

## How did One Day School start?

Back in the 1990s, very few teachers had had any training in working with gifted learners. There was no official requirement for their needs to be met. There was no established organisation to teach teachers about gifted children. The NZAGC, essentially a parent organisation, did a sterling job, but with no Ministry backing, it was limited in what could do.

In 1995, Rosemary Cathcart, a teacher and advisor with experience in the field, decided the answer lay in setting up a specialist gifted centre to “make gifted education visible”. Thus the George Parkyn Centre for Gifted Education was born. Over the following years the Centre organised workshops throughout New Zealand, provided advisory support for parents and schools, ran conferences with international speakers.

But even schools wanting to help were often restricted by their numbers and their resources. Somehow there needed to be some way to bring gifted children to a central location to learn together and to find acceptance and companionship. And so the One Day School was created.

Its first classes began with just 40 children. Its first home was the underground crypt of St Alban’s Church in Dominion Rd in Auckland, and then next door into the church hall, complete with a possum in the roof and a wiring system that occasionally let rain in through the wall switches. With no money, resources were garnered from book fairs, op shops, recycling centres and parent donations. The Salvation Army offered a discount on furniture. Later venues ranged from an ex-Army camp to a fire station.

Yet it worked. Against this extraordinary background, Rosemary and her colleague Marilyn Stafford set about creating a programme to meet the very different learning needs of gifted children. Based on Rosemary’s earlier work, they developed a programme which recognised that giftedness helped shape every aspect of the child’s perceptions and experience, including their very different approaches to learning.

Soon the programme began to attract more and more children, ultimately having a roll of almost 600 children at venues in different parts of the country, and, with schools having discovered the value of the programmes, able to access the use of standard classroom spaces. (Though the children missed those earlier unique homes!)

Rosemary’s work evolved into the courses she provides today for teachers from throughout New Zealand and from various other countries, but she is delighted to have the opportunity to return to her One Day School involvement.