Building a Bridge to Asia

Supported by the Asia Education Foundation, this year we partnered with Venkateshwar International School in New Delhi for a program of cultural exchange and enrichment through the India Bridge Project.

We were blessed with a bright and enthusiastic senior English teacher from that school, Mrs Madhumita Sengupta, who spent two weeks with us engaging with our students, teachers and parents. Her program included Q & A sessions with senior students, teacher meetings and some Indian dancing. We also video conferenced with her students in India taking them on a live virtual tour of The Sydney Opera House. Return exchanges and cultural days are planned for the future.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IN ACTION

Visitors to our school often comment on the peaceful atmosphere and easy relationship between the students and teachers. While this is very true, it is not something that just happens but rather comes about as a result of a lot of effort by the teachers and a habit of reflective practice. We supplement our approach with the input of fresh ideas from practitioners whose knowledge complements ours.

This year we invited international expert on Restorative Practice, Margaret Thorsborne, (pictured right) to work with our students, teachers and parents looking at managing relationships and how to rebuild them when things go astray. The students engaged well with the practice in their sessions, learning valuable skills about how to improve friendships and resolve disputes. The teachers and parents sessions were opened up to the general public and the participants were grateful for the opportunity to hear practical proven advice on a very relevant topic.

Rights of Passage

Our annual Year 12 presentation to the Parent body this year focused on Risk Taking.

In sometimes humorous but thoughtful presentations, the students gave insight into why they might take risks and the upside and downside to their behaviour.

In question time, a parent asked insightfully, “Do you think risk taking replaces the right of passage occurring in traditional societies?”

The students reflected that the Year 12 presentations themselves were a right of passage event that they all pass through. Other examples include our camps program which is carefully structured to engage each year level in a set of challenges.

Shane Power, Principal
Five Key Features of Total Education

Nurturing the Spirit of the Child

The School’s founder, Vijayadev Yogendra, believed that happiness is derived from the life of the spirit — from love and service. This continues to be a central goal of Total Education.

You can see the spirit of a child when they spontaneously help someone else or when they express their joy in living through their laughter. You see it when they bring themselves into their learning and their interactions or when they discover insights into how the world works. The teachers emphasise these things with the students in their everyday experience at school.

Each child needs to experience love and to feel “loveable”. Many children lose this when they join an education system which evaluates their personal worth only on the basis of measurable academic achievement.

Bringing Out a Child’s Innateness

This is a place where everyone is important. Small class sizes (one teacher to 13 children) mean that no one misses out on attention. Valuing everyone means that no matter what a child’s apparent academic or other abilities, they are considered in the school program.

The challenge for teachers and parents is to observe each child, trying to understand what it is that speaks to their individual self-expression. It may be something in the academic field like writing, science, history or mathematics. Or, it could be a creative pursuit such as art, drama, dance or music. This gift, whatever it is, is what we mean by “innateness”, and the teachers will try to cultivate this, to give it a chance to grow and be expressed.

Balancing Academic and Character Development

At SOTE we believe that a person’s success in life, whether it be work, family or community, will largely depend on what kind of person they are, on their character. The Total Education program therefore aims for a balance of academic and character development.

Although all children need the key skills of literacy, numeracy and much else in the way of academic knowledge, academic achievement can be over-emphasised and this can put unnecessary pressure on children’s learning.

Character development is not treated as a separate subject. It involves every aspect of school life. Students are given an experience of service and a practical understanding of values such a patience, consistency and responsibility. The most important part of this is the idea of the good example or what we would now call ‘positive role models’. Both teachers and parents have a crucial part to play in this.

Modelling a Co-operative Ethos

Our experience over many years has shown that students can achieve excellence without the motivation of competition. Instead the School emphasises cooperation and intrinsic motivation.

Co-operation is modelled by the teachers working together for the good of the children. Students experience co-operation through being given tasks to work on together, whether it be helping around the school, activities at the Outdoor Education Centre, cross-grade projects, school camps or within the class setting.

Intrinsic motivation is motivation that comes from within a person such as: interest, enjoyment, curiosity, challenge and a desire for excellence. All of these are within the individual’s control. At SOTE we encourage intrinsic motivation rather than external motivation from prizes, awards and other artefacts of the competitive approach.

