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## **Annual School Report 2017** (Based on 2017 Data)



The River School is a Government approved, independent, co-educational primary school and Early Childhood Centre located in a beautiful rainforest valley in Maleny, Queensland. The school began as a service project of Ananda Marga, a global organisation for self-realisation and service to all.

The guiding philosophy of The River School is Neohumanist Education. Based on Neohumanism, the philosophy of the innate oneness of all things, it seeks to instill in children an innate sense of love and compassion for all beings: people, animals, plants, and even the inanimate matter of the whole universe.

Our school is a loving community for 123 primary students from Prep to Year 6 (54 girls and 69 boys). We also operate a Long Day Care Centre for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten children, and Outside School Hours Care Program including Vacation Care during School holidays.

# History of the Ananda Marga River School

The community land on which the school is situated was purchased in 1984. It comprises a total of 52 acres and a community of five families. In 1987, the community decided to set aside a portion of the land (some 25 acres to the south of a gully which divides the property) for Ananda Marga projects. This portion of the land was named Ananda Kamala meaning "Bliss of the lotus flower". The first project, the Ananda Marga River School, opened in 1995 with 23 students. The school's name was decided by the children who enjoyed playing in beautiful Bridge Creek that runs through the school.

The dedication and passion of the Prout Community, Ananda Marga Education Ltd and numerous Dada's and Didi's has shaped The River School to become a leader of Neohumanist educational practices. Some of the original founders of the school remain on the Prout community and continue to be significant contributors to the school culture and environment. Prabha Demasson, a co-founder and major contributor to the development of the school, served 16 years as Deputy Principal, and 3 years as Principal before leaving in 2013. At this time, Jenny Oakley was appointed as the new Principal to continue guiding the Neohumanist vision of the school founders. In 2017 Anne Donoghoe, who has been with the school since 1997, was appointed Principal of The River School.

## SOCIAL CLIMATE

Based on our Neohumanist philosophy, the school works to foster a sense of family in the school. This family feeling extends beyond the school to all humanity and even beyond to plants and animals. Children develop this understanding both intuitively and rationally. In meditation they are guided to experience their oneness with all things. Rationally they learn to respect and appreciate the diversity and unity of our human family.



Service projects are encouraged in every class, in each phase of learning, so that children can act on their understanding of connectedness and develop confidence and skills to make meaningful changes in the world around them.

The school also runs "Buddy Programs" between younger and older classes, including our Early Childhood Centre. Furthermore, some sporting and service projects involve multi-age groups to build a sense of community in the school.

## **2017 - A Message From The Principal**

Reflecting on our journey over the last 12 months, made me realise 2017 will be best remembered as a year of change and growth. We said goodbye to Jenny Oakley (Principal 2013 – 2017), and are grateful for the many excellent contributions she made. We wish Jenny all the very best, knowing she will always be part of the fabric that creates the heart of our beautiful School. We also said farewell to some River School families as their journey took them along different paths and welcomed new families drawn to our Neohumanist philosophy. Our staff have grown as a team and embraced a deeper understanding of Neohumanism and how it is embedded into the fabric of what is taught and learned. We engaged in numerous community projects reflective of the value we place on creativity, innovation and service. The changes, learning and resulting growth that took place during 2017 have strengthened our community on many levels and I am proud and honoured to be leading our beautiful River School into 2018.

*"All is connected ... no one thing can change by itself." Paul Hawken (October 1994)*

## **Distinctive Curriculum Offerings and Extra-Curricular Activities**

### **MORNING CIRCLE**

The week begins with an all-school Morning Circle that includes a candle-lighting ceremony, singing, meditation, small performances, an introduction to the week's virtue and general announcements. Parents often attend these uplifting gatherings and are welcome to take part.

### **MEDITATION AND YOGA**

This is our daily Quiet Time. Children benefit from early use of their imagination and intuition in creative visualisation and meditation exercises. Yoga exercises help children stretch and relax, meditation centres them, and discussions, *the getting of Wisdom*, focus on our virtues and social, emotional learning.

### **VIRTUES**

The staff and students of The River School embraced a weekly virtue throughout each term and integrated them into weekly class presentations at Morning Circle. Each class found their own unique way to present the weekly virtue through films, plays, poems and oral presentations.

