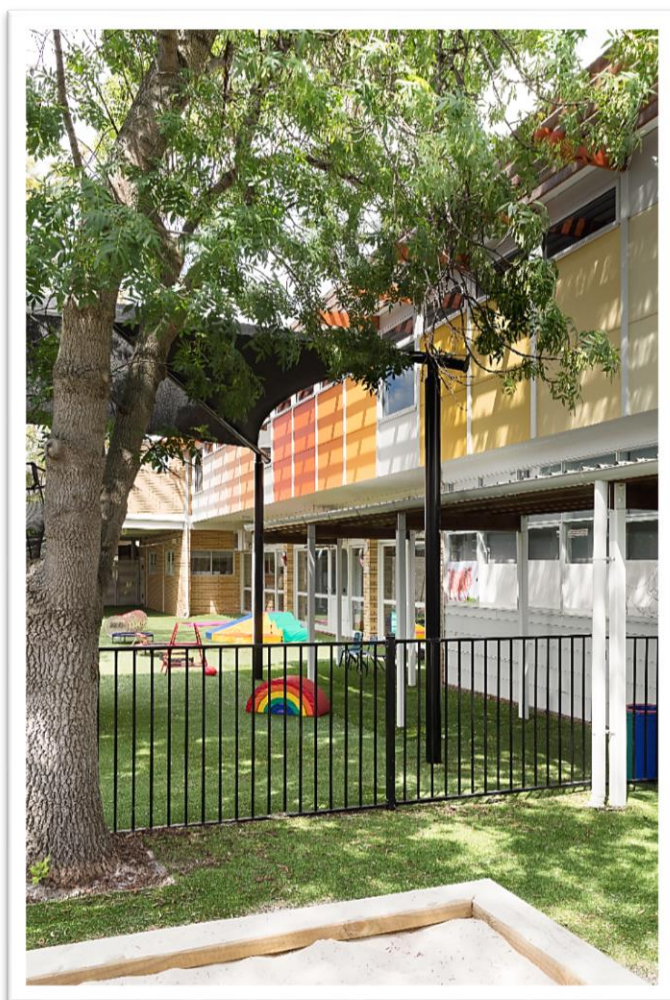


Giant Steps Melbourne

Annual Report



imagine • include • innovate

2019

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Contextual information about the school

Giant Steps Melbourne (GSM), located in Kew, is a school for children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. It opened in February 2016, initially supporting 11 students. In 2019 the school has 21 students enrolled aged between 6 and 19 years old. The school is registered as a Specialist Co-Educational School.



Outdoor fun

GSM's program is designed and delivered by teachers and therapists working collaboratively to develop the students' engagement, social connectivity, as well as skills and knowledge. GSM was established due to the overwhelming demand for the education and therapy program established in our sister school, Giant Steps Sydney (GSS).



Student taking part in Music Therapy

The Sydney school, located in Gladesville and established in 1995, has grown to now offer a range of additional services to best support students, their families and the wider community.



Dance and balance in the classroom

Further information regarding the history and context of both schools can be found at:

Website: www.giantsteps.net.au

For further information visit the Autism Hub:

<https://giantsteps.net.au/the-autism-hub/>

Street Address:

11 Malmsbury Street

Kew Vic 3101

Principal's Report

2019 saw expansion for GSM. One of the defining milestones was the launch of our unique VCAL Senior Secondary Program. The Foundation Level program, tailored to the individual needs of students with moderate to severe autism, provided unique learning opportunities for our senior students to experience.

Our program embedded the VCAL Foundation units within the set up and running of a social enterprise called PAWS for Giant Steps. Senior students were provided with hands on opportunities to become immersed in all facets of operating a small business including designing, making, marketing and selling dog treats.



Paws Pop-Up Shop

The implementation of this program is a significant shift in developing our students' knowledge and skills relating to the workplace. The structured tasks and experiences allowed our senior students to branch out into the community as well as engage with a tertiary vocational provider to learn valuable and accredited hospitality skills.



Learning to use the coffee machine

The overall outcomes for each student has been wonderful to see, particularly observing their increased engagement in social opportunities and their growing self-confidence in participating in the program activities.

In 2018 our staff retention was high and further growth in 2019 included the addition of a new teacher, an occupational therapist and two educators. This supported the increase of an additional 5 students, 30% growth on the following year, further refinement of the school program, as well as the running of the new Senior Secondary Program, VCAL.

In our fourth year of operation, GSM secured a significant Federal Funding Grant to increase our school's footprint by over three fold. On 11th April 2019, The Hon Josh Frydenberg, Treasurer of Australia and the Federal Minister for Education, Dan Tehan announced a \$9.7 million grant.

The capital works project will allow the development of learning areas, therapy areas, playground facilities, designated staff and training facilities on the adjoining Kew site. These will be explicitly designed for students with complex needs to support learning and engagement.



Student using our smartboard practice hand writing

The design will also support close collaboration of the professional team implementing the program. This extraordinary expansion project will allow the school community to fast track our ability to respond to the high demand for young people across the autism spectrum who will benefit from an expanded Secondary Program and the introduction of Post-School services. The grant will mean approximately 100 children and young adults will benefit from the unique and successful Giant Steps program. Our professional development priority in 2019 was to enhance the knowledge and skills of our Teacher's

Aide or Educators. Within our team, GSM has nine Educators, making up 50% of the overall team working side by side with the students.

Based on the success of our Sydney's school experience, the introduction of an Educator Competency Framework underpins their individual professional development in understanding and developing skills within their important role. This competency framework, created by GSS, is completely in line with the AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

GSM is very grateful for the work by the Sydney team and Estelle Lewis from Independent Schools Accreditation Authority NSW in the delivery of this program and assisting our Educators in moving across the competency bands.



Board Members Amanda Coombs and Jessica Stimson

As always, we are grateful for the ongoing commitment of our Melbourne School Board. Since the establishment of the school in 2016, they have helped the school be agile, both focused on delivering the best program for our existing students as well as pursuing valuable opportunities to physically expand at an extraordinary rate in order to support more families in need.

Thanks also to our families for their ongoing efforts in raising all the necessary funds through the numerous fundraising events and opportunities.



Giant Dinner 2019

Finally, a special mention to the wonderful Melbourne team. It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside a warm, passionate, dedicated team of professionals.



Superhero – Staff of 2019

They have not only made an amazing difference in the care and education of each of the Melbourne students but they inspire creativity and resilience in each other that has made Giant Steps Melbourne a wonderful educational institution. Congratulations team!



Ms Trish Karedis
Principal,
Giant Steps Melbourne



Ms Claire Allen
National Director of
Finances and Administration

The Rob Llewellyn-Jones Clinical Centre

In 2019, the Rob Llewellyn-Jones Clinical Centre started its first full year of operation in Melbourne. During this year we held 6 onsite clinic days, with families also accessing phone consults during Melbourne clinic days for a total of 43 appointments for 10 students.

The clinic operates onsite at GSM, with our visiting psychiatrist and key Sydney staff working collaboratively to see students within the school environment which could be the classroom, playground, out on walks or wherever their timetable has taken them.

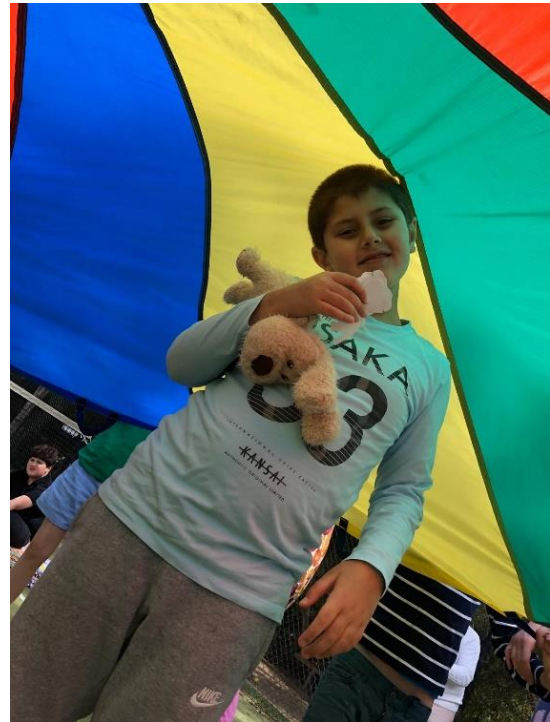
This ability to keep students in their daily program has given the clinic team a clearer understanding of how students are day to day as well as allowing them to see a range of activities and transitions. Some students required regular appointments, while others can have a review each term.



