major categories of Income for 2011 can be graphically summarized in the form of a pie graph.



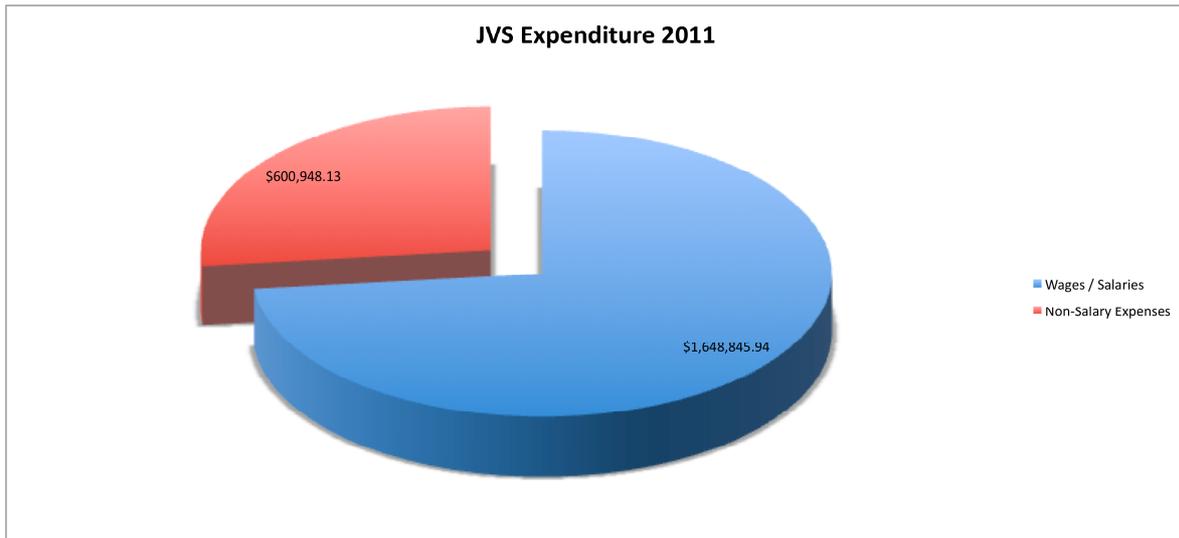
With respect to Revenue, it is noticeable that the School collected most of its income from Commonwealth (45.84%), State (21.8%) and School Fees (21.1%).

Student Tuition Fees charged (per student) were higher in 2011, mainly due to the School's continued focus from 2010 on making the collection of fees for all students a more important priority.

Expenditure

The Total Operating Expenditure incurred by the school increased in 2011, with Salary Costs being at higher levels due to salary renegotiation (i.e. contract renewal), an additional teacher being employed instead of the replacement of a teacher aide who left during the 2011, and the employment of a multi-skilled consultant.

The major categories of Expenditure for 2011 can be summarized in a pie graph.



With respect to Expenditure, it is noticeable that the school incurs most of its costs, as expected, in relation to Salaries, Allowances and Related Expenses (73.3%).

Please note that these costs are partially funded by State and Commonwealth Recurrent Grants.

Teaching and Learning Expenses, along with Materials, Books and Administration (including Interest) costs, feature as key items in Non-Salary Expenses (26.7%).

Balance

Overall, the profit and loss statements show that The Joseph Varga School continues to meet its obligations as a not-for-profit, benevolent entity with a small net profit of \$10,874.53.

The Board of Directors for The Joseph Varga School considers that its budget projections are sufficient to service any future shifts in the Income and/or Expenditure of the School.

13.0 Conclusions

The educational and financial positions of The Joseph Varga School, in conclusion, complies with the professional standards and mandatory reporting requirements for all aspects of its performance.

In the view of The Directors of the School, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the school will be able to continue to function successfully as a Special School and 'will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable'.

The confidence of the Board about the School's future viability stems from the fact that the School continues to select individual students that will most benefit from the school's ethos and resourcing, as well as from referrals provided by professionals in

the community.

Even the challenge involved in accommodating the diversity of the students enrolled at the School, socio-economically and psychologically, does not deter the School from pursuing its goal to eliminate as much educational disadvantage as possible. As a benevolent, charitable organization, although the ongoing change in demographic at JVS makes many aspects of the school program and funding very 'dynamic', the school continues to be highly successful at meeting the challenges facing students with special needs, and ensuring the school remains solvent, current, and at the forefront of special needs education.

In the master plan of The Joseph Varga School, the *Vision Statement* calls for the School to constantly improve the quality of its service, rather than to increase its size. This continues to include regular review, professional development, and the implementation of strategies that are 'multi-modal' to capture the curiosity and love of learning all children should engage in.

As a result, those students in genuine need will be able to continue to experience and benefit from '*The Joy of Discovery*'; our school motto.