

# Cowan Public School

## Annual Report



2016



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## Introduction

The Annual Report for **2016** is provided to the community of **Cowan Public School** as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

Paul McSweeney

Principal

## School contact details

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## Message from the Principal

Children, parents and staff at Cowan together form a wonderful school community that works together for the benefits of students' education.

2016 was another incredibly busy year at Cowan Public School; another year full of activities and events.

Cowan Public School is very lucky indeed to have such a supportive Parents and Citizens Association. In every facet of school life in 2016 there were parents ready and willing to assist whenever needed. It is a very special achievement for which I am truly thankful.

Schools are for and about children, and the Cowan children have had an excellent year.

We had excursions to the Australian Reptile Park, Old School House Museum and Bobbin Head, a school camp at Point Wolstonecroft, visits from authors and performers. We had many special days including the Cowan/Brooklyn Writers' Festival, Hat Parade, Archaeology Day, Mini Olympics, Grandparents' Day and Year Six Mini Fete.

The creative arts and sports again played a big part in the lives of Cowan students in 2016. The Sydney North Area Dance Festival was a highlight for our Dance Group who also performed at the Hornsby District Music festival. A school band was formed this year and they were able to play at events during the second half of the year. Music tutoring was offered to students again wanting to learn an instrument. Many opportunities were also offered to participate and enjoy many sports. Cowan competed in the local interschool (PSSA) competitions including League Tag, Football and Netball competitions. Cowan also competed at all Zone Carnivals and participated for the first time in the state wide Small Schools Knockout competition.

National testing in Literacy and Numeracy was held for students in Year three and Year five with Cowan achieving results of a high standard. Kindergarten children participated in the Best Start program to find significant starting points for their learning. Across all grades many of our academic targets were achieved.

This Annual School Report details the full range of the school's activities and achievements in 2016. At Cowan, high expectations are the foundations on which we build learning, personal development and satisfaction.

I certify that the information in this report is the result of a rigorous school self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of the school's achievements and areas for development.

**Paul McSweeney**

**Principal**

## School background

### School vision statement

Our vision at Cowan Public School is to empower students to become independent life-long learners, who are actively engaged and motivated.

Cowan Public School staff and parents work together to enable all students to strive for personal best, experience success, and promote individual student growth through a focus on personal effort and positive mindset.

It is the belief of the entire school community that by valuing and respecting others, the school engenders a love of community with a vision that the students will become responsible, caring and successful members of the community.

### School context

Cowan Public School is a small school with a teaching principal and is situated 15 kilometres north of Hornsby set on the outskirts of Muogamarra Nature Reserve and Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park. It is a small school with quality programs and the school community has high expectations. There are thirty five families with a total of 55 students enrolled for 2016.

The school operates with three permanent classes including a teaching principal and has a full-time SAM (School Administration Manager). The school is a focal point in the local community and is well supported by its parent body. The school caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 6. We proudly acknowledge our high standard of student behaviour and achievements. Our students perform exceptionally well in many endeavours and their excellent citizenship is regularly acknowledged by the wider community. The provision of a great variety of learning experiences encourages participation, thinking, creativity and fun. Our school is part of the local Keerawall Community of Schools as well as the wider Asquith Learning Community of Schools. Our students are taught to do their best, to be considerate and tolerant of others, to have personal pride and to be responsible citizens. The school provides a well-rounded education with the development of the 'whole child' seen as important, through its successful academic, sport and performing arts programs.

## Self-assessment and school achievement

### Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

#### For all schools (except those participating in external validation processes):

This section of the Annual Report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

Learning underpins everything that happens at Cowan Public School. It is evident that our school learning culture is delivering on ensuring all teaching staff understand that student engagement and learning are related. The school consistently implements a whole school approach to wellbeing that has clearly defined behavioural expectations and creates a positive teaching and learning environment. As we have multi-age and multi-stage classrooms, our teachers differentiate curriculum delivery to meet the needs of individual students. This has been communicated to parents both formally and informally.

