



Giant Steps Sydney Annual Report 2022 review



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Principal's Report

This annual report shares the tremendous efforts of the Giant Steps community in 2022. With restrictions reducing and the wider community becoming accessible again, the Giant Steps staff ensured our students quickly returned to many of the activities available pre-COVID. The successes of the year are seen throughout this report written by our very talented school leadership team. Following is a few of many highlights.

The school engaged in a review of programming and reporting procedures. This review led to the introduction of a new collaborative format for developing and documenting teaching programs and a new individualised four-point reporting scale. We are already seeing the benefits of these new processes with greater staff collaboration on programming and more effective feedback to on students learning in school reports.

The primary school enthusiastically adopted new syllabus for English and Mathematics, emphasising foundational skills and access content for diverse learners. A highlight for the Secondary school was the return of the accessible art program.

The return to pre-COVID operations allowed for offsite activities in including outdoor education, gymnastics, swimming, and water-based activities. Special event days were organised to involve families and celebrate occasions like Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Grandparents' Day.

A highlight for the year was our very own Helen Appleton on being conferred her PhD. Helen has worked tirelessly around her work at GS completing incredibly important work on understanding anxiety in our student population. Much of her important work is already imbedded in our practices. Well done Helen on this incredible achievement. Her thesis was titled, An Exploration of the Presence and Behavioural Manifestation of Anxiety in Children and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disability. Congratulations Dr Helen.

In 2023 we look forward to preparing for our school inspection by the NSW Education Standards Authority and completing the refurbishment of bathrooms across the school site.

A big thank you to the Giant Steps fundraising and administration team that support the families to raise the necessary funds and support the many operations of the school.



Mr Andrew Frakes
Principal



Ms Claire Allen
Director of Finances & Administration

Secondary

In 2022, the Secondary program consisted of 47 students split across eight different classes, in two buildings, the Quad and Clocktower. The spaces provided an environment that fosters social engagement between students of different classes when accessing common areas during recreational and meal times.

The focus of the program consisted of Outdoor Education (hiking, surfing and skiing), the 2022 academic programs, process and experiential tasks, and student engagement support. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, our ability to access our community activities were greatly diminished at the beginning of the year, however students were able to continue to access Outdoor Education. Over the course of the year, it became steadily more possible for our students to access the community.



Other highlights of the program included lessons focused around the integrated Literacy program focusing on Dreamtime and contemporary Aboriginal texts to develop concepts of our First Nations peoples, My Country in History, the Technology units of work Nature Creator and Jewellery Design, Solar System for Science, and China in Languages.

Students transitioning out of school in 2022 focused on investigating a variety of post-school options, developing independent, vocational, and self-management skills that will serve them well after leaving school.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, all but one of our annual camps were cancelled, but the camp that did take place was an immense opportunity for some of our students. A group of students travelled to Perisher to take part in adaptive skiing, including the use of tethers and sit skis. These camps are often the first time our students have experienced snow, but build life-long recreational skills that they can engage in with their families.



We were also able to maintain our accessible arts program, and were treated to a magnificent performance by the Sydney Chamber Orchestra, which left our students rapt.



Ms Claire Cherrington
Secondary – Director

Primary

Following the significant impact to operations as a result of the global pandemic, 2022 saw a return to more traditional operations and programs within the K-6 program. In 2022, the primary school consisted of nine classes across lower and upper primary with a total of 44 students across the program. Whilst we commenced the year with 44 students enrolled across the program, we welcomed three new families (one in upper primary and two in lower primary) throughout the course of the year. It was a delight to support these new families to transition into the primary program at Giant Steps.

In 2022, through a process of external and internal consultation, the primary team worked with a number of key stakeholders to begin the process of preparing for the NSW Education Standards Authority, Registration and Accreditation process which will be a key focus for the school in 2023. As part of this process, we convened an internal working party to review the school-based reporting processes. This review led to the implementation of new reporting documents for mid-year and end of year reporting including the introduction of an individualised four-point reporting scale to provide clearer feedback to parents in relation to curriculum.

As part of ongoing curriculum reform in NSW, 2022 saw the implementation of new syllabus documents across the primary program for English and Mathematics. These new syllabi have a renewed focus on building strong foundations for future learning and the introduction of access content, which supports diverse learners to better access the curriculum. The primary team adopted these new frameworks with enthusiasm.