The clinic team includes Sydney consultant psychiatrist Dr Peter Wurth, myself and Andrew Frakes, Head of Occupational Therapy.

The key benefits to the onsite clinic are:

- Students not needing to leave school to access hospitals, doctors surgeries or clinics
- Shorter wait times for an initial appointment
- Longer appointment times available with regular follow ups available
- Collaborative care from a highly experienced psychiatric team
- Input from home and school with high levels of data monitoring to assist with decision making
- Decreased student and family stress



The presence of the clinic at GSM continues to facilitate dialogue about mental health by both families and staff, and the need to consider it as an essential component to our students' wellbeing. The clinic and how we support our student's complex needs discussed at length with staff, families and external agencies who visit the site.



Helen Appleton
National Director of Student, Family and Psychological Services

Secondary Program

In 2019 the Secondary Program consisted of 6 students aged 16-19 years of age with a range of abilities and needs. Five students commenced the first year of their two year VCAL VET course. One student worked on an individual program. No students graduated in 2019.

The Secondary Program is designed to best support the students as they progress through an important stage of development, the move from being teenagers into young adults. The program also helps prepare students for life beyond GSM.

There were several themed units of work providing enriching and exciting teaching and learning opportunities. The newly-accredited VCAL framework provided students with a new experience of the curriculum, designed by Verity Harvey. This program established "PAWS for Giant Steps" a dog-biscuit business run by the students.



Paws for Giant Steps Launch Party. Verity Harvey VCAL Designer and Kerrie Nelson National Director of Schools and Colleges

As part of the VCAL course students:

- In Literacy, students completed units such as "Presentation Package" and "Business Meeting" which helped them to develop skills necessary to start to understand business mechanics.
- In Numeracy sessions such as "Maths Matters", "Navigate and Shop" and "Cooking and Catering" supported students to understand other elements of the supply chain for their business.
- In Personal Development Skills sessions such as "Pop up Stall" and "Let's Party" saw students plan and host a Launch Party for their business, inviting members of the school community to a night of presentations and celebration.
- In Work-related Skills sessions included lessons called "Community Garden" and "Employ Me" which started to teach the students the basics of

managing themselves in work place environments.

Students also commenced a Certificate I in Hospitality at Box Hill TAFE one day a week.



Students at Box Hill TAFE

In its fourth year, the Secondary Camp returned to the Mornington Peninsula. Our five senior-VCAL students participated in a variety of leisure activities and tourist sites were selected according to the students' interests and abilities. The camp provided ongoing opportunities for the students to build peer relationships with each other as well as with the young volunteers acting as 'buddies'.



Senior Camp Bushwalking Activity

The camp was organised in partnership with Flying Fox and due to their commitment and passion, our students had a wonderful experience. The Senior Camp allowed a motivating break from the regular school program whilst providing different challenges in a safe environment. Sleeping away from home and family is often a significant challenge and a wonderful achievement.



*Sam Kershler
Secondary Teacher*

Primary

The 2019 Primary Program consisted of 13 students across four classes. The class programs incorporated a selection of units of work delivering the Victorian Curriculum Learning Areas. Learning within the classroom as well as accessing the community play an integral part of the teaching and learning programs at GSM.



Super Hero Dress up Day

Morning Meeting, Handwriting, Working with Words and Library were the constant units of work allowing primary students to continue to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy. Additional themed units of work for the year included 'Aussie Authors', 'Superheroes', 'Holidays' and 'Backyard Blitz'. These teaching and learning activities offered opportunities for students to generalise these skills within new and motivating topic areas. The weekly shopping experiences in the community allowed opportunity for students to continue to develop and practice functional life skills. This aspect of the program was very important as typically families of primary aged students still require assistance with developing their child's awareness of road safety and ability to deal with external and less routine environments.

Another key component of the Primary Program was the 'Becoming Me' unit, placed in the Health and Physical Education part of the curriculum. The unit of work focused on several areas including, self-care, basic human anatomy, appropriate types of contact and the 'circles program'. The latter two help students understand appropriate types of contact they can have with family, friends, helpers and strangers. While in self-care lessons, students work on a variety of skills including teeth brushing, hair maintenance and handwashing, all requiring explicit instruction and support from our occupational therapist (OT). Our OT's help design individualised strategies taking into account sensory considerations and developing the motor planning skills of the students. While 'Games and Structured Play' and 'Backyard games' allowed students to develop fundamental motor skills, turn taking and game sense. 'Shopping' and 'My House' were the units of work in the learning areas of the humanities and

science. Once again, engagement in these teaching and learning activities opened up wider experiences for the students. This included weekly visits to local supermarkets, grocers, bakeries and online shopping allowing students to experience shopping across different environments, helping to consolidate their understanding of their broader world.



Swimming classes at Richmond Leisure Centre

The Primary Program incorporated outdoor and physical pursuits including swimming at Richmond Leisure Center and hiking the Yarra River trail to observe the local 'flying fox' colony. The opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with different settings often is an important individual goal for students. The development of such physical skills, creates greater opportunity for students to access the community for leisure with parents and carers.



*Dale Rugachwa
Teacher*



*Luke Evans
Teacher*



*Albert Orr
Teacher*



*Alisha Hopkins
Teacher*



*Angela Townsend
Teacher*

The majority of our primary students over the age of 10 participated in the Flying Fox camp on the Mornington Peninsula. Students were able to stay for two nights, many experiencing their first night away from home. With the support of both Flying Fox and GSM staff, students participated in trampolining, swimming, hiking, shopping and bowling. While an essential part of the camp experience is completing self-care skills and experiencing new social situations with support from a buddy. Camps continue to be a priority as they offer experiences in line with what other schools provide for typically developing students.

Occupational Therapy at School



The OT Room at Giant Steps Melbourne

The Occupational Therapy program for 2019 focussed on Activities of Daily Living (ADL) by welcoming a hairdresser onsite. This can sometimes be a distressing experience for some students, however, by working on this skill with clear expectations can build confidence and resilience within the task. Strategies utilised during this process are visual forewarning paired with a haircutting song, practising the skill with familiar adults prior to the hairdresser coming onsite and visual expectations for the students to reference during the task. This allowed students to build and develop the tolerance of having a haircut with the long term goal of some students getting their hair cut in a salon.



On site Hairdresser for students

During 2019, there was an emphasis on assisting families with their NDIS planning meetings. Ongoing assessments and quality report writing assisted families to identify goals for their children.

In Second Semester, we welcomed Deli Winthrop to GSM as a new Occupational Therapist. The Occupational Therapists continue to have ongoing supervision and strong collaboration with the Sydney school to advance professional development. In November the Occupational Therapy team continued to develop and consolidate their knowledge by attending Professional Development courses.



Balance practice in the OT Room

In 2019 we offered placement opportunities for students at Australian Catholic University for the first time to share knowledge and support training within the field of autism and education, we look forward to building this relationship further in the future.



Sarah Bylart
Occupational Therapist



Deli Winthrop
Occupational Therapist

Speech Therapy at School

Speech Therapy continued to be integrated as part of a transdisciplinary approach to each child's educational program at GSM.



