

The student returns to teach...

When Shelley Dowell entered Rossmoyne Primary as a grade five student in 1968 it was the start of a connection that continues to this day as a grade six teacher. When we come together on November 20 to celebrate the school's 50th anniversary, Mrs Dowell will have a unique claim to have been at the school almost at both ends of its 50 years.

"It was a really happy place to be in, the whole community was friendly and welcoming", Mrs Dowell recalled. "When I came back as a teacher those memories came flooding back - it still has the same friendly feeling it did when I was a little girl. It's got a real village feel to it which might have something to do with being tucked away off the main highway and bordered by the river. A lot of people stay in the area and others who move away seem to gravitate back here."

The appearance of the school was not markedly different to what it is now. The major changes have been the addition of the covered assembly area in 1995, the library in 2001 and the new classrooms on the upper level in 2010. Other differences included larger class sizes, no pre-primary and what was termed "cross-setting", or what we might call now "streaming" whereby children changed classes in the morning based on their ability levels in numeracy and literacy to be taught by different teachers. Assembly was in the quadrangle and an end-of-year concert was held on the oval. The children were possibly a bit tougher then too. Mrs Dowell remembers athletics in bare feet that picked up a few prickles and the high jump had a solid aluminium bar and sand below which together formed a hard landing for the descent.

Among Mrs Dowell's best memories was being a "tea monitor" - washing up the teachers' cups, saucers and plates in the staff room. The reward was that they were able to eat any of the teachers' leftover food.

At the end of Mrs Dowell's first year the principal, John McArthur, retired and was succeeded by Boyd Anderson. Mrs Dowell must be one of the very few currently serving teachers whose current principal is the child of their principal when they were a student at the same school. She clearly made a positive impression on Mr Anderson because he announced at the end-of-year concert that she was to be school captain in 1970. Mrs Dowell capped off her final year by being Blue faction captain and runner-up girls athletics champion.

She followed the educational path of so many former Rossmoyne Primary School students over what was then High Road to Rossmoyne Senior High School where she met current Rossmoyne Primary teachers, Mrs Banks and Mrs Marshall. There too she was inspired by some great teachers to herself become a teacher, specialising in physical education. She taught at various Perth schools as well as at the littleWheatbelt town of Yerecoin. But like so many other people whose careers had taken them away from the area. Mrs Dowell moved back to Rossmoyne to rejoin her old school as a relief teacher in 2007.



Ms Dowell coaching Year 6 soccer