In Literacy, we considered how best to introduce the new curriculum frameworks through the units, 'Once Upon a Time' & 'Allison Lester', continuing our strong focus on the 'four blocks model'. Our 'Once Upon a Time' unit explored a range of folk and fairy tales. Within this unit, students focussed on skills such as phonological awareness, and the use of descriptive language in texts. Students enjoyed and engaged well with opportunities to act out fables and tales with the use of props supporting them to emphasise and explore key themes relating to this unit of work.

In Numeracy, we continued to explore a range of mathematical concepts through our core mathematical units, 'Morning Meeting' and 'Cooking and Healthy Eating'. Our 'Topics' based unit, created a broad range of opportunities for students to engage with core mathematical concepts relating to representing whole number, combining, and separating quantities, geometric measure and 3D spatial structure. Again, this was all implemented within the framework of the new NSW K-2 Mathematics syllabus.

In History, Science and Geography our 'Building Construction' Unit of Work provided some interesting 'hands on' opportunities to engage students in their learning. Students explored various recycled and non-recycled materials to create their own buildings, as well as connecting with the design and planning stages of construction. A number of offsite experiences formed part of this unit as students explored the various constructions within our local community.

We studied 'Celebrations' in our Semester 1, Creative Arts Unit of Work and with visuals arts, Music and Dance explored a range of celebrations from difficult cultures. Whilst exploring a wide range of celebrations, students were able to focus on the development of foundation social skills such as social orienting, joint actions and adjusting behaviour to coordinate with others, whilst also developing a deeper understanding for how to connect with peers through celebrations and special events.

Return to pre-covid operations, had an immensely positive impact on our PDHPE units of work and we were able to access a wide variety of offsite activities and locations as part of the 'GSSA' Unit of Work. We connected with the local Gymnastics and 'Ninja Warrior' centre to support a number of primary classes to access a gymnastics program as well as focussing on the development of fundamental movement and gross motor skills through access to a variety of inclusive play spaces. Our bushwalking program returned in full swing, with students building skills in a variety of bush walking spaces as well as students returning to swimming and water based offsite activities.

With the return to welcoming families onsite, we were able to celebrate Mother's Day with our Mother's afternoon tea, Father's Day with our BBQ breakfast and sports morning as well as welcome grandparents and special friends onsite for high tea and to spend time within the classroom.

Our year 5 and 6 primary camp explored the beautiful south coast for two nights. There were so many highlights, the Science Space hosted by Wollongong University as well as Shoalhaven Zoo. Our 2022 camp provided a wonderful opportunity for students to consolidate skills focused on throughout the year at school in a new and novel environment away from the home and school setting.

As we look to 2023 there will be increased focus on preparation for our upcoming registration and accreditation process. This will be a wonderful opportunity to showcase many of the innovative and imaginative units of work that form part of the primary program at Giant Steps.



Caitlin Millauro, Sarah Rawlins
Co-Directors, Primary



Occupational Therapy

In 2022, the Occupational Therapy Team engaged in a range of external and internal professional development in order to upskill and develop knowledge across the team. This year we introduced four new OTs to the team, Cooper Snel, Meg Hodgson, Natalie Goh and Valerie Lam. They have all been a wonderful addition to the Therapy team at Giant Steps and have been a big part of our growth and development.

Delivery of Program

2022 saw the return of many programs including Outdoor Education and community access across the school. Swimming, gymnastics, bowling, flip out, aqua golf, shopping centres, Coles and accessing public

transport were all incorporated back into the programs to support our students' learning, problem solving skills, community access and gross motor skills. This allowed for a more active, physical and motivating program while supporting students with their emotional and sensory needs while accessing the community.

Professional Development

The team had multiple opportunities to attend training and professional development sessions across the year. This included seminars and courses focussing on self-regulation, toileting and play contributing to the team's knowledge base and development of new strategies to implement within both the programs and assessments at Giant Steps. Cassie and Cheryl also ran a new session as part of the Autism Training Essentials for new staff members focussing on Safety and Supervision within the school as well as Transport.

Refining Assessment Tools

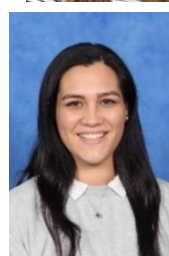
The development of new sensory profiles for each student to be displayed within classrooms has been yet another highlight. This assessment summary allows us to implement best practice and evaluate how we look at sensory processing for each individual student within the classroom. This is achieved through environmental modifications, addressing the emotional and sensory needs of each individual student, and adapting the programs to encourage participation in meaningful activities.