A review of the elements in the Teaching domain show that all classrooms are well managed, with well-planned teaching taking place so that students can engage in learning productively and with minimum disruption. To ensure the students are making progress within the expected timeframes, the teaching staff use assessment instruments to assist with monitoring and to identify any skill gaps. The school is committed to have the learning needs of the students at the forefront of decisions made at the school. The teaching staff meet regularly to review the curriculum and to revise their teaching and learning programs. In 2016 all teachers set and attained their professional learning goals and teaching requirements to ensure the school continues to perform and develop. A focus for 2017 is to use more student assessment data to plan and track student achievements.

In the Leadership domain, the school's leadership is committed to improving teacher quality and student learning. Cowan

Public School has shown that it is committed to equity and have high expectations for the learning of each student. The school's financial and physical resources and facilities are well maintained, within the constraints of the school budget, and provide a safe learning environment. For a small school, we are well resourced. Administrative practices effectively support the operations of the school at all levels. Parents and community members also have the opportunity to engage in a wide-range of school related activities.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine the strategic priorities in our School Plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework:

<http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/school-excellence-framework>

## Strategic Direction 1

### Student learning and engagement

#### Purpose

To improve student learning and engagement through the provision of a balanced, broad range of explicit, meaningful differentiated learning opportunities, allowing individuals to engage successfully with their world.

#### Overall summary of progress

Teachers have been progressively making judgements of students' learning, updating and recording student literacy and numeracy progress using the DoE's PLAN data base. Teacher consistent judgement has been quite evident as the teachers have been collaborating to determine cluster placements.

Learning and Support Team processes, including staff education on NCCD data collection have been enhanced to identify, monitor and plan student progress in Literacy and Numeracy. This has enabled early identification and intervention to provide stronger, more focused support to individual students.

Students to receive specific feedback from teachers in regards to their work and how they can improve it. Students also received explicit feedback from their peers when completing group tasks and given opportunities to revise their work. Students also learning to use language related to having a growth mindset with regard to reaching their potential for learning.

#### Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All students will exhibit positive growth in NAPLAN results where data indicates a trend overtime of improved results in spelling, writing and reading.</li></ul>	100% of Year 5 students showed growth from their Year 3 NAPLAN results. 58% of Year 3 students and 43% of Year 5 students achieved in the top two bands for Reading. 42% of year 3 students achieved in the top two bands for Numeracy.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>100% of teachers develop, monitor and evaluate their personalised professional learning plan.</li></ul>	K-3 classroom teachers continued to enter data into PLAN reflecting students' growth on the literacy and numeracy continuums of learning.  Teaching staff have developed the Professional Development Plans (PDP) in line with the school's strategic directions and modify accordingly.	\$840  Casual teacher funds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All teaching staff demonstrate an intimate knowledge of the school plan and directions. Monitoring of teacher programs provides evidence of differentiated learning which is a must in a school made up of composite classes.</li></ul>	All staff have regular meetings to discuss the school plan and milestones and have input into the directions that the milestones have taken.  Teaching staff provide differentiated learning every day in their classrooms with teaching programs demonstrating this.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All students participate in Student Parliament giving them a voice to contribute to decision making.</li></ul>	Student Parliament occurs two or three times a Term where all students have a say in what things they would like to see occurring in the school. It is led by the senior students who report to the principal for feedback.	

#### Next Steps

Continue to build on the strong Learning and Support processes in place and strengthen the support for Gifted and talented students.

Getting all K–6 classroom teachers to regularly update PLAN data for Literacy and Numeracy.

Continue to support teachers when developing individual education plans and differentiated learning programs to cater for the developing learning needs.

Continue to analyse NAPLAN performance data to identify areas of strength and weakness. Staff will work collaboratively to map areas in need of support through the K–6 curriculum.



## Strategic Direction 2

Develop and foster teacher expertise to deliver high quality instruction

### Purpose

Build capacity of teachers to create more relevant, applied and innovative learning experiences that spark learners' curiosity and inspire them to follow their passions.

