

RAVENSWOOD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS – REPORT TO SYNOD February 2013

The Ravenswood Ethos

Ravenswood School for Girls, Gordon, is a Uniting Church school, dedicated to the education of girls within a Christian community. Coupled with concern for each child's spiritual development is an awareness of the need for an education that encompasses the academic, cultural, physical and practical areas of learning.

Ravenswood is wholeheartedly committed to the best in education for girls. The school is devoted to the pursuit of academic excellence. Each girl is valued for her unique capacity to contribute to the life of the school. A sense of self-worth is encouraged by providing an atmosphere in which every girl may reach her individual potential, choosing from the many areas of learning and endeavour which the wide range of curricular and co-curricular activities provide.

The Ravenswood family is a Christian community in which members are able to contribute in an atmosphere of mutual care, respect and encouragement. A willingness to accept responsibility is fostered, and both leadership and participation skills are developed through active involvement in all aspects of school life. Girls are provided with the foundation for lifelong learning.

School Philosophy

The School Motto - *semper ad meliora* - always towards better things, affirms the school philosophy for all members of the school community in all areas of its endeavour.

As a Uniting Church School, we have always taken seriously our responsibility to embody the ethos of the Church with the view that it might positively impact upon and influence the lives of the students, staff and families that form the community. However, over the past two years we have undertaken to review and refine as necessary the way that we intentionally go about carrying out our role as part of the worship, witness and service of the Church.

TELL:

Worship

Chapel and Other Worship Services

Worship opportunities are provided in a range of ways for students. Whilst worship is ultimately about the living out of our discipleship and our service to God through the service of others, there are many opportunities to gather as a community in the name of Christ to connect with God and to encourage each other towards love and good deeds.

- All students attend weekly Chapel services – these services both cater for those of the Christian faith, but also seek to engage those outside the faith to reflect on the message of God in Christ. Chapel aims to be engaging and inviting and is tailored to meet the needs of young people
 - ways of encouraging participation in chapel and leadership by students are always being found
 - School Prefects lead much of the services in the Secondary School
 - Each Junior School Class takes a turn at leading a Chapel service
 - Those involved in special projects or charity or community service and social justice initiatives are encouraged to lead a chapel service related to the activities that they are involved with, thus linking worship, witness and service together in very clear and explicit ways
- Opportunities to participate in Holy Communion are offered once a term

- The whole school meets twice a year for worship in the Commencement Service and the Easter Service
- There is Staff Chapel Service at the beginning of the year and special services/rituals such as the Imposition of Ashes for Ash Wednesday
- Boarders' Chapel
 - The boarders meet once a term for Chapel services. These are more reflective, participatory and casual in nature, with the aim of fostering community.
 - Over the past several years, Ravenswood has been a part of combined boarders' worship events with other local Uniting Church Schools
- Significant moments in the lives of the school are marked with worship services. Such things include the welcoming of all new students in the Secondary School through a day which begins with an Orientation Day Chapel Service. Other services include the commissioning of school leaders in special services in both the Senior and Junior Schools.

Christian Fellowship

- In terms of student, Christian fellowship there is a Junior Cru and Senior Cru group
- There is a weekly staff prayer group
- There is a parents prayer group that meets regularly and once a term holds a prayer breakfast for staff and students
- Annual Mothers and Daughters service, just prior to Mothers' Day, foster connection between the generations by providing a significant shared spiritual experience.

Religious Education

- Not only do students learn about worship in Religious Education, but there are regular opportunities for girls to engage in reflective activities and rituals. The Blessing of the School Diaries ritual at the beginning of Year 12 is one example. Others include prayer stations in classes concerned with social justice as well as other opportunities for students to engage in prayerful activities as part of RE lessons
- The Year 11 Retreat is a time of reflection and growth. The labyrinth and other reflection activities are provided as opportunities for the girls to learn spiritual disciplines.