Engagement with Profession

One of our OT's Nicola Futeran, continues running camp Sababa in December, providing students with opportunities to engage in summer camp activities for four days. Nicola leads a team of volunteers and focuses on integrating community access programs during camp. Cheryl Toth continues to tutor within the Western Sydney University's Occupational Therapy course, and is currently studying for a PhD.



Cassie Roberts-Smillie
Director of Occupational Therapy-Primary



Cheryl Toth
Director of Occupational Therapy-Secondary

Music Therapy

In 2022, the music therapy team focused on strengthening the dialogue between Sydney and Melbourne, as well as providing opportunities to learn about the diversity of our school community through innovative units of work. Alongside this, they engaged in both delivering and participating in a range of professional development to ensure programs aligned with current best practice.

Celebrations and Cultural Diversity

Across semester 1 and 2, the music therapy program focused on the themes of 'Celebrations' and 'My Country'. The 'Celebrations' unit of work highlighted annual events from around the globe, such as Lunar New Year, Mother's Day and Carnivale. Mums were invited onsite to share a lesson with their child/ren on Mother's Day. Whilst all together, they learned a dance being taught in sessions, enabling them to share this experience with their children at home. The 'My Country' unit saw music therapists talking with families, gathering information about their cultural background and traditions. These formed the basis of lessons for students, featuring songs, dances and instruments from each family's background and the chance to share these with their classmates. As a result, we also learned a great deal about staff member's cultural backgrounds, leading to other learning opportunities in lessons across the day, such as cooking and art. A Harmony Week afternoon tea was held after this theme, where staff shared dishes from their own cultural background. This unit was a good opportunity to become more aware and embracing of our diverse school community.

Collaboration Across Campuses

Connections between the schools grew through regular collaboration between the Sydney and Melbourne music therapy teams. This was accomplished through weekly supervision, cross-campus team discussions and visits by staff across sites. As a result, the Melbourne team are looking into taking music therapy students on placement from the University of Melbourne in 2023. By strengthening this relationship, both schools have benefitted through the sharing of program resources, professional development and increasing the range of creative approaches to learning and engagement.

Internal and External Professional Development

The music therapy team continued to engage in both delivering and attending professional development for Giant Steps. In April, the team ran a full-day interactive workshop for music therapists entitled Engaging Autism: The Music Therapist's Toolbox.

Bronte Arns delivered a webinar on Transdisciplinary Practice and Collaborating with other Professionals for the Australian Music Therapy Association. This module continues to be available online for music therapists working towards the annual maintenance of their professional registration. The team continued to run workshops for staff on the Recreation and Play Assessment (RAPA) and ways to link leisure, play and learning time with the development of social skills. Vanessa Lucas completed her accreditation for Experienced Therapist with a research project on using student interests to increase engagement in music programs. She has been accepted to present the findings of this project at the World Congress of Music Therapy in Vancouver in 2023.



Ms Bronte Arns
National Director of Music Therapy

Speech Therapy

In 2022, the Speech Therapy team focused on expanding and enhancing opportunities for expressive communication, assessing comprehension and engaging in professional learning.

Expressive communication across environments

The implementation of individualised expressive communication systems has continued for each student this year. To enhance the opportunities for using these systems the speech therapy team implemented new supports to encourage students to use their communication systems not only in the classroom but also in the playground, on walks and out in the community. A key resource was the development of communication boards located in the playground. This enables all students to access an expressive form of communication in the playground to successfully request for highly motivating activities and actions. The team are eager to introduce these boards across the school in other communal spaces in the coming year. Another key resource was the introduction of 'talker tubs' where communication systems can be safely kept in the playground or quad

space and easily accessible when students have a need for their communication system.

During community access activities, students are encouraged to have access to their expressive system and this year expressive communication systems have been used to ask for an item at a café or to comment on what they see during a bushwalk. It is an ongoing project to ensure these resources are available over time to increase the availability of appropriate expressive supports in the student's environment.