To ensure teaching programs reflect current best practice and teachers are exceeding National Teaching Standards.

### Overall summary of progress

All staff have now completed training for the new History and Geography syllabus and are continuing to refresh their understanding of the English and Mathematics syllabus. Staff are presenting high quality professional portfolios that demonstrate attainment of the National Professional Teaching Standards.

Opportunities to share excellence with other schools was also of significant benefit to staff resulting in enhanced professional confidence and esteem.

The students in the early learning years have again been supported by the Language, Learning and Literacy(L3) program.

### Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There are explicit school practices, including effective feedback, to monitor and support the following Improvement Measures.</li></ul>	School leader regularly monitors and gives feedback to staff on their school practices, personalised learning programs and class programs.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>100% of staff will collaboratively develop and reflect upon their Performance and Development Plan, aligning their professional goals and professional learning with the school's strategic plan and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.</li></ul>	100% of staff have linked their Performance and Development Plan (PDP) learning goals to the strategic directions of the school plan.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All staff have learning programs which reflect BOSTES syllabuses.</li></ul>	100% of teaching staff have learning programs which reflect BOSTES syllabuses. Ongoing professional learning on the implementation of new history syllabus. Professional learning on the implementation of new geography syllabus.	\$1570  Professional learning funds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All teaching staff demonstrate expertise, have very high levels of contemporary content knowledge and teaching practices, and rely on evidence based teaching strategies.</li></ul>	L3 training continued for K/1 teacher. All staff participated again in Community of Schools professional learning and accreditation experiences each term.  100% of teaching staff have a sound knowledge of the professional teaching standards which inform their teaching practices and are used to evaluate their competency at proficient level.	\$1600  L3 second year course fees.

### Next Steps

Staff will continue to work collaboratively with staff across the Keerawall Community of Schools and Principal to continue involvement in the Community of Schools leadership network. Further consideration needs to be given to engage all staff in using technology to enable collaborative learning. Continue to develop, review and evaluate teaching and learning programs reflective of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards. Regularly monitor and update NCCD register details and continue to conduct review meetings in consultation with all stakeholders.



### Strategic Direction 3

#### Enhancing community engagement and participation

#### Purpose

Implementation of effective communication frameworks and school planning in partnership with an informed school community and the Keerawall Community of Schools.

#### Overall summary of progress

The school has continued to work with the school community at a range of levels to enhance the learning environment for students. The school community continued to support the students by being engaged in parent grade meetings, P&C meetings and fundraising events. Students were supported in the classrooms with parent and community volunteers who assisted the students' learning as reading helpers.

Communication systems have been enhanced by providing a variety of communication avenues to the community.

There has also been regular communication with the wider community focussing on the shared vision of the school and the positive impacts on the student cohort.

#### Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Families and the school share responsibility for student learning and wellbeing through building parent capacity to support learning at home, and improved communication.</li></ul>	A positive culture continues across community, students and teaching staff. Families supported and established the setting up of a school band and continued the running of a music tutoring program.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Resources for parents provided so as to inform and involve parents in the learning process of their child.</li></ul>	Continued refinement and of use of school website and digital newsletter.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Maintaining attendance rates of at least 25% of families at P&amp;C meetings and at least 80% of families at community events and fundraisers.</li></ul>	Monthly P&C attendance rates continued to be above 25% and regularly between 30 and 40% of families. The community Trivia Night had over 80 attendees and the majority of families turned up to school events like the hat parade and education week activities.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sustained high levels of positive student, staff and parent satisfaction levels with school learning culture and environment being &gt; 90%.</li></ul>	Parent, staff and student surveys reflected that there are very high satisfaction levels with the school learning culture and environment.	
Consultation and review meetings with parents/carers of all students requiring adjustments, thus meeting the requirements of the disability standards.	All parents of students requiring adjustments were informed of how their child was being catered for, and meetings were held throughout the year to keep parents/carers up to date with their child's progress	\$1450.00  Extra Learning Support teacher time to prepare and run meetings.

## Next Steps

Continue with community forums to provide opportunities for learning and sharing.