The School as a Living Community

They say it takes a village to raise a child. SOTE invites parents, teachers and children to be part of a living and evolving community in which they all play a vital role. A community requires a level of cohesion, a sense of shared values, open communication and a level of interdependence.

Parents are welcome in the school and have the opportunity to interact with the teachers each day when dropping their children off at school and walking them into the classroom.

Parents are involved in regular discussion groups on parenting where they can raise any issues of concern and share their parenting experiences with others.

Parents assist in caring for the grounds and buildings through working bees. They also participate in preparing cooked meals which are served to the children three times a each week.
Distinctive Curriculum

Total Education

The School’s curriculum is based on the program of Total Education devised by School Founder Vijayadev Yogendra. This provides for a balance between Academic, Health & Physical and Character Development, as well as a focus on the key relationships in the School.

Broad Curriculum Offerings

The School offers a broad curriculum and balances support for literacy, numeracy and science with focus on humanities and languages and a special emphasis on the visual and performing arts.

Yoga Classes

Yoga Classes are taken on a voluntary basis by secondary students. There is a good level of participation by students. Classes are taken by experienced teacher Debbie Lane at the Centre For Healthy Living adjacent to the School.

School Meals

The School provides a hot meal thrice a week. The teachers and students share the meal and this creates a family atmosphere. Parents assist with the running of the kitchen and the preparation of hot meals. Children help by setting the tables.

Film, Television and New Media

In 2015 Film and Television was offered to Year 10, 11 & 12 students with the subject taught by Mr Michael Funder. The course is wide ranging and incorporates both theory and practical elements.

At this senior level the subject is divided into Design, Production and Critique. In Year 10 students start with designing, filming and editing a 30 second advertisement. The FTV course in Years 11 & 12 follows the Senior Syllabus guidelines and the four areas covered over this two-year course period are Who Am I?, Music Videos, Documentaries and Independent Films.

A Broader Approach to Physical Education

Students in Prep to Grade 3 take part in the Movement for Learning Program which includes cross-patterning exercises and co-ordination activities which stimulate brain development. All students take part in 15 minutes of physical education four days a week as well as a sport class once a week.

Physical Education at SOTE is not just about sport. School meals, preventative stress management, education in positive attitudes and input to parents on the value of a good routine of exercise and rest are all part of the School’s broad approach to Health and Physical Education.
Interest Groups

On Friday afternoons the primary students participate in the Interest Groups program. A range of activities are offered that allow the students to discover new interests, follow a passion and connect with other teachers and students in a way that is not able to be offered in a regular class program.

The activities in these programs are offered by the teachers of middle and upper primary and are designed to allow teachers and students to connect through a common interest.

Time Out Program

The Time Out Program is conducted in the second semester of Year 7 and the first semester of Year 8. Students cover their core academic program on Mondays and Tuesdays. Thursdays and Fridays are spent on student-directed activities. A weekly excursion on Wednesdays gives students a broad-based outdoor experience and there are two camps, one bush-based and one beach-based.

Students return to the full-time curriculum in July of Year 8 with renewed enthusiasm and a stronger idea of themselves and their future direction.

Outdoor Education and Camps Program

The School has an extensive camps program starting at Year 4 with a Sleepover at School and progressing through to an Outward Bound Program for Year 11 and 12 students.

Listening and Breathing

All secondary students spend 15 minutes each day on two meditative exercises. One involves the equal breathing and the other requires students to listen to sounds in the environment. These exercises promote a daily experience of stillness and contribute to management of thoughts and emotions.
Extra-Curricular Activities

Year 12 Presentation
At the Combined Parents’ Meeting on 8th May, the Year 12 students talked to parents about Risk Taking. In their presentations, students addressed the various categories of risks, the rewards that can be achieved and strategies to manage those risks. The consensus was that risks are an integral part of life one simply cannot live life in a bubble wrap.

Work Experience
The Year 10 students undertook work experience at a very wide variety of work places from Monday 27th to Friday 31st July. Some of these included: Binna Burra Mountain Lodge, Harvey Norman, the Southern Downs Regional Council and the Avid Reader, in Brisbane.