Joining With Others

- The school has close links with Gordon Uniting Church - it is our Chapel
- Students in Year 4 (this year for the first time) and Year 9 are taken through a dramatic recreation of the core Christian narrative of Easter as part of the Gordon Uniting Easter Experience
- The school and Gordon Uniting Church communities combine for an annual Carols Service
- Student groups and representatives attends the Interfaith World Peace Day service at Lindfield Uniting Church
- Participation in Education Week services at Lindfield Uniting Church
- Bi-annually, in partnership with Gordon Uniting Church, we hold a faith exploration and confirmation program.

Witness

As a Uniting Church School, Ravenswood adopts several strategies to bear witness to the Christian faith, which underlies and undergirds the school.

Chapel Services

- Weekly Chapel services that present the life and message of Christ along with aiming to present the call to love God and love others as we love ourselves

- Guest speakers in Chapel – including local youth workers and representatives from organisations such as Crusaders
- Changes in the Church year are celebrated in Chapel, but also through other ways that help draw the attention of the students and staff, such as wearing purple day for the start of Lent.

TEACH:

Religious Education

Religious Education forms a key part of the witness of the school. Through Religious Education, Ravenswood does not seek to proselytise, but to assist students to learn about:

- The core Christian narratives – such as the life of Christ and other significant narratives from the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament
- God’s call to love others as presented in Scripture
- Understanding of the Church and its teachings/beliefs
- Values such as respect for others and ethical behaviour
 - Through the study of other religions and faith traditions – both in the class and through excursions to places of worship both Christian and from other faith traditions
 - o Year 10 Study of major world religions
 - o Year 10 excursion to mosque and Buddhist temple
 - Through the study of ethical issues and how people live out their values and morals
 - Through teaching/learning units about social justice issues
 - Through personal development, spiritual and character formation programs.

Leadership Development for students is fostered through:

- SRC (Student Representative Council) roles for girls from Year 4 to 12
- REPA (Ravenswood Environment Protection Agency) roles for girls from Year 1 to Year 12
- Class Captains and class Vice Captains for classes from Year 3 to Year 6
- All Year 6 have a leadership role- Sports captains, House Captains, Music Captains Social Service Captains, technical team, Classroom Assistants, Photographers, dance Gymnastic Swimming Cross Country Athletics Captains, Chapel monitors Noticeboard monitors Debating captains Crusaders Captain
- Rising Generations for Year 6
- Better Buddy Program for Year 4 and 5 where they are the senior Buddy for either K, 1, 2 or 3. Girls trained to assist, monitor and be a good role model
- Prefect program for School Prefects to be linked to a class and visit weekly to assist with learning

The Student Representative Council

The SRC at Ravenswood is composed of students from Years 4-12. These students are nominated and voted by their peers to represent them. In addition we have two School Prefects and a REPA Representative coming to our fortnightly meetings (12 over the year) to ensure there is communication across other aspects of the school community. We invite members of the School Leadership Team to join our meetings and have one of this team visiting most meetings throughout the year. The students elected in Year 10 are mentored by the Year 11 students to be the Chairpersons in their Year 11. This is a planned handover which see them take on more responsibility, starting with Minute taking over the year and then start to run meetings and activities by the end of the year.

As an SRC Representative, students are mentored (by Staff and Senior students) and trained to present information at School Assemblies, Year Group Meetings and to use the various methods of communication available e.g. Daily Notices, Noticeboards, SRC Portal

and Student Reception Box. Templates and procedures are used to assist the students understand how to prepare and use agendas, minutes and proposals. They collate feedback and ensure that it is presented to the appropriate person which may range from the Principal to Head of Department to Canteen Manager. Last year we had the opportunity to run a School Assembly and hope to include this as part of our ongoing responsibilities.

The SRC's focus is the student viewpoint so listening to others, rather than presenting their own viewpoint is an important skill to develop. Many projects investigated and perhaps implemented are based on student ideas. The SRC have been involved with the development of the Mobile Learning Device policy including the consequences for not following the guidelines, promoting asthma awareness and suggested behaviours to improve our interaction at school e.g. no barging in the corridors/stairs, use of spray deodorants, canteen behaviour and greater involvement in the Ravenswood community. There are activities which have become part of the yearly plan. These range from fund raising concerts by teachers and students for external charities, fund raising at the Spring Fair, an International Women's Day activity, acknowledgement of Teachers for World Teacher's Day and the R U OK Day activities. Pablo, the school mascot, is cared for by the SRC and the students are responsible for ensuring he is active at all student events.