Continue the strong links already established within the Keerawall COS to continue to provide extra opportunities for the staff and students in teaching and learning.

Obtain community feedback on the best ways to continue to promote and advertise the school in the community that show the many benefits of students attending a smaller school setting.

Key Initiatives	Impact achieved this year	Resources (annual)
<b>Aboriginal background loading</b>	<p>Funds were used for a speech therapist assessment as well as extra SLSO time. Also used to support a student's camp.</p> <p>Both students showed improvement academically and developed very good friendships with their peers. They were happy to be at school and school attendance record was very high.</p>	<p>\$473.95</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal background loading (\$0.00)</li> </ul>
<b>Low level adjustment for disability</b>	Employment of two School Learning Support Officers for extra hours, in addition to Integration Funding Support already provided, allowed intensive support for identified students on Personalised learning and Support Plans.	<p>\$14477</p> <p>School Learning and Support Officers</p>
<b>Quality Teaching, Successful Students (QTSS)</b>	Extra relief time for school leader to mentor teachers and work with them in the classroom.	\$1600
<b>Socio-economic background</b>	Funding was used to ensure that no student was disadvantaged through an inability of parents to pay. Funds, including school general funds, were used for excursions, text books, performances and other needs.	\$1971.70
<b>Language, Learning and Literacy (L3)</b>	<p>One member of the teaching staff completed their second, and final, year of training in L3.</p> <p>All students K-1 plotted and tracked on L3 data continuum.</p>	<p>\$1600.00</p> <p>Second year Course Fees</p>

## Student information

### Student enrolment profile

Students	Enrolments			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Boys	32	29	30	34
Girls	28	25	23	20

In 2016, 54 students completed the year at Cowan. The numbers of students enrolled have been very stable during the past three years.

### Student attendance profile

School				
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016
K	97.8	98	95.9	94.6
1	96.2	95.3	97.1	97
2	96.9	96.3	96	97.5
3	93.4	95.7	95.4	94.4
4	97.3	96	96.8	93.1
5	94.2	95.2	98.6	97.8
6	91	98.2	95.9	91.9
All Years	95.2	96.3	96.3	95.2
State DoE				
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016
K	95	95.2	94.4	94.4
1	94.5	94.7	93.8	93.9
2	94.7	94.9	94	94.1
3	94.8	95	94.1	94.2
4	94.7	94.9	94	93.9
5	94.5	94.8	94	93.9
6	94.1	94.2	93.5	93.4
All Years	94.7	94.8	94	94

### Management of non-attendance

In 2016, school attendance was again above the State average. The average was slightly down in Year 6 due to the fact that there were only four students in the grade and one of the students was on an overseas holiday during the year.

### Class sizes

Class	Total
K/1	13
2/3	21
4/5/6	20

### Structure of classes

Being a small school, all three classes formed were composite classes. The K/1 class was the smallest in number to give these children the best opportunity to have more individualised help in their initial years of schooling.

## Workforce information

### Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	2.29
Learning and Support Teacher(s)	0.1
Teacher Librarian	0.17
School Administration & Support Staff	1.61
Other Positions	0.02

\*Full Time Equivalent

Currently there is no staff member of indigenous heritage at Cowan Public School.

### Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

### Teacher qualifications

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	100
Postgraduate degree	

### Professional learning and teacher accreditation

All staff participated in professional activities, whether it was to further individual learning or to meet class or whole school needs. At Cowan Public School there are no new scheme teachers working towards NSW Institute of Teachers Accreditation.

Focus areas were:

Health–Anaphylaxis, asthma, CPR and emergency care.

Curriculum – Facilitating and completing modules for the new History and Geography Curriculum as well as professional development for all staff in understanding the new syllabus. All staff completed the online training course – Inclusion for learners with speech, language and communication needs. Staff also completed mandatory Child Protection Training. One staff member completed their second, and final, year of training for Language, Learning, Literacy (L3) and this was again a major professional learning expenditure during 2016. The program demonstrated excellent value added results for students and staff.