## **THE ARTS**

We have specialist teachers in Music and Arts and Cultural Studies. Students have the opportunity to learn guitar, percussion, and strings and the school offers a variety of performance groups. All students study marimba throughout their River School years, as well as having the opportunity to learn string instruments such as violin, ukulele and guitar. Individual private lessons in guitar, ukulele and keyboard are also available. Media Studies is now being offered to our students through our Arts and Cultural Studies Program, which also includes Indigenous studies and a strong environmental focus.

## **SPORT**

During 2017, the school participated in a number of sporting activities. Our Prep to Year 6 students enjoyed swimming lessons at the Maleny Pool which focused on water safety and swim skills and our Year 6 children learned how to surf. We held our “Friendly Olympics” in Term 3 and in the summer season, students of all ages cooled off in our fresh water creek at the school. AFL Auskick was offered to the students in Term 2 as an additional extracurricular activity. Our purpose built hall is ideal for wet weather sports including netball, basketball and for our younger students a regular Perceptual Motor Program (PMP) for gross and fine motor skill development.



## **EMPOWERMENT CENTRE**

Our Empowerment Centre offered one-on-one and small group learning support in literacy to supplement classroom programs. The Empowerment Centre is a place of learning where students at the River School are provided with intensive literacy tuition to ensure they reach their full potential in the classroom. Programs run at the Empowerment Centre are individually tailored to meet the needs of each student and are designed to compliment their learning preferences.

The Empowerment Centre maintains a close relationship with all classroom teachers. This in turn guarantees that learning activities completed at the Centre support the students' classroom learning. At the end of each term a progress

report is compiled for each student, drawing upon qualitative and quantitative data collected throughout the term. Our Empowerment Centre also has a Literacy Coaching component, where the Empowerment Centre coaches classroom teachers in best practice literacy teaching.

## **SCHOOL CAMPS**

The River School loves school camps! In 2017 our Prep to Year 3 students stayed on Bribie island for 2 nights with their parents and teachers. The focus of this camp for the youngest members of our school was 'family and connection'.

As our students move up through the middle years the focus of our camps change. Our Year 4's camped at Noosa North Shore where the focus was 'cooperation and challenge'. The students challenged themselves by attending camp without an accompanying parent and challenged their bodies, stamina, resilience and confidence through



activities such as rock climbing, archery, body boarding and team building activities.

Our Year 5 camp has a focus on 'environmental sustainability', which ties in with a strong underlying theme of the River School Year 5 curriculum. In 2017 they attended a 4 day Earthkeeper's Camp where they become more deeply connected to our environment and gained a greater understanding of the part each student can play in becoming guardians of their world and environment.

Our senior boys and girls in Year 6 participated in our annual rite of passage. The theme of their camp was 'empowerment'. The students attended a 4 day Warrior Camp which focused on self sufficiency, self empowerment and emotional intelligence and resilience. The returning warriors agreed that it was an experience that garnered them with life skills that they will take with them into their transition to High School, and beyond.

## **HEALTH**

Our vegetarian, whole food tuckshop provided delicious meals for purchase two days a week. Each classroom had access to garden areas where children had the opportunity to grow food, learn about sustainability and even grow food for our tuckshop and classroom cooking classes.

## **ELECTIVES**

Students from Prep to Year 6 participated in an elective program which allowed them to select areas of interest to explore. These included activities such as robotics, song writing, Chinese craft and cooking. This elective program has become a standard element of the distinctive River School curriculum.

## **KIDS IN ACTION**

Our Year 5 students were involved in the first part in the 2017 Kids In Action program. The program allows the students to join hundreds of other students and teachers from across the region who come together to share experiences and learnings to help save the Coast's spectacular environment.

Kids in Action brings schools together to explore local environmental issues. The conference is part of *Kids Teaching Kids Week*.

## **READERS CUP**

A team of 5 students from our Yr 5/6 classes attended the annual Reader's Cup at the Pacific Lutheran College at Buderim. Readers Cup is a statewide competition for young readers, organised by the Qld Branch of the Children's Book Council of Australia. Our team performed very well, winning their heat and were only 1 point away from proceeding through to the State Final.