Setting up my day with a visual schedule

The continued focus for speech therapy is on developing each student's functional communication skills, including supporting students to express their needs, wants, ideas, likes and dislikes, for example, using multiple modes of communication. Speech therapists, in collaboration with GSM staff and families, use a framework to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the individualised expressive communication needs of each student and select and implement strategies and systems to support expressive communication including Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) options.



Insects and Science

The types of systems vary according to each child, and usually involve multiple modes of communication, such as picture or object exchange, picture or photo books, 'talkers' (devices with picture/text to speech output), speech and gesture. Each student at GSM has an individualised expressive communication profile which identifies focus pragmatic messages and student specific strategies and supports for implementation.

In addition to expressive communication, the social communication needs of our students continues to be a priority. Finding opportunities within both structured and un-structured interactions to build social reciprocity, joint attention, adjust actions, turn take and share emotions are essential foundation skills for building meaningful and authentic communication. The comprehension skills of the students continues to be supported as we consider how to develop their understanding of instructions and questions following a functional hierarchy. This is an essential building block in supporting student learning, engagement in the curriculum and meaningful expressive communication.



Playing card games

In 2019, two of our therapists at GSM were successfully accredited by the Independent Schools Teacher Accreditation Authority (ISTAA) at the next career stage, using the Professional Standards for Therapists in Schools developed by Giant Steps in conjunction with ISTAA. Congratulations to Sarah Bylart who was successfully accredited as a proficient therapist and Catherine Haining as an experienced therapist.



Rachael Bowen
National Director of Speech Therapy

Music Therapy at School

The music program for 2019 focused on music from the genres Latin and Jazz as well as songs and showstoppers from musicals. The students enjoyed learning some well-known jazz standards and explored the concept of improvisation as a form of self-expression on instruments as well as 'scatting' during voice work activities. Students also learnt some Latin inspired dance moves and were provided with opportunities to dance with peers and adults to foster social communication skills.



Making Music

In Second Semester, the students learnt songs and dances inspired by Musicals. The students really seemed to enjoy the theatrical and visual element of songs from musicals and many of the students began to explore and extend their repertoire of music they listened to.



Piano session



Dance and Movement

Towards the end of 2019, a group of students from the school attended a production of 'Seussical The Musical' at Xavier College. This experience was incredibly positive and really brought the theme and understanding of musicals to life.



Catherine Haining
Director of Therapy
Giant Steps Melbourne

Workforce composition

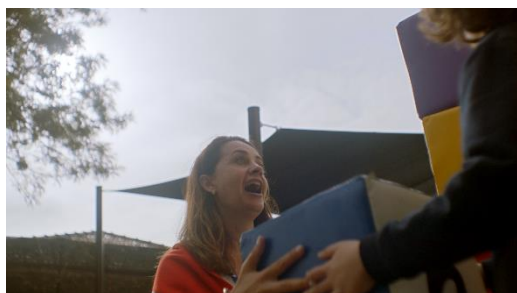
In 2019 staffing was stable across all areas – teachers, educators, therapists, and administration. The transdisciplinary model of staff working and planning together continues to gain strength. Collaborative efforts are the key to success. Teachers, therapists and educators work alongside each other, learning to combine their skills to produce programs that target student's individual needs across a range of contexts and student groupings.



Giant Steps Melbourne Staff

TOTAL STAFF NUMBERS		
	No. of Staff	FTE
Principal	1	1
Teachers	6	4.6
Therapists	4	4
Educators / Teachers' Aides	8	6.2
Administration	2	1.8
Total Staff	21	17.6

No staff identified themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.



Building towers

Details of all teaching staff

CATEGORY	# of Teachers
Teachers who have teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines, or	6
Teachers who have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognised within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications, or	Nil
Teachers who do not have qualifications as described in (a) and (b) but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context (Manual P.39)	Nil

Staff Retention Rates

Teachers	74%
Therapists	100%
Educators	100%
Administration	100%



Arts and Crafts

Of the 21 staff that were employed at the beginning of the year, two resigned. One full time staff member and one part time staff member moved overseas. This accounts for the average teacher retention rate of 74% across GSM.

Professional Development

In 2019 Giant Steps staff were involved in 582 hours of professional development across the year. The number of courses attended throughout 2019 totalled 19 across the following areas:-

- Safe & Supportive Schools
- Autism & Related Courses
- Curriculum - Communication
- IT
- Student Engagement



Literacy in the classroom

Average Professional Learning Hours per staff member – 28 hours per annum



Community Access

The Professional Development program supports the skill level of the staff and subsequently the level of staff satisfaction. This program also adds to the high retention rate of staff including teachers, therapists, educators and administrative support.

Course list:

- Anaphylaxis Training
- Aspiring Leaders
- Child Protection
- CPR Training
- Curriculum Development
- Epilepsy
- Essentials – Routines
- Essentials – Visual Supports
- Engagement Data
- Giant Steps Inductions 2019 – New Staff
- ICT in the Classroom
- Initial Lit Course
- Management of Actual and Potential Aggression (MAPA) Training
- Mental Health Clinic and Data Collection
- Midazolam Training
- OHS Meeting
- OT Course – Sensory PD
- Protecting Children – mandatory reporting
- Principal's Course (ISV())
- Reportable Conduct Scheme – VIC
- Senior First Aid
- Supervision Webinar placement of students
- Stage 1 Quality Assurance
- Stage 2 Quality Assurance
- Student Engagement Support – Tier 1
- Therapist Accreditation
- Time Management
- Toileting
- VASS Training
- VCAL explained
- VCAL Induction Program for New Providers



OH&S Fire Drill

Student attendance and retention rates in Secondary school

Student Population	
Primary	15
Secondary	6

In 2019 the school enrolled 21 students aged 6-19 years of age. No students graduated from GSM in 2019. Retention of students in a special school setting is not an overarching goal.

Decisions to transition students into other educational settings are always made within the context of an Individual Planning Process involving key personnel, parents and caregivers. Retention rates are not a useful measure in that they do not reflect the integration/inclusion focus of the school program.

The school, due to the small number of students does not report attendance rates against grades as there may only be one student per grade. The average attendance rate is reported on a per year basis for the school. **The attendance rate is very stable and high across the year with an average attendance rate of 98.24%.** The majority of students have five days absent in any one year, usually due to illness, challenging behaviour or issues with transport to and from school.

The school implements policy and procedures for the management of student nonattendance with parents on an ongoing basis through the Daily Diary. The school follows up where written explanation of absence is not received from the parents. Absences are monitored and parent meetings are held to resolve the non-attendance. Mandatory reporting procedures apply where absences are extended or the student may be at risk.



Senior Secondary outcomes

The Secondary school consisted of one class comprising of 5 students aged 17-19 years of age.



Box Hill Course TAFE Hospitality Course

Enrolment policies and characteristics of the student body

In 2019 the school enrolled 21, students aged 6-19 years of age. The student population are from a very wide and diverse background and includes students with a language background other than English. The school population is drawn from the greater Melbourne metropolitan area.

The demand for enrolment at Giant Steps continues to increase with the majority of applications coming from families wanting an educational service that includes autism friendly teaching strategies combined with therapy services delivered within a curriculum framework.