Local Schools – Participating in programs with the Keerawall Learning Community of Schools such as Staff Development days and once a Term Stage meetings.

In 2016, Cowan Public School did not have any permanent, beginning teachers.

## Financial information (for schools using both OASIS and SAP/SALM)

### Financial information

The three financial summary tables cover 13 months (from 1 December 2015 to 31 December 2016).

The financial summary consists of school income broken down by funding source and is derived from the school Annual Financial Statement.

Income	\$
<b>Balance brought forward</b>	<b>90 554.85</b>
Global funds	45 364.65
Tied funds	42 618.26
School & community sources	18 156.09
Interest	1 089.22
Trust receipts	9 434.15
Canteen	0.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>207 217.22</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	7 543.08
Excursions	2 499.39
Extracurricular dissections	13 464.12
Library	1 422.58
Training & development	748.68
Tied funds	27 651.10
Short term relief	4 226.90
Administration & office	20 434.84
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	4 677.09
Maintenance	526.22
Trust accounts	21 122.67
Capital programs	0.00
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>104 316.67</b>
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>102 900.55</b>

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 14 June 2016 to 31 December 2016.

	2016 <b>Actual</b> (\$)
<b>Opening Balance</b>	0.00
<b>Revenue</b>	191 336.34
(2a) Appropriation	176 696.15
(2b) Sale of Goods and Services	0.00
(2c) Grants and Contributions	14 101.94
(2e) Gain and Loss	0.00
(2f) Other Revenue	0.00
(2d) Investment Income	538.25
<b>Expenses</b>	-102 728.23
Recurrent Expenses	-102 728.23
(3a) Employee Related	-68 195.76
(3b) Operating Expenses	-34 532.47
Capital Expenses	0.00
(3c) Employee Related	0.00
(3d) Operating Expenses	0.00
<b>SURPLUS / DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR</b>	88 608.11
<b>Balance Carried Forward</b>	88 608.11

There is no opening balance recorded in the SAP finance table. The opening balance for the school for this reporting period is recorded as the Balance Brought Forward in the OASIS table.

The OASIS Balance carried forward amount (ie, funds on date of migration) is included in the (2a) Appropriation amount in the SAP table.

Any differences between the OASIS Balance carried forward and (2a) Appropriation amount is the result of other accounts and transactions being included in the (2a) Appropriation amount.

### Financial summary equity funding

The equity funding data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' section of the financial summary above.

	2016 <b>Actual</b> (\$)
<b>Base Total</b>	577 662.43
Base Per Capita	2 837.93
Base Location	0.00
Other Base	574 824.51
<b>Equity Total</b>	16 922.74
Equity Aboriginal	473.95
Equity Socio economic	1 971.70
Equity Language	0.00
Equity Disability	14 477.09
<b>Targeted Total</b>	56 870.00
<b>Other Total</b>	2 113.42
<b>Grand Total</b>	653 568.60

A full copy of the school's financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the parent and/or community groups. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

## School performance

### NAPLAN

In the National Assessment Program, the results across the Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy assessments are reported on a scale from Band 1 to Band 10. The achievement scale represents increasing levels of skills and understandings demonstrated in these assessments.

With cohorts of 10 or less in Years 3 and 5, data for Literacy cannot be viewed. The School average for Year 3 was at or slightly above the National average in all aspects of Literacy. In Year 5, with only 7 students sitting NAPLAN testing, all aspects of Literacy showed the school average to be below the National average. There was growth with every student and results ranged from Band 3 to above Band 8.

With cohorts of 10 or less in Years 3 and 5, data for Numeracy cannot be viewed. However, the School average for Numeracy for Year 3 was above the National average and the School average for Year 5 was slightly below the national average. Most Year 5 students did achieve above State average growth from Year 3.

The My School website provides detailed information and data for national literacy and numeracy testing. Click on the link <http://www.myschool.edu.au> and insert the school name in the Find a school and select GO to access the school data.>

In 2016, in accordance with the *Premier's Priorities: Improving education results*, schools are required to report on their student performance for the top two NAPLAN Bands in Reading and Numeracy.