## **KNITFEST**

Under the guidance of Alieta, our Arts & Cultural Studies teacher, Alberto the baby whale calf was a dynamic feature of The River School's Knitfest installation in the main street of Maleny. Alberto was surrounded by yarn jellyfish, fish and other sea creatures which were created by the students during art sessions with Alieta. Alberto and the children's work was certainly a highlight of the festival display.

## **MEDIA EDUCATION**

During media arts class, several groups from the Regents (Yr5) used the opportunity to work on making a 2-minute film to enter the local Young Eco-Documentary

Filmmaker Competition. Two River School films were made, and both became finalists!

Our student film called *'The Hidden World of Fungi'* won the competition! Congratulations to Grishka, Tom, Chloe and Jacob. Grishka spent his lunchtimes editing the film. An awesome effort! They won a GoPro for our school.

*'The Great Piccabeen'* film was also a standout finalist. Congratulations to Kieran, Jesse, Pearl, Bridgette and editor Obi. Both videos were filmed entirely at our school creek.

The films were publically screened at the Mary Cairncross theatre.

## **GURUKUL NEOHUMANIST CONFERENCE**

All core teaching staff attended an inspiring, three-day conference on Neohumanist Education. It was without doubt one of the best personal development opportunities our staff have been involved in. They gained a clearer understanding of Neohumanism and how to bring it alive in our classrooms and school community. Staff enthusiasm and energy, as a direct result of the conference, resulted in a weekly commitment to research, readings and discussions to further strengthen growth as Neohumanist educators.

## **TAIWANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENT VISIT**

In Term 2, The River School had the pleasure of hosting a group of Taiwanese University students. A beautiful cultural exchange provided for a week of rich learning.

The visiting Taiwanese University students and teachers prepared, organised and ran an amazing day of performance and workshops for our children, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all involved. This newly established relationship with the University has created possibilities for future visits from their overseas practicing teachers on a yearly basis.



## **SERVICE**

### **Erowal Aged Care Facility Visit**

Our Bunya and Puggle families combined to visit our local aged care facility (Erowal) to connect with the residents and to sing for them. The children were warmly received and everyone who attended where touched by the connections that were made over the visit.

### **Teddy Bear drive – Sunshine Coast University Hospital**

The Regents, completed a unit that focused on children who have made a difference in the world. One of those children was Campbell Remess, a 13 year old boy from Tasmania who spends all his spare time making teddy bears for sick children. Our Regent class were so inspired by Campbell that they each made a small, fluffy bear that was to be passed on to a sick child. Due to the risk of infection for the young patients, the Regents were unable to deliver the teddies personally however; a staff member visited the class, spoke to the students and then delivered the teddies to the kids.

### **Save the Orangutans**

In Term 3, our Year 5 students undertook research projects based on a number of worldwide ecological issues. Topics ranged from Oil Spills and the threat to Marine Life, Electromagnetic Radiation, Water Contamination, and Palm Oil Production and the loss of Orangutan habitats. The knowledge gained throughout the course of the projects moved the students so much, that they felt they needed to contribute in some way to the causes they represented. The Regents decided to contribute to the Orangutan Project by selling icy cups and holding a bake sale. All proceeds went to support those who ensure that displaced and orphaned orangutans are returned to the wild where they belong.

### **Toilet Paper Drive – Maleny Neighbourhood Centre**

As is becoming a yearly service project, our students once again took on the challenge of donating much needed toilet paper supplies to the Maleny Neighbourhood Centre. In total our school community donated approximately 300 rolls and our Year 4 students (having raised the greatest number of rolls) proudly delivered the supplies to the MNC. This was greatly appreciated and gladly received by Noreen at the Neighbourhood Centre.

## **Toy & Book Fundraising Bake Sale – Sunshine Coast University Hospital**

Our Puggle (Prep) students held a bake sale over two days to raise money for the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital's Children's Ward. The Prep students wanted to ensure that children who were sick in hospital had access to toys and books. The fundraiser was a great success and the Puggles invited a representative from the Hospital to the school and presented them with books and toys, which were gratefully received.