The school population breakdown is as follows:

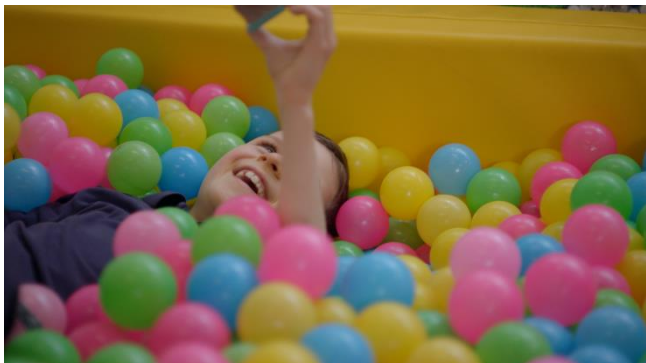
Student Population	
Primary	15
Secondary	6
Total Males	15
Total Females	6
Student Total	21

Ratio of 1 female: 4 males is the usual ratio for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder. No student identified themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Student performance in national and state wide tests and examinations

Victorian Certificate of Education

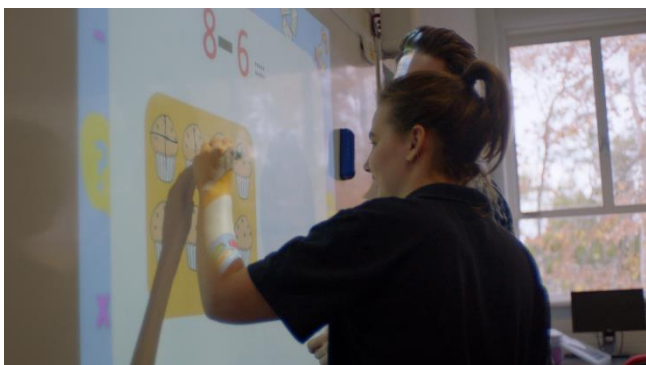
No students were eligible for the VCE with five students partaking in VCAL.



Relaxing in the ball pit in GSM OT Room

Literacy & Numeracy Assessments

In 2019 no students participated in the state-wide or national testing. All students had an Individual Plan with a particular focus on the communication outcomes.



Student participating in Numeracy lesson

The school uses a range of assessment procedures some administered directly by teaching staff others administered by Speech and Occupational Therapy staff at school assess *for learning* and at regular intervals do assessments *of learning*.



The goals for the IP are developed using a collaborative team approach including teachers, therapist and parents. The goals are then interpreted and matched with outcomes within the English syllabus documents as well as the Communication Support document.

Specific indicators are developed to match the skill level of the child and these are regularly reported against. In all curriculum areas this collaborative process applies.



Students in Music class

In 2019, in collaboration with our Sydney School a research project with Massey University and Griffith University is underway developing literacy assessments for children with limited language.

School Improvement Plan



Outside play lessons

1. Secured \$9.7 million Federal Funding Grant to increase school enrolment capacity by building new facilities including a College.

Outcome: Plans are being finalised and building is scheduled to commence 2020.



The Hon Josh Frydenberg, Treasurer of Australia and the Federal Minister for Education, Dan Tehan

2. Ensure smooth transition for the students and team into the newly renovated facilities occupying the first floor.

Outcome: New facilities allowed student numbers to increase to 21 by the end of the 2019.

3. School holiday program, providing additional respite services to families and more recreational options to our students were held each holiday period throughout the year.

Outcome: Families continued to make use of the Holiday program with a growing demand by more families with many gaining access to more of the 18 day program across the school year

4. VCAL program commenced in 2019 with Box Hill TAFE as a partner

Outcome: 5 senior students attended Box Hill TAFE on a weekly basis and commenced their VET Hospitality Certificate 1 Course

5. Completed developing the professional skills of a small team to drive the Student Engagement Support capabilities within the school

Outcome: Data collection continues to be collected for Student Engagement and Emotional Regulation and are embedded into Melbourne junior and senior school program

6. Melbourne therapists completed the competency framework from our Sydney school.

Outcome: Two therapists completed accreditation in 2018 - one awarded Experienced Level of accreditation and the other Proficient Level of accreditation.

7. Provide support to families involved in the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Melbourne

Outcome: Close to 60% of families progressed with the rollout of NDIS Scheme and required support from the school



Fox River Walk

Priorities for 2020

1. Complete detailed design of new buildings and engage builders, obtain all permits to commence build in December 2020
2. Increase Primary School enrolments
3. Develop Post-school programme for young adults with complex needs and develop transition program
4. Review of the school process VRQA, due June 2020

Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

GSM works in partnership with a number of schools from the public and independent sectors in Melbourne. Through community participation days and inclusion experiences, it supports the development of skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes in relation to students with disabilities.

For Giant Steps students there is a program to teach and develop social foundation skills for all our students across a range of environments. These programs are developed and implemented at a class, individual and whole school level.



Cooking in the purpose built school kitchen

The school has been very active developing networks with other educational providers to invite them to visit or work alongside our team on site thus sharing professional knowledge of supporting students with ASD in educational settings. GSM staff works across agencies to develop partnerships in order to increase the opportunities for our student body.



Yarra Bend Walk

For students at GSM respect and responsibility is promoted and actively taught as students learn to function within the context of a group. Even the most simple of examples, such as waiting for your turn or not pushing into a line, understanding that you may need to be aware of oncoming pedestrian traffic and adjust your walking line. In each and every activity throughout the school there is a focus on students understanding the perspective of another and for children with autism this is a core deficit. In all teaching programs respect and responsibility is actively taught so that our students are able to successfully participate in the full range of community activities.



Daily Walk

In 2019 GSM hosted a number of students on Community Service or Work Experience programs from local schools such as Xavier College, Mount Scopus, and St Kevin's College.

GSM students also attend holiday camps set up by Flying Fox and Xavier College. These holiday programs are wonderful opportunities for students with autism to experience a camp activity.

Student Welfare

Providing the safest learning environment possible for our children is the utmost priority of GSM. Our organization adheres to and acknowledges the Victorian Child Safe Standards and is committed to ZERO tolerance for abuse or discrimination of a child in any circumstance.

Children with a disabilities, including intellectual disabilities and autism, are particularly vulnerable to abuse and discrimination. We have extra safeguards in place to ensure these vulnerable children continue to have a safe environment.



Reading outside

GSM recognises that each and every child has individual vulnerabilities and capabilities and ensures that all of its students have a voice in respect of their own safety.

In 2019, more families were supported in the ongoing rollout of the NDIS scheme in Melbourne. This required the school to help families prepare for the planning process and make decisions about the appropriate supports required for their child and family. Families needed supporting documentation from therapists, as well representation from the school in meetings. This support has enabled those families, involved in the initial or review process within the NDIS scheme, to access opportunities and funds to further support the student's development and wellbeing and provide stability of the family unit.

GSM is committed to ensuring our children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. The school has clear Policies and Procedures which ensure Giant Steps Melbourne is a Child Safe School in supporting the welfare of students.



Ball pit fun

Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

Giant Steps Melbourne surveys all staff and parents. Both staff and parent satisfaction remained solid in 2019 and showed an overall maintenance of satisfaction levels.

Student satisfaction is not surveyed formally due to the students' variable ability however parents act as strong advocates for their child within the survey and respond to questions on behalf of students.



Practicing taking turns

Curriculum

The Victorian Curriculum seeks to be inclusive of all students regardless of their level of need. Giant Steps Melbourne staff constantly work to develop authentic and functional learning and learning experiences that engage, motivate and challenge our students. Teachers and Therapists in 2019 reflected and refined learning opportunities which are sustainable and meaningful, and integrated both educational and therapy goals for all students. Again this year, we continued to develop those opportunities which allow greater levels of independence and participation in community life.



Smartboard

The school particularly seeks to develop the social development and active learning of our students, both core elements underpinning the Victorian Curriculum. The teachers and therapists work diligently to achieve these goals by incorporating important knowledge of how students with autism learn best in their planning and implementation of the curriculum within the school program. Staff are highly committed and seek to ensure their student's programs are both fun and enjoyable but above all build on their needs to understand their world.



Kew Library Visit

Summary

In 2019, the school has well and truly transitioned from a new school to a more established school. The school's efforts on a number of fronts are now recognised. This includes achieving significant progress for each of our students via our educational and therapy programs. The ongoing work around the Mental Health Clinic, Holiday Program and newly introduced Siblings activities have rounded off the day to day school program with services positively received by our families. It has also sustained relationships with schools from other sectors and increased awareness of our school's expertise further afield. In 2019, GSM supported more community service programs for a number of secondary students across the year as well been invited as an Educational Leader during the 2019 Deloitte 'Courageous Australia' Program.