At Cowan Public School, in Year 3, 58% of students were in the top two bands for Reading and 42% for Numeracy. In Year 5, 43% of students were in the top two Bands for Reading and 14% for Numeracy.

## Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Each year schools are required to seek the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school.

Their responses are presented below.

In 2016 the school sought the opinions of parents/carers about various aspects of school operation and communication as well as how the school can advertise itself to the wider community..

The school's awards system was modified and explicitly explained to students and parents. It has been accepted as a positive strategy to reward the efforts of students across a range of school based activities. More children said that they were working harder to try and achieve these awards.

Other responses show that Cowan is an effective school. Student learning and happiness are the core business of the school. Responses show the school enjoys a very positive relationship with the parent community as well as the wider Cowan community. Parents are concerned about the future growth of the school as there is little scope for growth in the suburb and not many younger families live in Cowan. Parents would like the school to advertise, more often, the benefits of a small school to the wider community.

Parents believe the school offers a caring and nurturing learning environment which meets the individual needs of students. Students agree that they have access to good resources and an interesting learning environment. They are motivated and keen to do their best. Teachers feel they have the support of the parents and students in the development and delivery of learning programs. The support of the parents, students and teachers in our community continues to be excellent.

## Policy requirements

### Aboriginal education

Two students of Aboriginal heritage were enrolled at Cowan in 2016. The Aboriginal flag is raised alongside the Australian flag each morning. Within the new History key learning area, all students are developing a deeper understanding of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal heritage including Australian Aboriginal history. The Senior class completed a unit of work on Aboriginal history.

Students participated in a range of class based activities during NAIDOC week. The events culminated in formal assembly was held where students shared their work and learning from the range of art, poetry, story writing and craft activities.

### Multicultural and anti-racism education

Cowan had only a small number of students in 2016 from a Non-English speaking background. Harmony Day was a focus in 2015 with the whole school involved in celebrations to mark the day.

Lessons were also delivered by staff at the school to provide students with opportunities to identify and appreciate the cultural heritage of all students and to represent differing viewpoints.

Teachers participated in professional learning that included strategies for embedding multicultural and anti-racism education into their teaching and learning programs.



## Other school programs

### Cowan/Brooklyn Children's Writers' Festival 2016

Cowan Public School hosted the 5th Cowan/Brooklyn Children's Writers' Festival on Thursday, 8th September. The staff and students of Cowan and Brooklyn Public Schools came together for an entire day devoted to quality Australian literature and illustration.

The librarians of Cowan and Brooklyn schools, Mrs Scanes and Mrs Bull, are passionate advocates for exposing children to quality literature and illustration. They organised this popular literary and artistic event and had the strong support of the Principals, Mr McSweeney and Mrs Aitken..

Every child participated in three dynamic and creative workshops tailored to their stage and interests, to inspire and develop their writing and drawing skills. They all experienced, and were enriched by, the professional talents of six acclaimed Australian authors and illustrators. The lineup of presenters included talented authors John Heffernan, Tim Harris, Frances Watts and Katrina Rowe as well as children's illustrator David Legge and author/illustrator Gus Gordon.

The 'Upper Forest' was transformed into a Mad Hatters Tea party, complete with an entrance through the rabbit hole. The guest speakers and staff from both schools feasted on a smorgasbord of culinary treats prepared by the Cowan staff.

The guest presenters were delighted with the enthusiasm and behaviour of the students. The authors were amazed at how well prepared the children were in having read many of their books.

The day concluded with John Heffernan awarding Cowan students for their story writing with the John Heffernan Writing Award for Excellence Competition. He judged 41 entrants and presented prizes for Excellence and Encouragement. This unique writing competition, named in John's honour, has now been running for five years.

This exceptional event was months in the planning and was given generous support from both Cowan and Brooklyn P&Cs, Cowan children and staff and the local school community during the Cowan RushHour.