## **END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE “Guardians of Our Future”**

Our students delivered an outstanding performance at our end of year concert entitled “Guardians of Our Future”. They performed to a packed Maleny State School hall and everyone was impressed with the high standard, dedication and the pure enjoyment on each child's face as they danced and sang their way through each act. Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the magical creators of this original, Neohumanist production, Kester and Kirsty, and our wonderful parent community for their support on so many levels.



## **GRADUATION - Red Cedar (Yr.6)**

In December our Year 6 students celebrated the end of their Primary School Years with a beautiful Graduation Ceremony created by the parents of our Red Cedars. Heartfelt speeches given by students, along with talented performances and recognition of each student by their classroom teacher, Annie Willrich, combined to ensure an uplifting and touching experience to see our students onto the next stage of their journey.



## **Parental Involvement**

Nurturing a strong parent community, our school welcomes parent volunteers to engage in many activities at school including tuckshop, gardening, helping in the library, participating in art projects as a way of sharing their expertise with our teachers and students. Parents and families are an integral part of The River School.

In 2017, the school offered a number of avenues for parent involvement.

**Energy Levy:** Parents were requested to donate two hours a week (20 hours per term) in Energy Levy. They could assist in their child's class, help in tuckshop, assist on school camps, or help in other ways as needed.

In 2017, the school's Board has announced that due to the increasing demand on working parents in our community, the donated hours requested from our families in 2018 will reduce to 10 hours per term.

**Parent Committee:** In 2017 there was an active Parent & Friends Committee. Their main focus was serving as a conduit between the school and the parent community. This was combined with co-ordinating fundraising events such as our Cafe Nights which involve dinner at the school with various events including Open Mic nights, a whole school camp out, student performances and a trivia night run by our Year 5 students.

## Parent, Teacher and Student Satisfaction with the School

In 2017 all the parents and students of the River School were surveyed to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with the school.

Results from the 2017 parent survey are included below.

### PARENT SURVEY

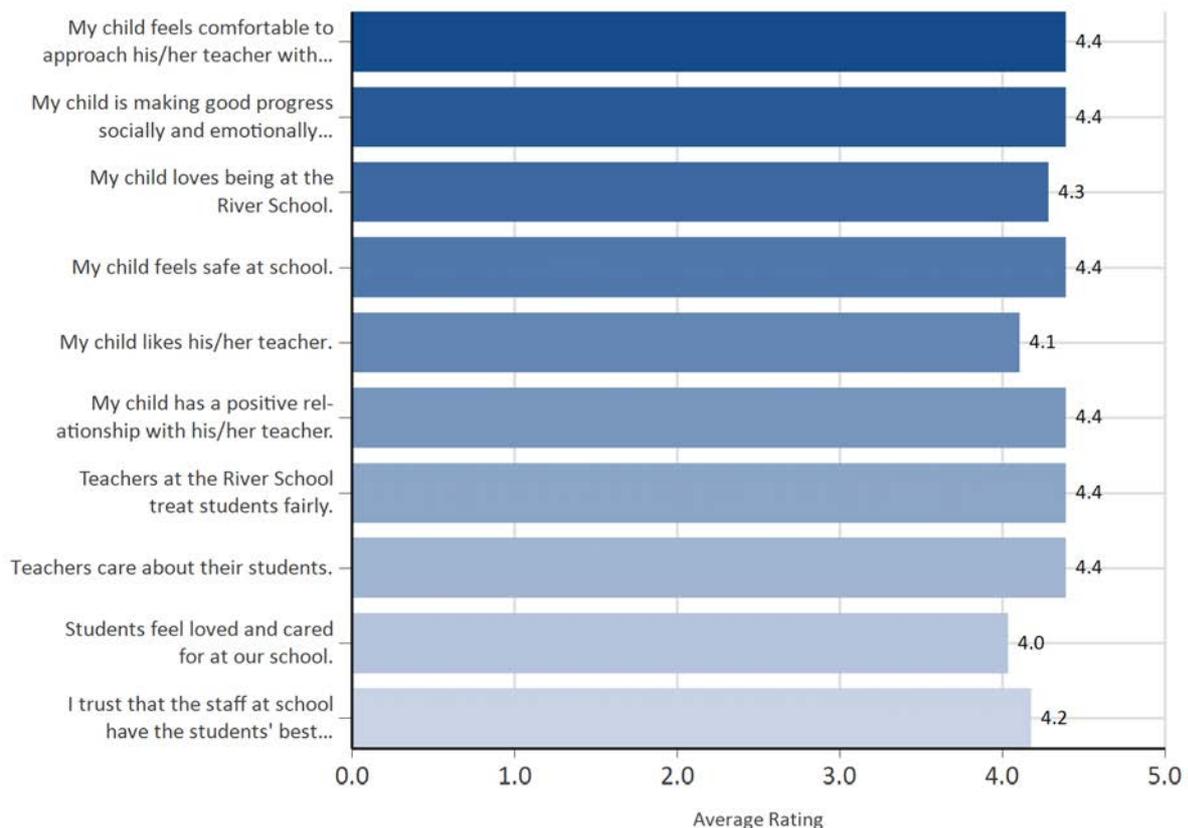
Our anonymous Parent survey was administered to all families at the River School.