The \$9.7 million Federal Grant to the school has acknowledged the necessity of quality services for families with students with special needs in Victoria. It is exciting for Giant Steps Melbourne to add significant value in the education sector, both directly to families as well as supporting future training for teachers caring for students across the autism spectrum. We hope initiatives like the PAWS for Giant Steps will be just one of many successful case studies challenging the boundaries and opening up exciting and fulfilling pathways for those living with autism.

GSM is always focussed on the ongoing progress and care of our students and development of our team. We are appreciative of those who support us, including all levels of government, private donors and corporations and the wider community. Their willingness and commitment provides the essential foundation for us to engage with the wider community, advocate for students with special needs, and broaden opportunities for them to thrive.



Ms Trish Karedis
Principal

Summary financial information

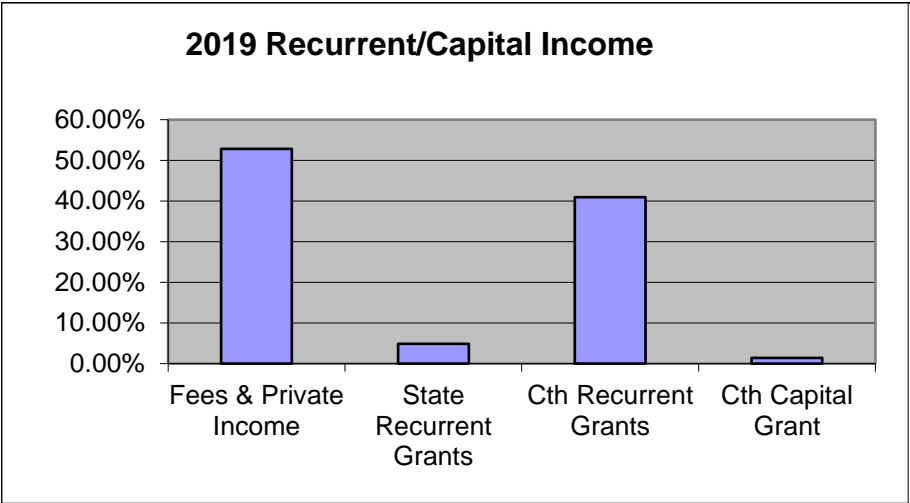
Giant Steps Melbourne is a registered Charity and a Public Benevolent Institution. Each year Giant Steps has a full financial audit conducted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

Giant Steps does not charge fees and in 2019 received over 45% of revenue from donations, fundraising appeals and support from community organisations and companies.

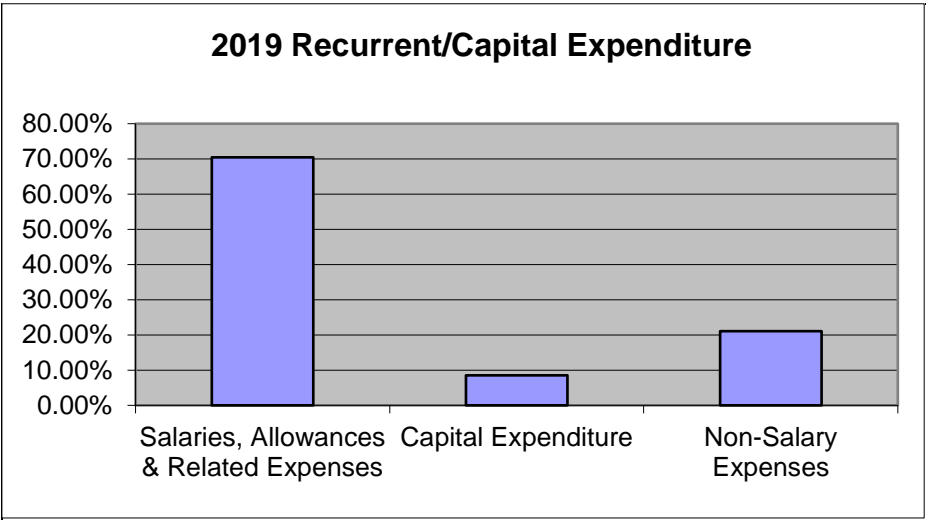


Summary financial information

(a) Graphic one: recurrent/capital income represented by column chart
Please note: Giant Steps does not charge School fees



(b) Graphic two: recurrent/capital expenditure represented by column chart



POLICY AND PROCEDURES

School Enrolment Policy

Giant Steps Melbourne is a Specialist Co-educational F-10 School providing an education for students who have a primary diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. The School operates and is registered through the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority. All applications will be processed in order of receipt and consideration will be given to the applicant's support for the ethos of the school, diagnosis, and other criteria determined by the school from time to time.

Once enrolled, students are expected to support the school's ethos and comply with the school rules to maintain the enrolment.

Enrolment Policy can be found at <http://www.giantsteps.net.au/enrolment>



Procedures

- All applications should be processed within the school's enrolment policy.
- Consider each applicant's supporting statement/ interview responses regarding their ability and willingness to support the school's ethos.
- Consider each applicant's educational needs. To do this, the school will need to gather information and consult with the parents/family and other relevant persons.
- Identify any strategies which need to be put into place to accommodate the applicant before a decision regarding the enrolment is made.
- Inform the applicant of the outcome.

School Policies

All Policies, Guidelines and Procedures are available in full text on My School (intranet), Operational Handbook and by request. All Policies, Procedures and Guidelines are reviewed on as required.

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee also review policies and procedures in the OHS area and provide training for staff through the Whole School

Meetings – including Professional Learning session for all staff.

- Anaphylaxis Management
- Anti-Bullying
- Attendance
- Assessment
- Code of Conduct
- Code of Ethics
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Communication Bill of Rights
- Child Safe
- Complaints and Grievances
- Diversity and Equity
- Discipline Policy
- Distributing Medicine
- Dress Code
- Enrolment Process
- Equal Opportunity
- First Aid
- Gender Identity
- Infection Control
- Leave
- Medication
- Mandatory Reporting
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Record Management
- Reportable Conduct
- Student Behaviour Management
- Student Welfare
- Use of Internet, Email and Electronic Facilities
- Safe and Supportive Environment

School Guidelines

- Alcohol
- Anti-discrimination
- Anti-harassment
- Asthma
- Workplace Attire
- Communication Protocol
- Copyright
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Electrical Safety
- Epilepsy
- Hazardous Materials
- Injuries to Staff
- Injuries to Students
- Toileting
- Injury Management Plan
- Missing Students
- Evacuation
- Lead Safe
- Playground Supervision
- Privacy
- Professional Attitude

- Return to Work Coordinator
- Return to Work Program
- Smoking
- Staff Mobile Phones
- Student Reports
- Student Sickness
- Sun Protection
 - Sunscreen
- Unwanted Visitors
- Visitors
- Volunteers
- Extreme Heat Guidelines
- Lockdown

School Procedures

- Administering Medication
- Assembly Points and Access to Emergency Equipment
- Bomb Threat
- Buildings and Grounds
- Crisis Management
- Early Pick-up of Students
- Education & Financial Reporting
- Employment Screening
- Excursions
- Emergency Management Plan
- Individual Plans
- Late Arrival of Students
- Lead Safe
- Lockout, Lockdown & Evacuation
- Medical Treatment for Students
- OHS Maintenance Work
- Reporting Procedures
- Removal of Ignitable Material
- Safe Storage of Flammable Materials
- Storage and Maintenance of Equipment
- School Operation
- Student Files

Policies

Policies for:

- Student welfare
- Discipline
- Reporting complaints and resolving grievances

A. Policies for Student Welfare

The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment which:

- minimises risk of harm and ensures students feel secure
- supports the physical, social, academic and emotional development of students
- provides student welfare policies and programs

that develop a sense of self-worth and foster personal development

To ensure that all aspects of the school's mission for providing for a student's welfare are implemented, policies and procedures were in place (see list above).