In 2013, the SRC will be looking to start a series of events and activities "random acts of kindness" to promote greater awareness of student's kindness and needs and build on the community responsibility. This has been planned throughout 2012 and is to involve students interest in supporting mental health awareness and other interests e.g. preventing violence against women and charities that students raise. In previous years we held training sessions with external programmes, however, in 2013 we are looking to use internal sessions and opportunities to build the student's skills.

Ravenswood Environment Protection Agency

Students are nominated to be elected as a REPA representatives and hold the position for one year during which they attend fortnightly meetings to discuss environmental concerns and initiatives.

In June 2012, REPA hosted a Teen 'What to Wear' Sustainable Fashion Event, supported by 1 Million Women and 10 000 Teens. Year 8 students and visiting students from other schools had the opportunity to be inspired by Bronwyn Darlington, a leading expert on designing and making sustainable fashion, sharing her insights into the real story of what we wear and how we can reduce our carbon footprint through the choices we make; and Liane Rossler - Award Winning Australian Designer and founding partner of the internationally famous Dinosaur Designs, demonstrating techniques for making fab products using recycled materials.

Year 9 Social Justice

The Year 9 Social Justice Team is a voluntary group that provides students with the opportunity to focus on issues of oppression, privilege and social inequalities.

- On the 13 November 2012 the Ravenswood Year 9 Social Justice team visited Loreto Normanhurst to listen to the story of Somaly Mam. She is an inspiring woman who in her life has overcome great hardships. She was trafficked into the sex slave industry in Cambodia at the age of 12 and faced (in her words) "a life without warmth and love" for many years. Somaly Mam, along with an ex Loreto Normanhurst student, has since set up the NGO, Project Futures, and work both in Australia and Cambodia to assist women trapped in the sex slave industry and to help them build a better life.
- 2012 - Visit to Lane Cove Gardens for social activities and lunch with the residents.
- The Year 9 Social Justice Team worked on a project to help long-term unemployed women get jobs, called *Fitted for Work*. Clothing is given to unemployed women, along with interview preparation lessons, to help them acquire jobs and become self-sustainable. Fitted for Work is a not-for-profit volunteer based organisation. The

- Guest Speaker - Matt Godfrey from Urban Neighbours of Hope in Mt Druitt addressed the team in the hope of building strong ties with the Ravenswood community.
- Another major project the Social Justice Team has been working on is *Loose Change for Lifeline*. This project, already involving other schools on the North Shore, allows the girls in the Social Justice Team the opportunity to raise money for Lifeline
- On the 21 September 2011, the Year 9 Social Justice Team helped to raise awareness about the International Day of Peace. At midday the Social Justice Team read a prayer of peace and rang a number of bells around the school. This act helped to promote world peace and harmony within our school community.

Year 9 Social Justice Day

This programme generally involves having a speaker from an Aid Organisation - this year we would like to use a speaker from Uniting World. This was followed by question time and viewing clips from a movie with a Social Justice message - Molakai - the story of Father Damien and the leper colony in Hawaii. Workshops were held - ethical eating and cooking; Banner making; Flash mob on Social Justice Issue; Letter writing for Justice; World Vision 40 Hour Famine launch preparation.

Leadership Development in Year 9: Dare to Lead Conference held at Killara High

The Year 9 Social Justice group were invited to attend a Dare to Lead Seminar on Monday 19 March 2012 at Killara High School. Killara High School hosted Karen Smith from the Aboriginal Heritage Office, North Sydney, for a discussion forum and showed the Close the Gap 2012 DVD from Oxfam. The key theme was "What is this Gap and why should we care?". *Close the Gap* is a programme which aims to give Aboriginal Australians equal rights, health care, education and opportunities. The seminar included various group activities where they addressed serious issues, such as the poor health care and employment opportunities available to Aboriginal people.

Leadership Development in Middle School

The Mentor Group captain is selected to collect information for Student Reception each week.

Each sports team elects a team captain whose main role is to support the team and provide a written report of the game each week.