Functional Comprehension Assessments

2022 was the year of assessing all students level of verbal comprehension which takes place every second year at Giant Steps. Previously referred to as 'talking and listening assessments', these functional assessments take into consideration several factors (such as the number of pieces of information, physical environment, routine, sensory related impacts, competing motivators, and complexity of language). The assessments take place in the classroom and associated environments such as the playground or on community access. To assess student's comprehension of oral language, regular supports and strategies are temporarily removed to assess their edge of learning. Comprehension is the foundation for developing meaningful expressive (both verbal and non-verbal) communication and informs many of the teaching strategies implemented. The assessments are completed by all team members including teachers, occupational therapists, music therapists and educators. The staff body was upskilled in the delivery of these assessments through a professional learning series where video examples and scenarios were used to facilitate learning. The results of the functional comprehension assessments are used to inform

curriculum outcomes and ensure teaching strategies are appropriate and effective.

Professional Learning

In 2022, the speech therapy team attended fortnightly team meetings to share the diverse knowledge the team has as a group in the areas of play and social foundation skills, feeding and approaches to support communication in autistic individuals. To extend the team's knowledge about expressive communication applications and to assist with decision making, the team engaged in a course run by the Center for AAC & Autism about LAMP Words for Life. This prompted the team to think critically about the application and outline some benefits and challenges when using this program with our students. The team also completed an introductory online course on Gestalt Language Processing delivered by Marge Blanc. The Gestalt Language Processing approach has recently gained a large voice in supporting students who are echolalic or exhibit the 'chunk learning style.' Completing this training forms the beginning of investigating how best to support our students and their communication while taking this approach into consideration. Giant Steps had 2 representatives from the speech therapy team attend the AGOSCI conference which focused on enhancing the participation of all people with complex communication needs.

The speech therapy team used their knowledge and collective experience to deliver some valuable professional learning sessions internally to the Giant Steps staff body. This year the Secondary team was encouraged to think creatively about how literacy opportunities are differentiated to reach the student's edge of learning. Video examples and group brainstorming activities were used to promote discussions and begin planning for the semester ahead. Another topic for professional learning was exploring a single case study of a student and their expressive communication journey throughout the 9 years they have been at Giant Steps. The single case study allowed for a deeper level of understanding by specifically outlining the student's strengths and also barriers to communication with the hope that this knowledge is then transferred to all students.

Book Week

Giant Steps had its inaugural book week celebration in 2022 and it was a great success. Students were presented with a 'book of the day' and completed

some simple comprehension activities on these books. The Book Week parade was very popular with both staff and students dressing up as their favourite book or movie character. The team are looking forward to rolling this out again in 2023.



Katherine Halter
Director of Speech Therapy - Sydney

Student Welfare and Family Support

The Rob Llewellyn-Jones Clinical Centre

In 2022 we held 20 clinic days, seeing 59 students from K-6, Secondary and Adult Services over 175 appointments. The clinic team is comprised of the visiting doctors, Dr Yvette Vella (developmental paediatrician) and Dr Peter Wurth (psychiatrist), myself and Andrew Frakes, Principal. Dr Richard Webster, paediatric neurologist at Sydney Children's Hospital Westmead, continued to collaborate with the team, consulting onsite in Terms 2 and 4. This continues to be a highly valuable resource to our families.

The key benefits to the onsite clinic continue to be:

- 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 more regular follow ups if needed
- Collaborative care from a highly experienced medical and psychiatric team
- Decreased student and family stress

The ongoing presence of the clinic at Giant Steps continues to facilitate dialogue about mental health and its impact

on our students for both families and staff, and the need to consider it as an essential component to our students' engagement and wellbeing.

Stepping Stones Triple P

Stepping Stones was offered to families in the K-6 program in Term 4 in 2022. The program is run by Rachael Bowen and myself and four families attended the program for nine weeks, learning about creating positive interactions, autism specific strategies for understanding, communicating and planning, strategies for managing misbehaviour, how to plan for community access and new experiences. This included both parents and grandparents, allowing for increased discussion and support for some families. Feedback from the parents who attended was very positive and highlighted the practicality of the strategies. The online nature may have made attendance more accessible for some families, but did limit the general sharing of strategies and experience that is often a hallmark of this program.