Musica Viva
The Musica Viva for 2015 was the Sydney based quartet, Teranga, presenting music of Senegal together with some Australian flavours. The students had learnt a variety of songs and movement sequences, designed to give them a deeper experience of the music of Senegal. It was an interactive and entertaining afternoon.

Sports Days
There were sports days held for secondary and primary students. Events of the day are organised so that everyone can participate and those who wish can challenge themselves to see what they can achieve.

Science Week
The School hosted a Science Forum presented by The Heritage Research Station on Let’s Talk About Science: Using Light to Help Feed the World. Students from Scots College, Assumption College and the Glass House Christian College also attended.

Secondary Musical Production
Senior students this year presented the musical production The Pirates of Penzance. Jointly directed by Michael Funder, Colin Alley and Ronda Mattarollo, it was an outstanding performance played over two nights from 16th to 17th October, including all of the secondary students on and off stage.

Students Running the School
On Tuesday 28th July, Year 9 students took over the running of the school for the day. The roles taken over by the students included Principal and Deputy Principal. The students also took over teaching from Prep to Year 7, prepared for and taught subjects, such as Math, Science, English and Sport.

Graduation
The guest speaker at the 2015 Graduation was Professor Jan Thomas. She spoke on the topic of Privileges and the Responsibilities it Entails telling the Graduates that they are privileged because the school has provided them with a strong basis to face the challenges that life will bring. This privilege she said comes also with the responsibilities of continuing to contribute and give back to society. Parents took good advantage of the question and answer session to draw on Professor Thomas’ wealth of knowledge.
Community Engagement
PEACE PROJECT & INDIGENOUS CONNECTIONS

The Warwick Peace Project provided several opportunities for the School’s engagement with the wider community this year through its Peace Festival, promoting a culture of peace and cultural diversity. The School’s involvement included the Bunya Expo, Bush Dance for Nepal and Opening Ceremony for the Multicultural Soccer Carnival.

The School’s indigenous coordinator Sharman Parsons engaged the students in the traditional knowledge surrounding the bunya nut culminating in an open day for the public on her family’s retreat involving education, traditional dance, music and delicious traditional food.

Cooking on a Budget Workshops

Through its relationship with the indigenous community in Warwick, the school facilitated cooking workshops run in conjunction with Mission Australia in the school kitchen over three nights. School parent and dietician, Elia Faa, conducted the workshops which were really well received by the participants.

Bush Dance for Nepal

In partnership with the Peace Project, this lively event in the Vijayadev Yogendra Auditorium attracted people from throughout the district to enjoy the Bald Rock Mountain Band and the Toowoomba Nepalese Community Musicians in a blend of East and West. Our students prepared a poster display about Nepal and over $1000 was raised and donated to the disaster Fund. The leader of the Nepalese Community wrote “I am very much overwhelmed by your incredible support to the Nepalese people who need support during this hard time.”

School Renewal
SECURING THE FUTURE

The School was deeply saddened by the unexpected passing of long standing teacher Roy Fox (pictured right) while on compassionate leave to care for his ageing mother. Roy epitomised many of the key tenants of the philosophy of Total Education, especially loving kindness. In the great outpouring expressed at his memorial service held at the school, past students proposed remembering him through some permanent development at the school.

On a brighter note, the School welcomed back alumni Alison Burt (nee Goddard) this time in the role of primary teacher, rather than student. After achieving well in her studies at Queensland University of Technology (Alison was recipient of first class honours and the Dean’s Scholar Award), she worked in the state and private education systems before joining the school and naturally has fitted in seamlessly.

We have also welcomed two new primary teachers in Kiki Williment, also a parent at the school and Caitlin Alley, a first year out teacher who did a practicum at the school. These teachers are replacing Renee Locke who is on maternity leave.

In secondary, John Muehlebach replaced Roy Fox in senior Maths B and Physics. School parent Jo Collins also joined the staff as the new secondary art teacher.
Use of Computers to Enhance Learning

Computer Access

Currently, there are primary and secondary computer labs for general use and specialist labs for Film and Television and Graphics.