### Archaeology Day

Cowan Public School held its first Archaeology Day in 2016. All children from Kindergarten to Year 6 participated in a series of activities which involved then in art, rock carving, burial customs, various science-based explorations and writing, all of which were linked to a variety of ancient cultures. Links to English, Maths, Visual Arts, Science and Geography were incorporated.

The day was a huge success due to the efforts of all staff who ensured that it ran smoothly and to the children who participated with enthusiasm.

### Cowan Mini Olympics 2016

On the 9th August, 2016 Cowan Public school held a mini Olympics in collaboration with the Rio Summer Olympic games. The whole school joined together to launch the games with a torch relay around the school grounds with each student passing the beacon on. The games officially began when the two youngest members of the school lit the flaming cauldron.

No longer were there any Australian students at Cowan. In their place were keen athletes representing the Jamaican, United Kingdom and Brazilian teams. From swimming on dry land, to balloon tennis, and a relay using toilet plungers, the Olympic events were far from traditional. Students in teams representing the Olympic coloured rings rotated throughout the Olympic field. Other events included an obstacle course like triathlon event followed by old-fashioned sack races and tug-of-war.

The students were very excited by the Gold, Silver and Bronze medals that were presented after each event. The Jamaican team were crowned overall Olympic victors at the closing ceremony. Special certificates were also presented to children who showed great conduct and attitude during the games.

### Sport

Cowan Public School prides itself on its inclusive approach to sport and all forms of physical activity. While we recognise and applaud the achievements of our top athletes we consistently focus on and recognise the student participation. Our school is firmly committed to ensuring our students develop a range of sporting skills, attitudes and confidence that will ensure they maintain an active lifestyle throughout their school and adult lives.

Our three main carnivals of the year achieved 100% participation and Alberta House were the Champions of each carnival. 5 students represented the school at Zone Swimming, 18 at Zone Cross Country and 20 at Zone Athletics.

Cowan again participated in Primary Schools Sports Association (PSSA) sport. 34 children were given the opportunity to represent the school in three different sports during the year. The school participated in Junior Netball and Junior Soccer and joined with Brooklyn Public School to participate in Senior Boys and Girls Soccer competitions in winter competitions. The school also participated in Junior and Senior League Tag competitions in Summer. For the first time, the school also participated in the state wide Small Schools Knockout competition which is a Soccer competition where Cowan were able to play against Meadow Flat Public School who are out near Bathurst.

Many children also had the opportunity to represent the school at Zone team selection trials. Senior Girls and Senior Boys teams were also entered into a League Tag Gala Day.

The whole school also participated in the two week long Special Swimming Scheme at Hornsby Pool where intensive Swimming lessons were conducted.

### **Adventure Writing**

Eight students from 4/5/6 were chosen to attend the annual Adventure Writing activities at Asquith Girls and Boys High Schools. Other primary schools from our Community of Schools also attended. The theme for this year was Science Fiction.

The children started the day with a Treasure Hunt Quiz where they had to find answers to a variety of Science Fiction questions. This allowed them to become acquainted with their buddies from other schools. Next came a series of workshops, designed to help the children write better stories. There were sizzling starts, to make story beginnings better, character development activities and story planning activities. The children then worked with their buddies to produce a science fiction story. This culminated in a book being produced which contained all of the finished work.

All of the children agreed it was an interesting, fun and helpful day which provided them with some great ideas for story writing. They then led an Adventure Writing day back at school where all of the school was involved in writing science fiction stories.

### **Lego Quest Challenge**

A new initiative in 2016 was the Lego Quest Challenge. Every Wednesday during lunchtime, in the Library, the students were able to create Lego models of a theme that was chosen by the co-ordinators earlier in the week. Two of the Senior students ran the challenge every week. The completed Lego models were judged and photographed and prizes awarded for originality, creativity and ingenuity.

Thanks to the generosity of Cowan families and friends in supporting the Woolworths Earn and Learn competition in 2015, our school achieved a huge amount of points to spend on resources. We now have an extensive range of Lego to be used in our weekly Lego Quest Challenges.