Ms Helen Appleton
Director of Student, Family and Psychological Services

Contextual Information about the School

Giant Steps Sydney is a school for children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, located at Gladesville. Information regarding the history and context of the school can be found at:

Website:

www.giantsteps.net.au

MySchool:

<http://www.myschool.edu.au/SchoolProfile/Index/64404/GiantStepsSydney/43740/2014>

The Autism Hub:

<https://www.theautismhub.net.au/>

Senior Secondary School Outcomes

Higher School Certificate

7 students attained their HSC

RoSA

6 students attained their ROSA

No students undertook a VET course

Literacy & Numeracy Assessments

In 2022 no students participated in the state-wide or national testing. All students had an Individual Plan with a particular focus on the communication outcomes (Support Document – Communication NESA). The school uses a range of assessment procedures some administered directly by teaching staff others administered by Speech and Occupational Therapy staff at school in order to ascertain an assessment *for learning* and at regular intervals assessment *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.

Teacher Standards

In 2022 Giant Steps employed 25 teaching staff across the year with an FTE of 23.20. These teaching positions were supported by 19.4 FTE therapy staff and 44.80 FTE Educator (teacher aide) positions.

Details of all Teaching Staff

Level of Accreditation	Number
Conditional	1
Provisional	4
Proficient	20

Staff Retention Rates

Teachers	89%
Therapists	91%
Educators/Teachers aides	66%
Administration	92%

Average Retention Across Giant Steps – 80%

There was some staff movement due to Long Service Leave, Parental Leave and these were supported by casual staff.

Professional Learning

In 2022, Giant Steps staff completed 2015.7 hours of professional development. The average professional learning hours per staff member per annum 25.19 hours (if we had 80 staff then) / or 23.71 hours (if we had 85 staff then).

All staff participate in extensive training across each year in a variety of focus areas including:

- Safe & Supportive Schools
- Autism & Related Courses
- Curriculum
- Student Engagement
- Information Technology

The design of the program includes over 35 courses to ensure that each staff member has opportunities to consolidate, update or develop new skills to maintain and improve the operation of the school, and in turn provide the best support for all of our students. The school's professional development program also aims to maintain a high retention of our staff. A comprehensive Staff induction program is also a facet of our training helping any new team members develop the appropriate skills in becoming an active and effective member of our

organisation.

Some of the courses staff engaged in included:

- Autism Essentials
- Tips and Tricks
- Managing Risk Offsite
- IT Induction
- Mental Health Clinic & Student Engagement Support
- Functional Comprehension Assessments
- Expressive communication
- Supporting toilet training
- Literacy
- Play Theory & Behaviour
- Communication Case Study
- Recreation and Play Assessment
- Epilepsy Essentials
- Midazolam
- Senior First Aid
- CPR
- Bronze Medallion
- Leading from the Middle
- Middle Leaders
- Women in Leadership
- Leading Evidence Informed Practice
- Courageously Navigating Hard Conversations
- Reportable Conduct
- Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting and Reportable conduct
- Safety Intervention

Workforce Composition

In 2022 staffing was stable across all areas – teachers, educators, therapists, and administration staff including both full-time and part-time staff. The staffing ratio across the 3 programs reflected the differences in the model of program delivery. 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.

TOTAL STAFF NUMBERS		
	No. of Staff	FTE
Principal	1	1
Teachers	25	23.2
Therapists:	22	19.4

Educators / Teachers Aides	49	44.8
Administration	13	11.14
Total Staff	110	99.54

Student Attendance and Retention Rates in Secondary School

Student Population	
Primary	48
Secondary	44

In 2022 the school enrolled 92 students aged 4-18 years of age. Retention of students in a special school setting is not an overarching goal and as a school we seek to transition students to other beneficial school placements in support of their learning. In 2022 the following transitions occurred:

- 7 students to post school options
- 1 student to local public school

The retention rate for secondary aged students has showed a 100% retention rate over the last ten years as students with high support needs are unlikely at this stage in their schooling to move to another educational setting and are very likely to remain at the same school throughout high school.

Retention rates for the K-6 do not adequately reflect the movement of students who integrate into other educational settings as part of their transition plan. A retention rate in this instance does not reflect the movement of students out of the school. In K-6 Giant Steps actively supports students to move to other educational settings. This decision is 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 92.1%

Managing Non Attendance

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.

Post School Destinations

Provision of support services for young people with high support needs continues to be a challenge. Giant Steps continues to be a leader in the field with the establishment of the Adult Autism Services Giant Steps (AASGS) in 2008, and as we progress, the staff are considering more flexible options and programs to meet the changing needs of young adults.

Five students took up a placement at AASGS and were supported in their transition to other services that made up a five day per week program for each of the students.