From our 99 families, we received 28 responses to our survey.

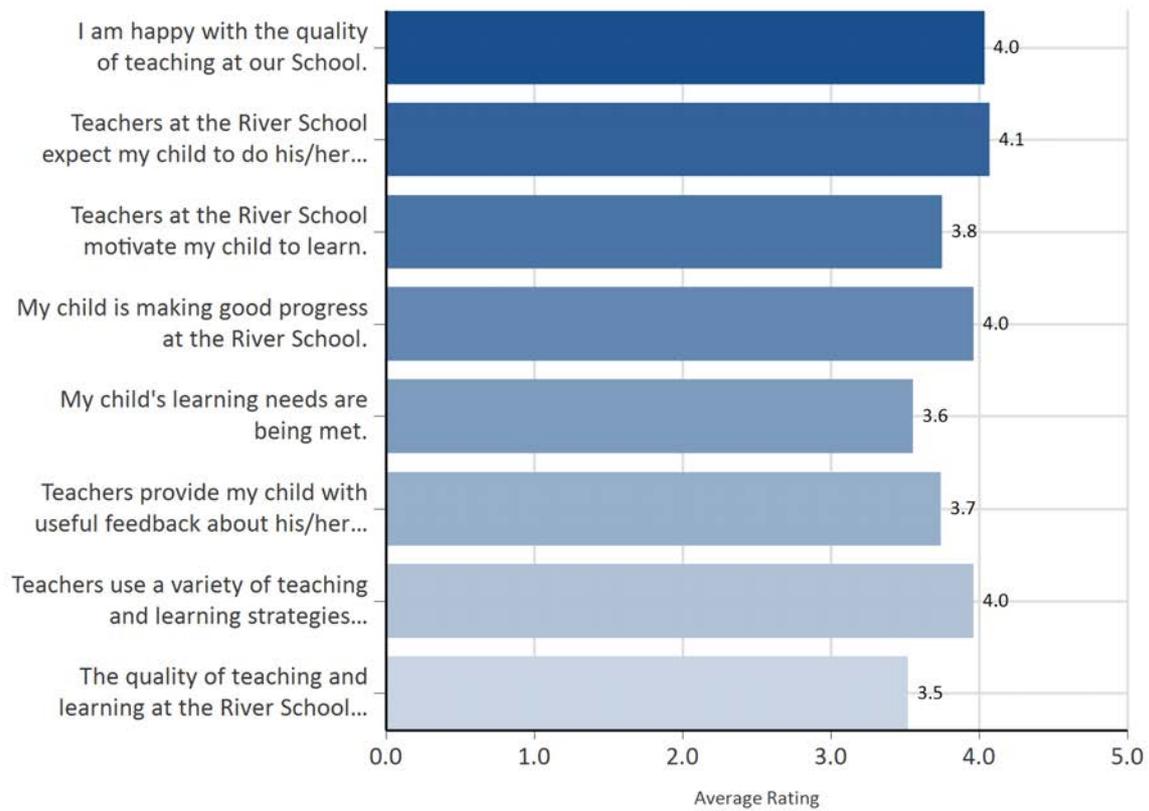
Parents were asked to rate statements on the following scale:

Rating	Score
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

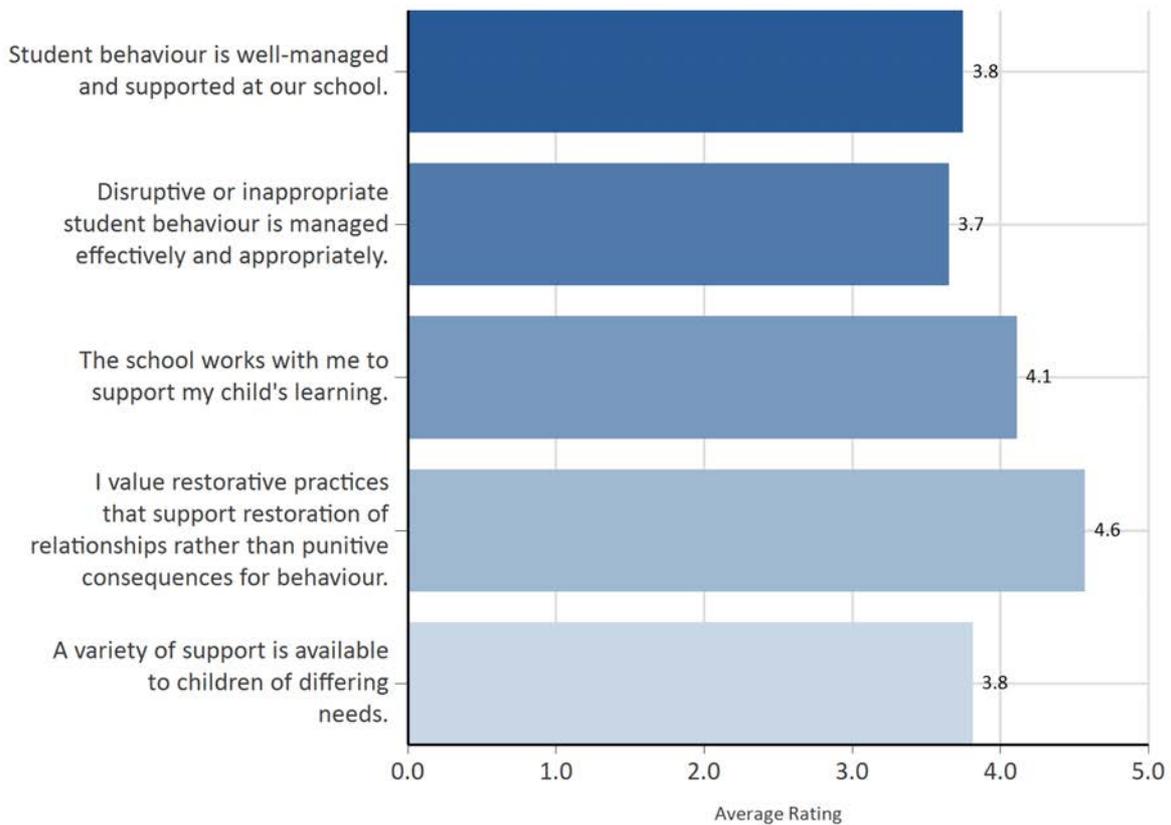
### Care for Students



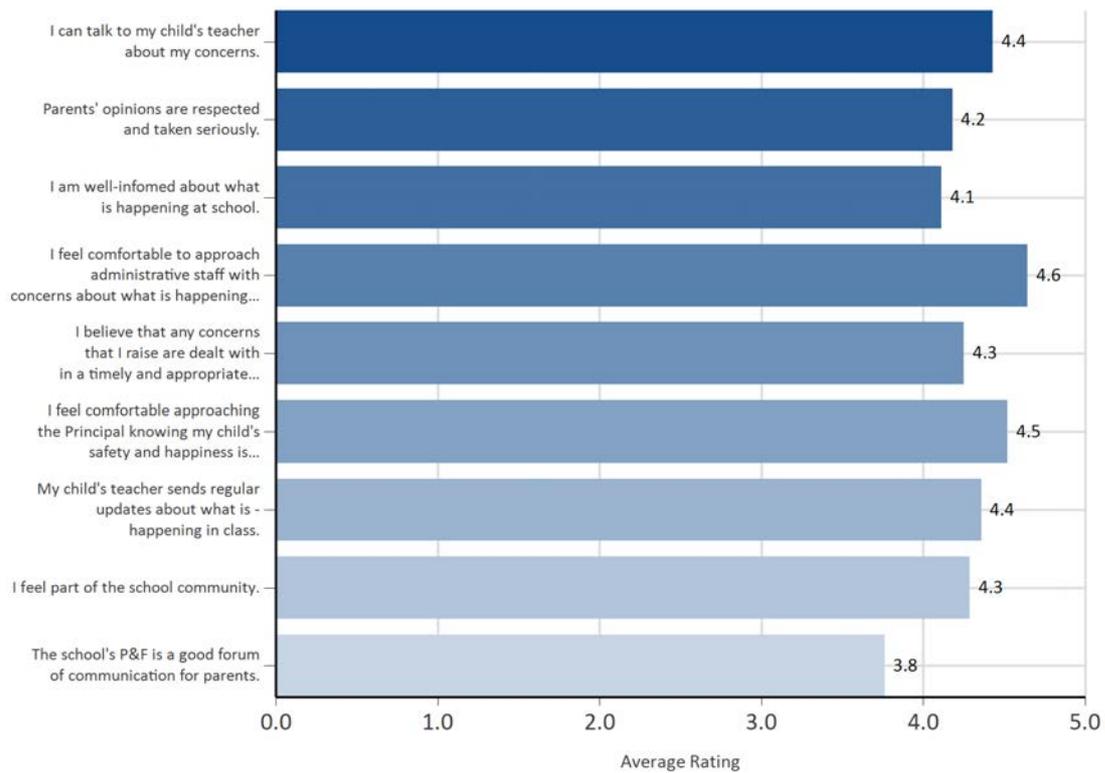
## Quality of Teaching and Learning



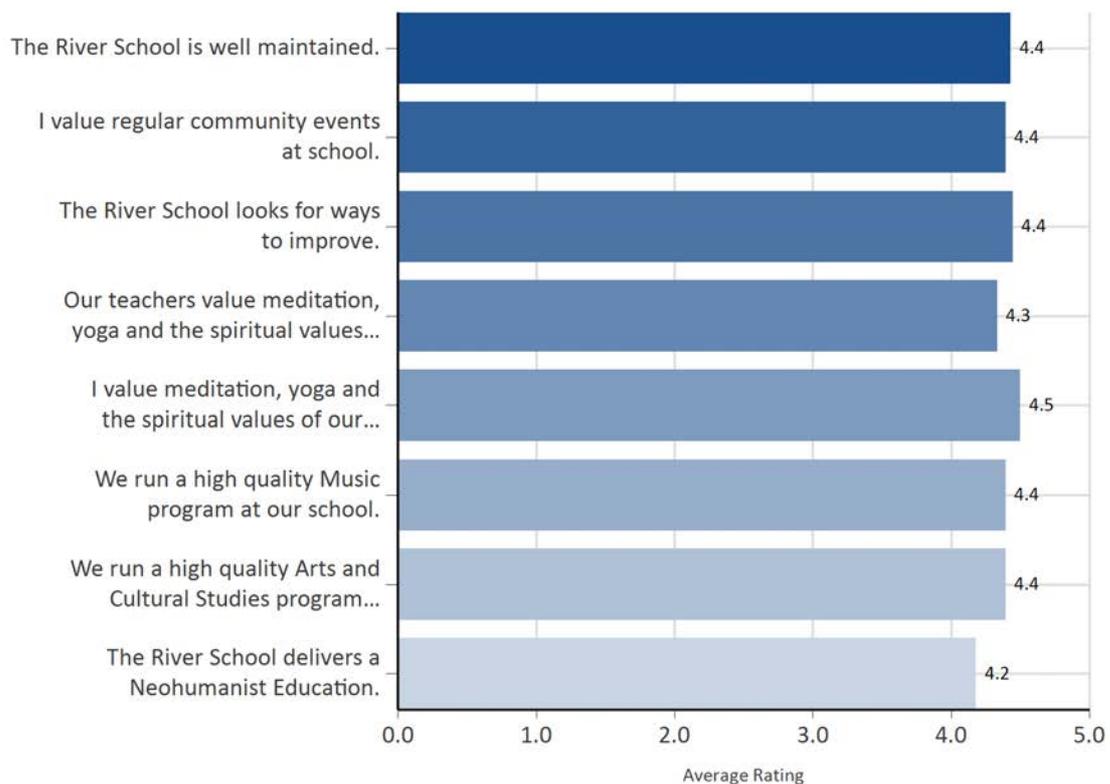
## Support for Behaviour



## Relationships and Communication



## Other



## **STUDENT SURVEY**

Our Student Survey was administered to students from Prep to Yr 6 in November 2017. Students were asked to rate statements on the following scale:

Rating	Score
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

From the responses received, each statement has been given a numerical score with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest.

MEAN SCORE	STUDENT SURVEY 2018 LIST OF QUESTIONS
4.25	1. I love coming to the River School.
4.18	2. My teachers expect me to do my best.
4.05	3. I feel safe at school.
4.14	4. My teachers provide me with useful feedback about my schoolwork.
4.26	5. My school gives me different ways to learn.
3.82	6. My teachers motivate me to learn.
3.73	7. Teachers at my school treat students fairly.
4.10	8. I can talk to my teachers about my concerns.
3.84	9. Student behavior is well managed at my school.
4.33	10. I like being at my school.
4.08	11. My school looks for ways to improve.
3.99	12. My school takes students' opinions seriously.
4.53	13. My school is well maintained.
4.73	14. My teachers care about me.
4.40	15. The Principal cares about me.
2.88	16. I enjoy Morning Circle.
3.48	17. I enjoy the quiet time we do at our school.
3.79	18. I enjoy the yoga we do at our school.
4.36	19. I enjoyed my class camp this year.
4.23	20. I enjoyed being involved in the Whole School Production: "Guardians of our Future".

## School Income - Funding Sources

The River School receives funding from a variety of sources including Federal and State funding, Grants, school fees and parent contributions. Details of funding sources can be found on the MySchool website.

<http://www.myschool.edu.au/>

## Staffing Information

In 2017 our school employed:

- 6.8 FTE Teachers
- 3.55 FTE Teacher Aides
- 2.2 FTE Specialist Staff,
- 3.67 FTE Admin/Clerical Aides and
- 2.9 FTE Building/Grounds and Bus Drivers

All of our classroom teachers hold a Bachelor's Degree. All of our classroom teachers participated in Professional Development opportunities in 2017 which included curriculum development, restorative practice, Neohumanist Education, behaviour support and digital technologies. The school spent \$16,648.55 exc GST on Professional Development during 2017.

**Average staff attendance for the school, based on unplanned absences of sick and emergency leave periods of up to 5 days:**

<i>Number of Staff</i>	<i>Number of School Days</i>	<i>Total Days Staff Absences</i>	<i>Average Staff Attendance Rate</i>
34	3652	229	93.7%

*Principal on extended leave from Term 1 through to August of 2017.*

**Proportion of teaching staff retained from the previous year:**

<i>Number of permanent teaching staff at end of previous year</i>	<i>Number of these staff retained in the following year (the program year)</i>	<i>% retention rate</i>
9	7	77.7%

## Key Student Outcomes

### Student attendance

The Average Student Attendance Rate as a percentage in 2017 was 84%.

### BENCHMARK DATA FOR 2017

#### Reading

Year	Average Score (School)	Average Score (National)
Year 3 (2017)	376	431
Year 5 (2017)	539	506

#### Writing

Year	Average Score (School)	Average Score (National)
Year 3 (2017)	354	414
Year 5 (2017)	442	473

#### Spelling

Year	Average Score (School)	Average Score (National)
Year 3 (2017)	347	416
Year 5 (2017)	477	501

#### Grammar and Punctuation

Year	Average Score (School)	Average Score (National)
Year 3 (2017)	377	439
Year 5 (2017)	524	499

#### Numeracy

Year	Average Score (School)	Average Score (National)
Year 3 (2017)	394	409
Year 5 (2017)	508	494

Benchmark data is available in detail at the *My School* website <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>

## **Further Information**

For further information about The River School, or for a copy of our Parent Handbook and enrolment information, please contact [admin@amriverschool.org](mailto:admin@amriverschool.org).

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