Leadership within the Senior School (Year 12)

Leadership development opportunities:

- Year 12 Leadership Day involves the whole year group
- Leadership training for leaders (Prefects, Captains) to be commissioned (Term 3)
- Prefect Leadership Training Retreat
- Prefect 'afternoon teas': some take the form of Leadership development.
- St Andrew's Anglican Church Roseville Leadership Forum.

Leadership programs

- AIS Leadership program for Secondary School Captains at NSW Parliament House
- Rising Generations tailored program as part of the Year 12 Leadership Day
- Prefect Leadership Training Retreat
- Senior Leadership Conference - Alliance of Girls Schools.

Experiences that point students beyond interests and towards the common good:

- Support of Cot Effort fund raising activities for each house
- Suzanne Stanton's presentation to Year 12 a part of the Leadership Day.

TEND:

Charity Fund Raising

The school raises tens of thousands of dollars each year for charity through a wide range of activities across all year levels.

- 'Cot Effort' Charity fund raising. This strange title has come to be the blanket term for charity fund raising in the school. Where once groups of girls sponsored a cot in the Children's Hospital, each 'House' group in the school chooses a different charity to support each year and works to raise funds to support that charity.
- Special events such as Lifeline, The Salvation Army and Wesley Mission
- Student leadership in the World Vision 40 Hour Famine
- Lent Event
- Special Annual Charity days - such as Jeans for Genes and raising for special disaster relief appeals, Daffodil Day, Special Olympics, Pink Ribbon Day for Breast Cancer, World's Biggest Morning Tea.
- Shoe-In: collecting school shoes and sending them to country NSW
- Great Book Swap - supporting Indigenous Literacy Day.

Junior School: Social Service Captains - work for nominated charities:

- Puppy Cupcake days - girls work with parents to raise funds for Guide Dog Puppies
- Shoe-In: donation of school shoes for indigenous and country schools program
- Book Swap - donations for Students in need
- Cambodia Picture Book Donation - for children in Cambodia.

Service

Ravenswood takes seriously its responsibility for the formation of young people into responsible citizens in the world. There are both programs for charity fund raising, community service and social justice. The school recognises that to work for social justice in the world, requires people to adopt an attitude of personal and communal social responsibility. Thus whilst charity fund raising may not constitute pure social justice, by engaging students in experiential and immersion opportunities where they can contribute and, better still, work for the good of others the students are encouraged to think beyond their privileged lives and consider the needs of others in society and the world and thus develop positive attitudes and values. To complement this and enhance it, students are provided specific learning programs to assist them to learn about social justice issues and how they might become active advocates. Work towards the common good occurs across faculties, as whole school events, year based projects and individual initiatives as girls follow their passions and use their gifts to help others.

Community Service

Ravenswood students engage in a wide variety of community service.

- Ravenswood offers the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and girls are encouraged to take up this challenge - A mandatory part of each level of the award involves a community service component, with a larger number of hours being required, the higher the level of the award
- International Baccalaureate (IB) - Creativity Action Service CAS component of the course. The service part involves a required number of hours participating in community and social service activities
- Year 9 Social Justice Team.

- The Year 11 Community Involvement Programme enables students to take part in a variety of activities such as visiting Sir Eric Woodward School; visiting the RED Cross Blood Bank; taking part in the Special Olympics; collecting donations of food for the Wesley Mission Food Drive; providing hampers for the Salvation Army Christmas Hamper Appeal; coordinating the 40 Hour Famine and Daffodil Day; selling badges on Legacy Day; visiting aged care residents in Horton House in Gordon; and supporting Teen Variety and Lifeline
- Community Problem Solving in Year 8, 10 and 11
- Special Service Learning Trips - 'Cambodian Immersion' & 'Operation Bula' which are overseas trips where students are engaged in experiential learning and community service. These are often profound life-changing times for the participants and then also become rallying and community points as students share their experience, learning and newly developed passion for issues facing the disadvantaged in the world
- Year 12 Leadership Day - A keynote speaker talks about volunteering and giving time and energy back to the community
- The Student Representative Council
- Promotion of participation in service opportunities such as RUOK Day
- Year 11 students "Knit with Love" with a group from Gordon Uniting Church
- Project Able- work experience opportunities for girls in Year 11 and 12 to work within the disability sector
- Year 9 Commerce students donate one third of their market day stall, an immersion learning project, profits to the house charities and thus learn the values of corporate social responsibility
- The Year 10 Community Service programme.