Computers are available in the secondary school library and for specialist areas such as science, music and art. There is a small lab for Time Out.

The Graphics Lab has industry standard software for technical graphics (CAD), creative graphics, graphic design (Photoshop), video editing (iMovie), stop animation and for the creation of simple games (Adobe Flash).

iPads have been introduced to students in Years 8 and 9 and several class sets are available for primary grades.

Primary students enjoyed several virtual excursions including the Tyrell Museum of Palaeontology in Canada in real time and the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra as well as a scribble drawing lesson with artist Kirstine Ballarad.

Student Laptop Program

Students in Years 10, 11 and 12 have their own laptops and were eligible for a Commonwealth Government bonus to assist with the purchase.

Teacher Laptop Program

Every teacher has a MacBook laptop. These are used for preparation, research and reporting to parents. Teachers have access to data projectors and digital video cameras to record oral presentations and edit these on their computer.

iPads uses include etexts for Year 9, rat and mice dissection for Biology, general literacy and numeracy applications and creating short animated plays as well as special education uses.

Students are quick to adopt new technologies and keeping up is always a challenge. However, the teachers provide the important aspect of teaching the discerning use of technology.

School Network

The school uses a cloud based server in Office 365. This has created a simpler, more stable network and superior file storage system for students and teachers and greatly enhanced the communication faculty. Every student has an Office 365 account with access to the Microsoft Online suite of programs which can also be accessed from their home computers.

A wireless network allows access to the internet, scanners and printers from anywhere in the school.

New Media students in Year 8 and 9 learn word processing, spreadsheet, presentation skills and web page design as well as to use vector based graphic design programs.

Art students access artwork and research artists on the internet. Paintings or photographs created in the classroom are converted to digital format where they are further refined and manipulated.

Drama students use the internet to access information about playwrights and texts in their assignments as well as for poster design.

Primary students work on projects with their teachers through supervised internet access on their classroom computers and the primary lab.

Real time virtual excursions are available with institutions throughout the world.

Film & TV students create short films and documentaries using digital video equipment and video editing software with the final products being burnt to DVD.

Mathematics

Spreadsheets are used extensively for statistical and financial analysis including graphical representation of the results.

Science Internet research is conducted on projects and Word or Power Point are used to present the results. Virtual dissections are conducted on-line for Biology.

Students of Humanities subjects such as English, History and Study of Society use computers for word processing, internet research and oral presentations.
Social Climate

**Student Well-Being**

Class teachers in primary school give particular attention to the well-being of each child and connect regularly with parents if there is any cause for concern.

The Home Group system at secondary level ensures one teacher maintains an overview of each student’s progress and well-being. The Home Group program looks after study skills, human relationships education, values education and welfare issues.

Primary and Secondary teachers assist each other with student welfare with support from the Deputy Principal and Principal.

Special meetings are held with parents of particular grade levels where issues arise.

Confidential counselling is available to students, parents and teachers at *The Centre For Healthy Living* adjacent to the School.

**Teachers Well-Being**

Measures are actively taken to support teachers in their well-being:

- Social get togethers especially at end of term.
- Regular mentoring meetings for new teachers.
- Weekly teachers meetings provide a forum for problems to be aired.
- Support with stress is provided by counselling through the Centre for Healthy Living.
- Leave is provided for sickness and family or bereavement issues.

**Student Attendance**

Student attendance is monitored by roll marking each day and extended absences are followed up by teachers and then, if necessary, by the Deputy Principal. The close relationship between parents and the School ensures that extended non-attendance is very rare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Average Attendance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prep</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
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<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>91%</td>
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**Average Student Attendance by Year Level**

Prep Year 95% Year 8 Out 94%
Grade 1 92% Year 9 91%
Grade 2 96% Year 10 93%
Grade 3 92% Year 11 92%
Grade 4 92% Year 12 93%
Grade 5 92%
Grade 6 92%
Grade 7 91%
Parent Communication & Involvement

Parents' Program

Parents at SOTE attend a weekly discussion group on parenting issues. Groups are facilitated by parents with longer experience at the School. Training and support for parent facilitators is provided through the Group Leaders’ Meetings.