B. Policies for Student Discipline

Students are required to abide by the school's rules and to follow the directions of teachers and other people with authority delegated by the school. Students with ASD find it difficult to follow rules that may have little personal meaning; however they are part of keeping students safe. Students will be supported through environmental modifications, visual supports and teaching and learning programmes to follow those rules related to health, safety and welfare for both staff and students. The support level of students is constantly monitored. As behaviour is seen as having a communicative function for students with Autism, the onus is on staff to ensure that the appropriate environmental supports as well as communication interventions are in place to support the students as they learn new replacement behaviours.

Corporal punishment or any aversive practice is not permitted under any circumstances. All disciplinary action that may result in any sanction against the student provides processes based on procedural fairness. Such processes would also include an advocate to act on behalf of the child or family.

The full text of the school's discipline policy and associated procedures is provided to all members of the school community through the Parent Portal and the website.

All discipline policies are viewed within the context of the student's disability with a strong focus on assisting student's to develop a range of behaviours that will increase their level of participation in all settings and enhance opportunities not only in school but in other community settings.

C. Policies for Complaints and Grievances Resolution

The school's policy for dealing with complaints and grievances includes processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by parents and/or students. These processes incorporate, as appropriate, principles of procedural fairness.

The full text of the school's policy and processes for complaints and grievances resolution is outlined on the Parent Portal.

Appendix 1: STUDENT ENROLMENT POLICY

About Giant Steps Melbourne School Program

History

Giant Steps Melbourne opened on 1 February 2016. It was set up by Giant Steps Sydney and supported by a group of parents who had children with autism. The Sydney school, established in 1995, was based on a program originally operating in Montreal, Canada in 1981.

The opening of a second Giant Steps school in Victoria responded to the increasing demand of its program and services. In particular, one family who had previously enrolled their young son in Sydney had moved to Melbourne due to a change of circumstances. Discovering there was no school offering the same program and services, they connected with other families wanting something better for their children's future and showed their commitment in establishing a new school.

With the demand steadily growing, the Giant Steps Sydney board and school leadership team set out to find a location. They located a suitable premises at Kew, recruited some previous staff who were committed to make the move interstate and trained new staff. They also obtained government funding to cover part of the costs and the new families helped raise the balance required by approaching corporate donors and organizing fundraising events.

Giant Steps Melbourne runs a school with a transdisciplinary model integrating teaching and learning and therapy for students with autism. Giant Steps Melbourne has an F - 10 School Program.

What are the Special Features of the Giant Steps Program?

- A transdisciplinary approach where speech, occupational and music therapists are on site working with special education staff in a collaborative team developing individual plans specific to each child's needs and abilities within the Victorian Curriculum framework.
- Giant Steps Melbourne uses a child and family centred approach that aims to encourage the children to achieve their maximum potential.
- Programs at Giant Steps Melbourne may vary from time to time.

How is Giant Steps Melbourne Funded?

As an independent school Giant Steps Melbourne receives both State and Commonwealth funding which contributes approximately 45% to the total running costs. Giant Steps Melbourne is also a registered charity and all parents are actively involved in supporting the school.

Donations to Giant Steps Melbourne are tax deductible.

Giant Steps Melbourne does not charge fees in the School Program.

Giant Steps Melbourne's Vision Statement

"Giant Steps Melbourne will continue to be recognized as a centre of excellence for the creation, implementation and dissemination of innovative and effective programs and services for individuals with Autism and their families."

Giant Steps Melbourne's Mission Statement

"Giant Steps Melbourne seeks to develop intensive therapeutic and educational programs to ensure that each individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Giant Steps Melbourne also seeks to provide support to families, improve understanding of autism in the wider community and to develop best practice amongst carers and professionals".

Giant Steps Melbourne's Core Values

- Maintain a culture of best practice service to individuals with autism.
- Remain open to the acceptance of new ideas and approaches, seeking continuous improvement in all that we do
- Recognise the skills of our staff, encouraging commitment and dedication from a team of quality people.
- Strengthen professional relationships within and outside of Giant Steps Melbourne.
- Adopt collaborative approaches to challenges.
- Promote constructive reciprocal involvement within the community.
- Pursue growth opportunities consistent with our core undertakings whilst maintaining prudent financial and risk management.
- Celebrate our achievements.

Giant Steps Melbourne Enrolment Process

Eligibility Process

Our school is funded in part by the Victorian Department of Education and Training which has very specific criteria for placement. A completed Application Form, with supporting documentation, must be lodged by parents or legal guardians. Students are placed on the Eligibility List based on the following:

- A medical diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder
- A psychological diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder
- May have an associated development delay
- Is aged between 5 and 18 years
- All applicants will receive acknowledgement upon receipt of an Application Form.

Admissions

A vacancy may arise when:

- a student moves from one program to the next program because of his or her age
- a student leaves Giant Steps
- a student graduates (is integrating independently at his or her local school)
- additional places become available due to the availability of additional resources

Offer of Placement

When a vacancy arises the following will be considered:

- where the class vacancy exists
- age of student
- time on the Eligibility List

Offer of a place is subject to an interview of parents/guardians and child. The Admissions Committee will meet to determine Offer of Enrolment. Students are selected for intake based on the following criteria:

- The assessment process will account for compatibility in relation to the intake group and will consider characteristics related to the developmental age as well as social and behavioural repertoire.
- Parent support and commitment in the program, both school-based and home-based. That is, parents demonstrate past and present commitment to their child's overall developmental needs including education, socialisation, and communication, behavioural / emotional and general well-being.
- Parents demonstrate a willingness to become

actively involved in and initiate fundraising activities and parent committee work or be willing to support the program in other ways.

Conditions of Entry

Parent Commitment

Parents are required to have an interview with a Board member prior to admission to gain an understanding of Giant Steps' expectations regarding the participation and commitment required by parents.

Parent Contributions

Giant Steps Melbourne is a registered charity and all donations are tax deductible. Government funding does not fully meet the costs of running the school. The remaining funds are raised through donations and fundraising events. All parents are expected to contribute towards the substantial fundraising effort required to secure the successful on-going operation of the school.

Medical Treatment

If a student needs urgent hospital or medical treatment of any nature and the school is unable to contact the parent or guardian after making reasonable efforts you authorize the school to give authority for such treatment. You indemnify the school, its employees and agents in respect of all costs and expenses arising directly or indirectly out of such treatment.

Change of Details

It is the responsibility of the parents to advise the school of any change of address and contact numbers.

Student Absences

The school needs to be contacted if your child is going to be absent from school for any reason. Parents must send in a Sickness/Absenteeism note each time the child is absent, or partially absent, from school.

Exclusion from Giant Steps Melbourne

- If the Principal, or any person deputing for the Principal, considers that a student's behaviour is of such a serious nature that there is substantial risk to other students or staff, the Principal or Deputy may exclude the student permanently or temporarily at their absolute discretion.

If the Giant Steps Melbourne Board or the Principal believes that a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation between a parent and school

has broken down to the extent that it adversely impacts on that relationship, then the Giant Steps Melbourne Board or the Principal may require the parent to remove the child from the school.

Withdrawal from Giant Steps Melbourne

The school requires one term's notice if a student's enrolment is to be withdrawn.

Enrolment

Students are offered a place in Primary or Secondary programs. Current students need to apply in writing to the Principal if they would like to move to the next program.

See criteria for offer of placement.

Uniforms

We encourage students to wear the school uniform.

Amendment of Terms and Conditions

The Board may alter these conditions of entry at any time by notifying parents in writing. Alterations will apply from the date of the notice.