Community

Ravenswood engages students in many ways that seek to build connections and which foster a sense of community, not only within the school but with the wider society beyond the school perimeter. Community building is not only just about fostering connections, but begins with the formation of the individuals who comprise community and the kinds of values and attitudes that underpin their participation. The school has a comprehensive pastoral care program which seeks.

- The Rite Journey
- Values Education - ethos, Year assemblies
- Harmony Day - Year 5 hold a day once a year where we connect with a Jewish School, an Islamic college and an Armenian school to foster respect and understanding across cultures and religions.

TRANSFORM:

Social Justice

- Social Justice is a key part of the Religious Education program
 - It forms a part of most programs for Secondary School Religious Education, but becomes the focus in Year 9, with teaching and learning units and assignments to help students become aware of and learn about issues of social justice in the world
 - Year 9 Social Justice Day - A day-long incursion where students are engaged by speakers on a range of issues and given opportunity to begin to consider ways that they might continue being active in working for social just in the world
- Visiting Speakers to Chapel and Year Assemblies
- Ravenswood Environmental Protection Agency
- Aboriginal Reconciliation
 - A developed reconciliation action plan
 - Year 9 volunteer at Life for Koori Kids on a Saturday morning and run a reading program there

- We support Jarjum College at Redfern through a range of ways including fund raising, the provision of resources and service to the school
- The Year 11 Community Problem Solving Group
 - o has run a writing competition in our primary school and donated the books produced to Jarjum College
 - o organised book sponsorship and donated boxes of new books to Jarjum for the library
 - o raised over \$4000 and bought a Multi-lit kit and Yawning Strong books for Jarjum with this money
- We celebrate Reconciliation week
- Flying the Aboriginal flag each day
- Ravenswood participated in and provided the venue for the Wontok Youth Poverty & Development Conference hosted by UnitingWorld and Anglicare
- International Women's Day
- White Ribbon Day – A campaign for the end to violence against women
- One Billion Rising – A campaign for the end to violence against women
- Year 9 Social Justice
 - 'Fitted for Work': a project to help long-term unemployed women get jobs through the collection and distribution of women's work clothing
- The Student Representative Council
 - explores how it might encourage the student body to become aware of issues of social justice, and also how it might encourage the student body to participate in activities and advocacy for social justices issues
- The Year 9 Geography excursion promotes a strong sense of cultural tolerance and empathy by taking the students to six distinct communities across Sydney
- The Social Sciences Department and Religious Education is involved in planning how to provide students with workshops on Global inequalities.

IB CAS activities which relate to the Synod report include:

- Operation Bula! international service trip to Fiji (group)
- Volunteering as assistants at the Cerebral Palsy Alliance's Boccia state titles (a ball throwing, Paralympic sport for disabled athletes) (group)
- Connecting with Sydney Youth Engagement (SYE), an organisation harnessing the skills of youth volunteers, facilitated by Loki Ball, NSW Youth Volunteer of the Year (group)
- Activities organised by **individual** CAS students, including: assisting with literacy – Indigenous inner city children; assisting in a school for disabled children; volunteering to feed the homeless; volunteering in hospitals and nursing homes.

The Ravenswood Environmental Protection Agency is in its fourth year, and is made up of students from Years 1 to 12. Our mission is to *"highlight each student's capacity to help protect the environment through small manageable acts, and to generally raise awareness of environmental concerns."* To date many projects have been established.

One main focus has been to reduce our rubbish going to landfill through:

- Encouraging girls to bring bringing rubbish-free lunches to school on Nude Food Days
- Composting of green waste in the Junior School
- Encouraging the use of refillable water bottles facilitated by the sale of a school water bottle
- The sale of and encouragement to use reusable cups, ideal for holding hot beverages
- The sale of and encouragement to use reusable tuckshop order bags
- Budgeting for the installation of a water fountain and water bottle refilling station
- Installing recycling bins in all classrooms throughout the school and in locker areas.