Combined Parent Meetings involving all the parents are held twice each term. The most highly rated activity of the Parent Program this year was the presentation by Margaret Thorsborne on Restorative Practice - Managing Relations at Home. Other highly rated presentations were the Year 12 Talk on Risk Taking and the session on Community by Principal, Shane Power.

Grade Meetings

Grade Meetings were held at the start of Term 2 for all levels. Parents met with the Class or Home Group Teacher to discuss the group’s progress and exchange views on how issues might be tackled jointly between home and school.

Reporting to Parents

At the end of each semester, parents receive a Report of Student Progress which covers academic, character and physical development as well as subject reports with an A to E grading at secondary level. All primary parents have agreed not to be included in A to E reporting. Primary reports include comments on each child’s achievement in each Key Learning Area and NAPLAN results are supplied. Prep Reports are based on a combination of Education Queensland and SOTE frameworks.

Feedback from Parents

Parents rated the Senior Musical, Pirates of Penzace (83%) the Primary Spring Concert (74%) and the Senior Drama “A Chip in the Sugar” and “Mr Melancholy (59%) as the school activities they enjoyed most in 2015.
Leadership in Education

TOTAL EDUCATION AS A MODEL

Addressing the Teacher Development Program in the 1980s, the School’s Founder, Vijayadev Yogendra said: “I’m sure you’ll teach the three R’s and I’m sure you’ll do the academic work and I’m sure you’ll fulfil the obligations of the state system but the subtlety is in developing a human mind so that at the end that person is not angry, is content, and has the quality that creates the harmonious society. We have to recognize that these children will grow up in a very hostile environment. But I always maintain that a person with a tremendous capacity, if we can develop it in them, can manage a hostile climate. Their own personality, what they have gathered within themselves, through their thinking, will give them that air of confidence, discipline, and strength, that they won’t worry. And this as I say, is part of total education.”

Vijay, as he was known, set the school as a model for how to educate to “develop the human mind” in this subtle but fundamental way.

Institute of Total Education

The School hosted a number of meetings for the Total Health & Education Foundation this year to review the direction of the Foundation’s Institute of Total Education. The aims of the Institute include making available to the broader community the unique programs developed in the School around teacher development, parent development and student learning. New programs created around teacher wellbeing for the educational community were discussed. Teachers Stress Management Courses were trialled in several local and Toowoomba Schools with very good responses from participants. Development of these programs is continuing and other initiatives are being explored.

Research on Total Education

The Queensland University of Technology study into children’s moral reasoning concluded this year and the principal Shane Power attended a seminar at the university on the results of the study. The study concluded, “These findings indicate that young children use multiple levels of reasoning about the nature of knowledge and differentiate between reasoning in the moral domain and other domains.” While those conclusions were not particularly impactful on the School’s program, an anecdotal reflection came from one of the researchers to the effect that they were having difficulty finding situations of conflict for the children because of their capacity to accommodate each other and work out solutions. This was quite pleasing for the School to hear.

Visits to the School

The School was visited by Mayor Shinki of Kumiyama, Japan, his wife Mrs Shinki, and his secretary, Mr Okuna. A presentation on Total Education, had previously been given to the Kumiyama Director of Education by the Principal Mr Power on a visit to Japan. As local government in Japan is responsible for schools, the Mayor was keen to experience the School first hand. The visitors were treated to lunch in the school dining room followed by a tour of the school. The visitors also enjoyed a walk up the tree house which they thought was magical.

The School also had a visit by the Southern Downs Region Mayor, Cr Peter Blundell, and Council’s new CEO Mr David Keenan. The principal gave the visitors a tour of the school during which they chatted to students and teachers about the school’s principles and how they are put into practice, before enjoying a cooked lunch in the School dining room.
Teacher Development

Staff Stability
The School has a high level of staff stability with 82% of the teaching staff being retained from the previous year.

Staff Composition
- Full-time Teachers: 25%
- Part-time Teachers: 46%
- Full-time Non-Teaching: 3%
- Part-time Non-Teaching: 23%
- Indigenous Staff: 3%

Teachers Seminars
Teachers started the year with two seminars at the School one on Being Open to Learning and the other on School Policies.