Appendix 2: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction
2. The Legislative context
3. Duty of Care and Legal Liability
4. General Guidelines
5. Resources

1. Introduction

The care and protection of children according to the parameters set out in Victorian and Federal legislation is both complex and sensitive. In 2015, the Government responded with policy initiative and legislative changes to implement the Betrayal of Trust recommendations. New minimum Child Safe Standards were implemented, in particular following the Government's 'zero tolerance' for child abuse in Victorian schools.

These changes have led to further development of a Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct applies to all Giant Steps Melbourne staff, contractors, volunteers and board members. Visitors are also made aware of this Code of Conduct to ensure they comply when visiting our school.

This Code of Conduct has been formulated to identify the type of conduct that is required, in particular the

way to respond to children in performing their duties. It is also intended to provide practical assistance for staff members if they encounter ethical problems.

This Code may require amendment from time to time.

By accepting employment with the School, you must be aware of and comply with this Code.

Therefore, you must:

- a) conduct yourself, both personally and professionally in a manner that upholds the ethos and reputation of the School;
- b) comply with the School's policies and procedures;
- c) act ethically and responsibly; and
- d) be accountable for your actions and decisions.

In 2014, amendments to Ministerial Order 706 included requirements that registered schools had to meet, including having an anaphylaxis management policy and comply with the Anaphylaxis Guidelines, as developed by the Department of Education and training.

Giant Steps maintains an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) also including bushfire preparedness. In addition, this plan includes policies and procedures for the planning and approval of off-site activities which consider the risk of bushfire in the activity location.

Contractors and Volunteers

Contractors, consultants and volunteers working with the School must be aware of this Code and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the conduct described in it. Conduct that is not consistent with the conduct set out in this Code may result in the engagement of a contractor, consultant or volunteer being terminated.

If you are engaging or managing external consultants, contractors or volunteers, it is your responsibility to make them aware of the School's expectations of conduct during the period of their engagement.

2. The Legislative Context

Everyone who is concerned in a professional capacity with the care and protection of children needs to have a clear understanding of the essential elements of the law as it applies to the care and protection of children.

Legislation relating to the care and protection of children is currently contained in the following Acts of Parliament:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006

- Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards
- Working With Children Act 2005
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Crimes Act 1958

3. Duty of Care and Legal Liability

Staff can be deemed legally liable if they have been negligent in relation to their responsibilities under the legislation as it pertains to the care and protection of children.

Generally speaking, a person owes a duty not to injure another as a result of his or her own negligent act or omission. The duty does not usually extend to the taking of steps to prevent injury where one has not caused or contributed to the risk giving rise to the injury.

There exists, however, special duty relationships between some members of our society which give rise to more onerous duties of care. The relationship between teacher and pupil is one of these.

The general law of negligence provides that a person may be negligent if:

- S/he owes a duty of care to the person injured, that is, the standard judged reasonable in all of the circumstances, and
- S/he did not carry out that duty to the legal standard required, and
- The person suffered damage as a result of the failure to observe the duty of care.

With regard to care and protection the following general principles apply:

- Staff must take reasonable care to ensure that their students are not harmed. They have a duty to protect their students against foreseeable risks of personal injury or harm.
- The standard of care is that of a reasonably prudent parent. The degree of care depends on such factors as the age of the students.

There must be an efficient system of supervision in operation in the school.

Duty of care applies while the students are under the care of the school. This applies equally to school based activities and out of school activities. The same duty of care applies to employees who volunteer their services to the school.

Employees are required to follow good standards and approved practice as detailed in the school's Code of Conduct.

4. General Guidelines

The school is committed to the achievement of the highest standards of education in which the security, protection and comfort of students is a high priority. The following guidelines are to be adopted for the care and protection of students and staff.

Supervision of Students

1. Staff must take all reasonable care to ensure that no student is exposed to any unnecessary risk of injury. Staffs are to remember that they are in loco parentis – the standard of care required is that of a skilled professional.
2. Staff should be familiar with and adhere strictly to the school's evacuation procedures. These procedures have been developed in consultation with staff.
3. Sick or injured students should be attended to by a staff member in the Sick Bay area until parents or guardians arrive. The Sick Bay register must be completed and signed. The admin office must be informed of a student's illness and if additional assistance is required. Incident/accident reports need to be completed.
4. Students should not be left unsupervised either within or outside of class. Staffs are reminded of their duty of care obligations in this regard. Staff should be punctual to class and allocated supervision.
5. It is recognized that, at times, individual instruction occurs with students alone in enclosed areas. External monitoring is made possible with a window in each door.
6. Staff should remain with students at after school activities until all students have been collected. In the event that a student is not collected staff should remain with the student until collected or return to school with the student.
7. Playground supervision is an integral part of the responsibility of staff. It must take precedence over other activities. It is unacceptable to be late. Staff should actively supervise their designated area, being vigilant and constantly moving around. Social conversations between staff members whilst on playground duty distracts staff from actively supervising students.
8. Staff should be alert to bullying, any other form of discriminatory behaviour, and any challenging behaviour that may cause injury to staff and/or students. Incidences must be reported to the appropriate staff member.
9. Parents must seek permission of parents for students to attend excursions and/or community access activities. Venue and Risk Assessments must be completed prior to any off-site school activity.

Relationships with Students

1. Staff should, where possible, avoid situations where they are alone in an enclosed space with a student. Where staff are left with the responsibility of a single student they should ensure that this is in an open space in view of others. Where this is not possible or practical it should be discussed with the immediate supervisor and documented.
2. Staff should never drive a student in their car unless they have specific permission from their supervisor to do so, such as community access, and excursions. In the event of an emergency, staff should exercise discretion but then report the matter to the appropriate supervisor. Emergency cards/contacts/health care plans must be carried at all times when out of school grounds.
3. Staff should notify the Principal or Director of Therapy immediately should they suspect a situation involving any form of reportable conduct (formerly referred to as child abuse). It is not staff responsibility to investigate. Similarly staff should report to the Principal or Director of Therapy any suspected case of neglect.
4. Social relations between staff and students outside the school can be problematic. Staff must be alert to the risk involved in social relations with students and be conscious that their position places extra obligations on them as mandatory reporters.
5. When physical contact with a student is a necessary part of the teaching/learning experience, particularly in regard to the sensory needs of the child staff must exercise caution to ensure that the contact is appropriate and acceptable. Support from OT's can be useful in these situations and programs need to be documented.
6. For students where support is required with toileting a plan for toileting needs should be included in the student's individual plan and monitored. Staffs need to be aware of the issues of privacy and dignity for the student.
7. Staff should not supply or condone the use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs for themselves or any student in their care.
8. When congratulating a student, a handshake, pat on the shoulder or brief hug are acceptable as long as the student is comfortable with this action. Kissing of students is not acceptable.
9. Assessing a student who is injured or ill may necessitate touching. Always advise the student of what you intend doing and seek their concurrence.
10. Staff must always treat students with respect and without favouritism. There is no place for

sarcasm, derogatory remarks, name calling, inappropriate familiarity or offensive comments.

11. Staff who communicates with students electronically must abide by the terms of the school's Computer/Internet Policy. Transmission of messages or files which are sexually explicit or offensive are totally inappropriate.
12. Staff should ensure that they are familiar with and adhere to the school's procedures in regard to the storage and administration of medical products to students.
13. Sometimes in ensuring duty of care staff may be required to restrain a student from harming him or herself or others using reasonable force. Any such strategy must be in keeping with the school's behaviour support and crisis intervention strategies. For some students Behavioural Support Plans including crisis prevention strategies need to be developed.