Active participation in Local/National/International Environmental Initiatives

- Earth Hour
- World Environment Day
- Junior School participated in a Northern Sydney Region Waste Free Lunch Schools Challenge. It required an initial and final waste audit – sorting and classifying the contents of all of our general waste bins. Following the audit we introduced our waste reduction strategies and reduced compostables from 9kg to 3kg, general waste from 3kg to 1kg and recyclable rubbish from 2kg to 500g
- One Million Women/10 000 Teens: encouragement for girls to register and be active participants in the challenge to cut their carbon initiatives by 1 tonne in a year
- Hosting of a Teen 'What to Wear' Sustainable Fashion Event, supported by 1 Million Women and 10 000 Teens, focussing on how we can reduce our carbon footprint through the choices we make
- Continuing on this theme we held our second Clothes Swap, where we encouraged girls to swap clothes to save money and the environment. “Reuse is the new black of the fashion world.” (SMH Nov 12-18).

At the Grade/Class Level environmentally focused programs in Science

- Year 2 Clean Up Ravenswood, (Australia) Day.

Other

- Maintain a native bee hive (*Trigona carbonaria*). They work away pollinating our plants and helping girls to establish a positive relationship with an insect rather than reach for the can of Mortein
- In recognition of the importance of environmental sustainability, we have introduced 2 Inter-house Environmental Shields, (one for the Secondary School and one for Junior School) awarded annually to the House which has earned the most environmental House points
- The REPA Telegraph was started in June and is emailed out on a regular basis to communicate environmental issues and initiatives to parents of Junior School students.

Ravenswood supports the local community through access to school facilities. The auditorium is used by Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra and Killara Music Club. The swimming pool is used by Northern Sydney Health and other community groups throughout the year. Lifeline utilises the school premises for its Christmas appeal and is actively supported by the school community with support and donations throughout the year.

Ravenswood provides school facilities for teacher professional development for both Ravenswood and other local schools in cooperation with The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales. Many other organisations such as the NSW Camellia Society and local charities and Arts organisations are assisted through access or support in achieving their aims and goals.

Ravenswood is actively aware of its environmental effect upon the community and has implemented projects to reduce its environmental impact progressively such as; installation of solar panels, solar hot water, LED lighting, a Building Management System in the recently constructed Mabel Fidler Building to minimise the impact of the building. Sustainability is a key feature of the construction and will provide opportunities for students to learn about sustainable design. Water retention for campus irrigation, natural ventilation across specifically designed building floor plates, a floating roof and the large cantilevers of the upper structure provide shade and weather protection to access ways and public spaces. The temperature in the Learning Resource Centre is modified by an air circulation system in the wall cavities that retains warm air in winter and expels it in summer.

TRACTION:

Global Exchange Programme

The school has established reciprocal exchange programmes with a number of girls' and co-educational schools in Canada, England, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and the United States of America. The school has recently established relationships with China and France with a view to students travelling to these countries in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

Scholarships and Bursary programme

Ravenswood offers academic, Music and all-rounder scholarships to girls for entry in Years 7 and 11. In order to be considered for an academic scholarship, applicants must complete a test prepared by ACER. In order to satisfy requirements for application for a Music scholarship, students must sit the ACER test and audition. All rounder scholarship applicants are required to complete an application detailing all their recent achievements. The Ravenswood Old Girls' Union awards scholarships to daughters and granddaughters of old girls for Years 10, 11 and 12. For the first time in 2012, Ravenswood offered two scholarships to girls for accommodation in the Ravenswood Residential College for Years 10, 11 and 12.

From time to time, and at the discretion of the Principal, the school offers bursaries to families in financial need.

Financial Stewardship

The Principal and School Council supported by the Finance Committee, Head of Business Services and Finance Department provide prudent financial stewardship of the school's human and physical resources. The school operates within the framework of a 5 year Strategic Plan. Beneath this lies a Financial Plan, ICT Strategic Plan and Masterplan for the use and development of the school's buildings and grounds.