Enrolment Policies and Characteristics of the Student Body

In 2022 the school enrolled 93 students aged 4-18 years of age. The student population come 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 Sydney 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	
K-6	50
Secondary	43
Total Males	64
Total Females	29
Student Total	93

Ratio of 1 female: 4 males is the usual ratio for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Enrolment Policy: Appendix A

School Enrolment Policy

Giant Steps Australia is a comprehensive co-educational K-12 special school providing an education for students who have a primary diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. The School operates and is registered through the NSW Education Standards 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, siblings already attending the school and other criteria determined by the school from time to time.

Once enrolled, families 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>

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 a three cycle.

The Workplace Health and safety Committee also review policies and procedures in the WHS area and provide training for staff through the Top Up sessions- a weekly Professional Learning session for all staff.

- Code of Conduct
- Communication Bill of Rights
- Child Protection
- Code of Ethics
- Enrolment Process

- Mandatory Reporting
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Premises and Buildings
- Reportable Conduct
- Student Attendance
- Student Behaviour Support
- Student Welfare
- Use of Email and Electronic Facilities
- Safe and Supportive Environment
- Attendance
- Assessment

School Guidelines

- Alcohol
- Anaphylaxis
- Anti-discrimination
- Anti-harassment
- Asthma
- Workplace Attire
- Communication Protocol
- Copyright
- Electrical Safety
- First Aid
- Hazardous Materials
- Injuries to Staff
- Injuries to Students
- Toileting
- Injury Management Plan
- Lead Safe
- Playground Supervision
- Privacy
- 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

School Procedures

- Child Protection
- Administering Medication
- Buildings and Grounds
- Complaints and Grievances
- Early Pick-up of Students

- Education & Financial Reporting
- Emergency Management Plan
- Employment Screening
- Excursions
- Individual Plans
- Late Arrival of Students
- Lead Safe
- Medical Treatment for Students
- WHS Maintenance Work
- Reporting Procedures
- Returns to BOS
- School Operation
- Student Files

Policies

Policies and relevant procedures can be accessed online at <https://www.giantsteps.net.au/giant-steps-sydney/>

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 and revised during 2014 (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 Information booklet
- On My School

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 can be accessed on the school's website. An appropriate outline of the policy and processes is also provided in the Parent Information Booklet.

School Improvement Plan

1. Executing IT strategic plan.

Outcome

Successful transition to Microsoft Teams/365 environment. Employed new IT manager.

2. Renovation of bathrooms across school to promote student independence in increase facilities.

Outcome

Architectural drawings and approvals complete. Builder engaged to complete work in 2023.

3. Continue research partnerships with Universities

Outcome

Dr Helen Appleton was conferred her doctorate for her thesis *An Exploration of the Presence and Behavioural Manifestation of Anxiety in Children and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disability*.

Priorities for 2023

1. Review of assessment processes
2. Renovation of Primary Courtyard playground
3. Completion of bathrooms project.
4. Continue research partnerships with Universities.

Initiatives Prompting Respect and Responsibility

Giant Steps works in partnership with a number of schools through community participation, work experience and integration to support the development of skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes in relation to students with disabilities. The school has developed Buddy programs for schools as well as Kids helping Kids, a HSIE unit of work in K-6 that promotes and develops interaction skills with typically developing peers.

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.

The school has been very active developing networks with other educational providers and runs a range of workshops to support the inclusion of students with autism as well as training courses for teachers and school personnel. Giant Steps staff works across agencies to develop partnerships in order to increase the opportunities for our student body.

For students at Giant Steps 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.

In 2022, with COVID-19 restrictions reducing Giant Steps was able to host students on Community Service or Work Experience programs from local schools. Giant Steps students also attend holiday camps set up by schools in particular St Ignatius and Moriah College. These holiday programs are wonderful opportunities for students with autism to experience a camp activity. The liaison with schools and other community organisations continues.

Curriculum

Throughout 2022 the school staff worked as a team developing, refining and reflecting on how to create learning opportunities that were meaningful and sustainable, integrating both educational and therapy goals for all students across all contexts including school, home and other environments. The curriculum is inclusive of all students in NSW and challenges the school staff to continually find meaningful, authentic teaching and learning experiences that engage, enliven and challenge our students. Learning should be fun and full of delight and joy as children experience the world through school. At Giant Steps we seek to find those opportunities for our students, to open up options and incorporate individual outcomes in all teaching activities.