The focus in the Easter period was on the Carmody Report - Changes to Child Safety Reporting and Intuition, Spontaneity and the Ability to Improvise.

In May the teachers looked at Restorative Practice - A Relational Approach to Behaviour presented by Margaret Thorsborne, a specialist in the field.

In October, the teachers looked at Creative Approaches in Education.

Curriculum Afternoons
Teachers spend two afternoons each term on curriculum issues. This year the focus continued on planning with the Australian Curriculum. Specific sessions were held on Literacy Coaching Overview: Debunking Maths Misconceptions in the Early Years, Study Skills Workshop and Building Assessment Communities.

Teachers also participated in a session held on How to Teach Mathematics - Queensland Education, Training & Employment Modules.

External Professional Development
SOTE Teachers (23) attended a variety of Professional Development Programs including: Road Maps to an Irresistible Geographical Inquiry, Improvement & Innovation in Assessment, Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder, Dyslexia-Reading and Literacy Support and Polarity Thinking with Jane Kise.

The amount expended per teacher on professional development was $366 p.a. (excluding the cost of teacher replacement).

The School has been able to tailor its expenditure to teachers’ vocational goals with the assistance of the Queensland Government’s Non-State Schools Teacher Capability Initiative (formerly Great Teachers Great Results).

Teacher Development
A Teacher Development Program on the principles of Total Education is held monthly. This provides a regular forum for teachers to reflect on their teaching in relation to personal and school goals.

These programs are conducted by SOTE personnel and in 2015 included: Competition vs Cooperation, Communicating with Parents, and The Role of Quieting Practices in Total Education. In addition, newer teachers to the school are provided with one on one mentoring.

Teacher Supervision
SOTE teachers mentored 3 preservice teachers this year from USQ, in Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary.

Teachers’ Qualifications

Leadership
Shane Power
LLB

Judy Currie
BSc., Dip. Ed.

Full-Time Secondary Teachers
Colin Alley
Dip Teach, M.Ed Admin
Matthew Bradshaw
BA, B Ed.
Ronda Mattarollo
BA, BEd (Secondary)
MEd (Special Ed)

Full-Time Primary Teachers
Samantha Fisher
B Ed GrDipEd (Special Ed)
Patrice Jubb
Dip Teaching Early Childhood
Sophia Lightfoot
BA GrDipLearn&Teach
Alison Burt
B Ed (Hons)

Part-Time Teachers
Bernadine Bradshaw
BA (Hons), Dip Ed
Joanne Collins
BA Vis.Arts Dip Ed
Susan Cooper
BA GrDipLearnTeach (MidYrSch)
John Cosgrove
B Ed (Primary)
Judy Funder
BA (Hons), Dip Ed
Michael Funder
B Mus Ed
Karen Leech
Dip Teaching
Ray Licence
BSc (Hons) Dip Ed (Secondary)
Renee Locke
B Ed (Primary/Middle School)
John Muehlebach
B Eng Dip Ed
Peter Pickering
BEcon Dip Ed
Georgie Stewart
B Ed
Stuart Watt
BSc Dip Ed
Grade 3 NAPLAN Test 2015 (10 students)

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Grade 5 NAPLAN Test 2015 (10 students)

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Grade 7 NAPLAN Test 2015 (9 students)

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Year 9 Test NAPLAN 2015 (10 students)

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<td>100%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Year 12 Outcomes 2014

- Students awarded a Senior Education Profile: 8
- Students awarded a Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement: 0
- Students who received an Overall Position (OP): 8
- Students completed/completing School-based Apprenticeship/Traineeship: 0
- Students awarded one or more Voc Ed and Training (VET) qualifications: 0
- Students awarded a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) at end of Year 12: 8
- Students awarded an International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD): 0
- % of Y12 students who received an OP1-15 or IBD: 100%
- % of Y12 students completed/completing SAT or were awarded QCE, IBD, VET: 100%
- % of QTAC applicants receiving an offer: 100%

Year 12 OP Scores 2015

Year 12 QCS Grades 2015

These statistics need to be read with some caution given the small student numbers at SOTE.