Discipline

1. All staff should be familiar with and adhere to the school's Behaviour Support Policy.
2. Smoking is not permitted on the school premises. Furthermore, smoking is not permitted at any school function or activity whether these functions/activities are on the school premises or not, by staff or students.
3. Alcohol is not to be consumed on the school premises or at school camps or excursions. The only exceptions will be those occasions deemed appropriate by the Principal, but in any case will not include occasions where students are in attendance.
4. No student should be allowed to leave or be sent from a class unless supervised.
5. At all times when speaking with students, or in the presence of students, care must be taken to use appropriate language. Staffs are not to have discussions regarding school/personal matters in classrooms/teaching spaces while students are present.

6. Communication Issues

1. Staffs are required to respect and adhere to the established lines of communication in the school.
2. Staff should be mindful of confidentiality when in discussion with parents. Staff can never guarantee confidentiality if the matter under discussion requires mandatory reporting.
3. Staff should not speak about another staff member to students or parents.
4. Staff should present a courteous professional manner to students, parents, visitors and other staff members. Confrontation and criticism in public is to be avoided at all times.

5. All matters discussed in staff meetings and staff memos are to be treated confidentially and not discussed with students.
6. The media should not be given access to students or allowed entry to the school without the expressed permission of the Principal.
7. Staff must respect and treat students with dignity at all times and be aware of the vulnerabilities of the school's student population.

Camps/Billets/Excursions/Community Access

1. In the case of activities involving overnight accommodation of boys and girls, both genders should be represented in the group of supervisors.
2. Excursion information must be communicated to parents.
3. A mobile phone must be taken on all excursions. The teacher in charge must always have a complete list of student contact numbers with them on excursions, community access, as well as all emergency information.
4. Staff must seek the permission of parents prior to an excursion; complete all necessary documentation including risk assessments and purpose of the excursion.

Duty to Disclose

1. Staffs are required to report to the Principal any allegation of "reportable conduct" (formerly referred to as child abuse).
2. Staffs who are the subject of an Apprehended Violence Order or a Reportable conviction are required to inform the Principal immediately they are in receipt of such an Order or Conviction.

Appendix 3: Procedure Complaints and Grievances Resolution

The school's procedure for dealing with complaints and grievances includes processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by parents, staff and/or students. These processes incorporate principles of procedural fairness.

Grievance Procedure

Giant Steps Melbourne seeks to ensure problems are identified, reviewed and corrected in a timely manner. Employees are to seek resolution to work-related concerns following the steps indicated in this document. This procedure was developed to ensure that staff grievances are recorded and resolved in a transparent, accountable and professional manner.

The objectives of the grievance procedure are to:

- Promote the resolution of disputes by measures based on consultation, co-operation and discussion,
- Reduce the level of work-place confrontation, and
- Avoid interruption to the performance of work.

An employee may raise a grievance regarding any aspect of their employment as set out with the grievance procedure so that all grievances are resolved as quickly as possible and co-operatively to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned.

A question, dispute or difficulty must initially be dealt with as close to its source as possible, with graduated steps for further discussion and resolution with the Principal / Director of Therapy. The procedure for dealing with grievances or disputes is as follows:

The procedure:

- Where appropriate start by addressing the issue with the person/persons concerned.
- In the event that the matter is not resolved, or if it is not appropriate to address the issue directly with the person/ persons concerned the employee or employees shall document the issue in writing on the "Giant Steps Grievance Form" and meet with the Principal to discuss the issue. The Principal will then investigate the issue and respond accordingly. The Principal may seek outside assistance in order to resolve the matter.
- In the event of failure to resolve the matter at the school level the employee shall notify a member of the Giant Steps Melbourne Board in writing as to the substance of the issue.

Appendix 4: Child Safe Standards Policy

Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to child safety. Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to the health, welfare and safety of each and every student. We support and respect all children, as well as all those who make up the extended school community (including staff, volunteers and parents).

Giant Steps Melbourne has ZERO tolerance of child abuse.

Giant Steps Melbourne believes that every child has a fundamental right to be safe and that the specific needs of our students living with Autism does NOT reduce that fundamental right to be safe. We have a responsibility to ensure that our students are protected from all and any harm.

Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to preventing child abuse. We believe that by identifying risks early

and then removing and reducing these risks we will move well towards preventing child abuse.

Aims

The aim of this Policy, and related Policies and Procedures, is to:

- Empower our children to be vital and active participants at Giant Steps Melbourne;
- Ensure our staff, including any contractors, and volunteers are committed to providing our students with a child safe environment;
- Ensure that any allegations, concerns or complaints about a child's safety is taken seriously and that each and every one is treated consistently with our procedures regarding such matters; and
- Promote and value the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and those from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background.

Our Students

Giant Steps Melbourne is an independent special school for children with Autism. At the forefront of every action that we take or decision that we make, we ensure that our children with Autism are safe, are valued and can participate fully in school life.

We understand that our students have a variety of abilities and levels of understanding and processing of information. We understand that our children have an increased risk and vulnerability of being subject to abuse. This increased risk is due to a number of factors, including communication difficulties, personal care needs and possible intellectual or cognitive disability. We understand that we must be more vigilant and have stronger strategies and controls to counter these risks.

At Giant Steps Melbourne we promote the value that each student must be viewed independently and that staff and volunteers must not make assumptions about the student's ability to understand.

At Giant Steps Melbourne we maintain increased vigilance in identifying indicators or warning signs of possible abuse. We understand that many actions or behaviours that may be signs of abuse by a child without Autism, may actually be manifestations of the student's Autism/ co-morbid conditions and/or developmental delay. An example of this may be inappropriate public behaviour, such as touching oneself. Therefore, we maintain records of our

students' normal behaviours and are vigilant about identifying any changes in their behaviour.

Irrespective of our students' perceived limitations and abilities, Giant Steps Melbourne will endeavour to:

- Teach our children about their bodies and about being safe in all environments;
- Teach, enable and facilitate independence for all our children in regard to personal care to reduce their risks of abuse in the future; and
- Inform our children about "safe" people and the means to communicate any concerns, allegations or complaints.

Staff and Volunteers

Giant Steps Melbourne has vigorous human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We actively encourage the recruitment of personnel who have a background and are skilled in working with children, especially with children with Autism. Our recruitment processes rigorously ensure that our personnel are equipped to deal with challenging behaviour in an appropriate and safe manner and that all staff and volunteers are aware of our legislative responsibilities.

All people engaged in child related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check. Validation of the Check is verified upon the commencement of each person engaged at Giant Steps Melbourne.

Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. Child Safety is included as an agenda item in each weekly Whole School Meeting. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess and minimize the risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse in our children.

Giant Steps Melbourne takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate such allegations. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with such allegations, including the means by which to communicate with our children and their individual abilities.

Giant Steps Melbourne has a strict Code of Conduct which guides our staff and volunteers on the standards of conduct required when working with our children. New employees and volunteers are supervised to ensure they understand our commitment to child safety and to ensure their behaviour is appropriate and conforms to our Code of Conduct.

Legislative Responsibilities

Giant Steps Melbourne takes its legislative responsibilities seriously in regard to all matters of child safety.

Our Policies and Procedures in this area state that all personnel are mandatory reporters and are required to comply with their duties as such.

Irrespective of our legislative requirements, Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to reporting any inappropriate behaviour through the appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Risk Management

Giant Steps Melbourne acknowledges that being a special school for children with Autism we have some unique risk factors based on our children's needs and behaviours. Our risk management procedures ensure that these unique factors are included in all areas of risk management.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess and minimise child abuse risks, including risks posed by physical environments and environments outside of school hours.

Related Policies

Student Welfare Policy and Procedures
A Safe and Supportive Environment
Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure
Keeping Students Safe – Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct
Code of Conduct for the Care and Protection of Children

Related Documents

Recruitment Forms

- Phase 1 – Interview Questions
- Phase 2 – Educator Safeguarding Interview Questions
- Phase 3 – Referee Questions

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually. This policy will also be reviewed after any form of incident regarding child safety, no matter the severity. This will ensure effectiveness is maintained and all risks are removed.