Staff are constantly seeking to find new ways to teach and to support student learning, they are to be congratulated.

Throughout 2022 teachers and therapists worked on planning and programming to meet the individual needs of students within classes. Teachers and therapists plan units of work that engage students, are motivating, functional and lead to greater levels of independence and participation in community life.

School Satisfaction

The Giant Steps Parent Advocacy Group PAG regularly meet and are in constant contact with families throughout the year. The PAG acts as a conduit between the parents, the organisation, its leaders and the Board. The PAG monitors parent satisfaction throughout the year. In 2021 parent satisfaction was high particularly in regard to the way the school operated throughout the COVID-19 restrictions. Due to the nature of the disability of our students we look at different factors to evaluate student satisfaction. One key factor we look at is school attendance and rates of school refusal. In 2021 attendance remained very high despite COVID lockdowns and school refusal was extremely low.

Summary Financial Information

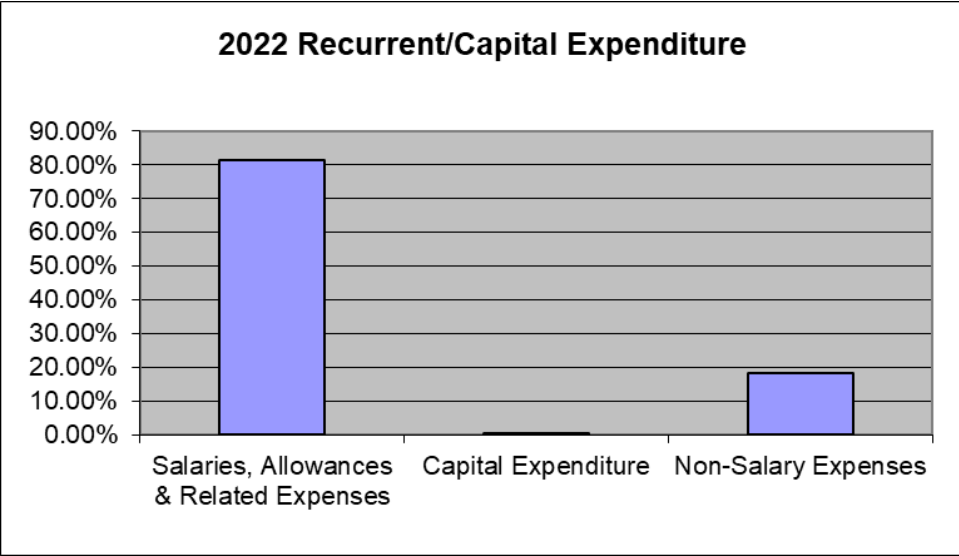
Financial Information

Giant Steps Australia is a registered Charity and a Public Benevolent Institution. Each year Giant Steps has a full

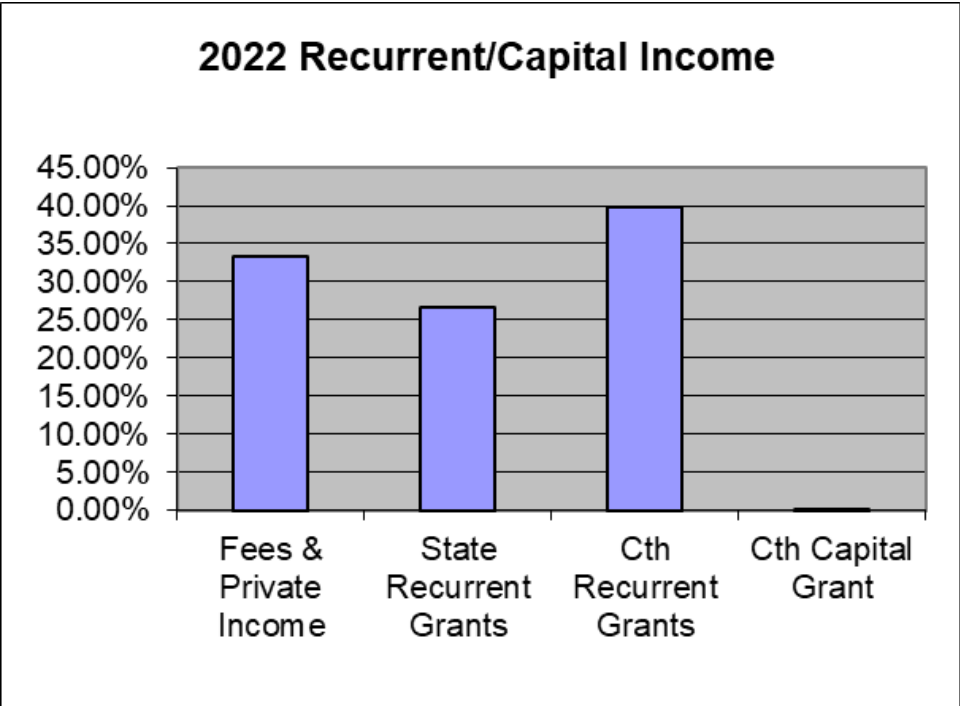
financial audit conducted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers. Giant Steps does not charge fees and in 2022 received 33.36% of revenue from donations, fundraising appeals and support from community organisations and companies.

(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



Appendix A: ENROLMENT POLICY

About Giant Steps Australia Early Years Program and School Program

History

Giant Steps Sydney was established at the old Gladesville Hospital site, about seven kilometres from the Sydney city centre, in July 1995 by a group of dedicated parents who wanted to bring world's best practice in the education and support of children with autism to Australia. The school began with a program that was developed in Montreal Canada and an intake of 12 students.

Some 27 years later, Giant Steps Sydney has evolved into a leading educational centre for children with autism and their families. Giant Steps has a multifaceted approach to the provision of services to children with autism and their families, whilst spreading a culture of caring and professional excellence through the broader community.

What are the Special Features of the Giant Steps Program?

- A transdisciplinary approach where speech, occupational and music therapists work with special education staff in a collaborative team developing individual programs specific to each child's needs and abilities within the Australian curriculum framework
- A class grouping structure whereby students engage in whole class, small group, paired, whole school and, where appropriate, individual teaching and learning programs
- Highly trained and committed staff
- Individualised and small group instruction by specialist teachers and educators
- Programs and therapies soundly based on current research
- Setting of individual goals and close monitoring of a child's progress
- Program adjustment based on each child's need
- Parent consultation and guidance in supporting students within the home environment
- Home visits and transitional support to student's next educational setting when required

How is Giant Steps Australia Funded?

As an independent school Giant Steps Australia receives both State and Commonwealth funding. Giant Steps Australia is also a registered charity and all parents are actively involved in supporting the school.

Donations to Giant Steps Australia are tax deductible.

Giant Steps Australia does not charge fees.

What Other Services does Giant Steps Australia Offer?

Giant Steps Australia also offers a range of outreach services (Speech, Music and Occupational Therapies) as well as educational support, parent training and training amongst professionals and providers in the wider community, through the Autism Training Hub.

A vacation care program runs during the school holidays for the children of Giant Steps.

There are fees for service provisions such as outreach services.

Giant Steps Australia's Vision Statement

"Giant Steps Australia will continue to be recognised 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 Australia's Mission Statement

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

Giant Steps Australia 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 Australia'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 Australia.
- 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 Australia Enrolment Process

Eligibility Process

Our school is funded in part by the NSW Department of Education which has specific criteria for placement in a special school. A completed Application Form, with supporting documentation, must be lodged by parents or legal guardians.

To be eligible for enrollment students must have a current report from a specialist medical practitioner or registered psychologist with appropriate clinical experience. The report must detail the nature of the student's disorder. Documented evidence must indicate a developmental disability affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, that significantly affects the child's ability to learn. There must be information of a functional assessment consistent with the student's disorder.

Students must be eligible to receive Federal and State funding.

Admissions

A vacancy may arise when:

- a student moves from one program to the next program because of their 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
- parent commitment and involvement

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 must demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the ethos of the school. This involves active participation in fundraising activities and parent committee work and to support the program in other ways.
- An offer of enrolment must be accepted by both Parent/carer(s) where appropriate unless the School agrees to waive this requirement. Upon acceptance all signatories to the terms and conditions will be jointly and severally liable in respect of the obligations contained in these terms and conditions.

Conditions of Entry

Parent Commitment

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

Parent Contributions

Giant Steps Australia 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 Australia

1. 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 may exclude the student permanently or temporarily at their absolute discretion.
2. If the Giant Steps Australia 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 Australia Board or the Principal may require the parent to withdraw the child from the school.

Withdrawal from Giant Steps Australia

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

Enrolment in next program

Students are offered a place in the Early Years, K-6, 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.