

GIANT STEPS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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ABOUT GIANT STEPS

Giant Steps established a school for children with autism (ASD) in Sydney in 1995. Now recognised as a leading education centre, the organisation has expanded its school provision to include a range of integral services to meet the needs of our students and families.

Our trans-disciplinary team supports students from Kindergarten through to Year 12.

Our team of teachers and therapists (Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Music Therapy) draw on their expertise to provide an innovative and individualised education and therapy program for each student. These programs are based on the New South Wales Curriculum and incorporate all of the key learning areas.

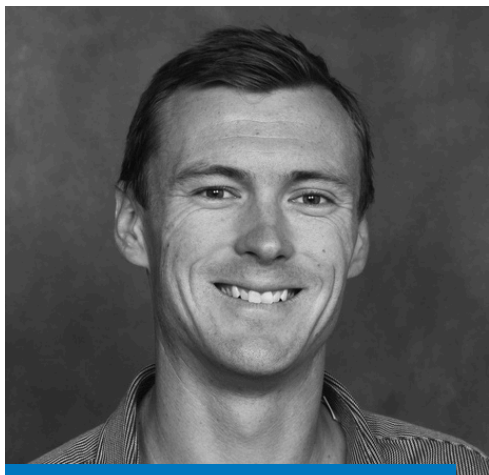
Each member of our trans-disciplinary team play an integral part in the design, implementation and the assessment of the programs. This collaborative approach allows us to deliver rich learning programs within a supportive teaching environment. These programs aim to support student engagement and develop their skills. Our collaborative approach also allows us to differentiate the program to best support the individual social, physical and emotional needs of each student.

Giant Steps is a school that aims to provide a rich and meaningful education to children and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. All students, from K-12, access the Australian Curriculum and are offered the wide array of subjects and experiences that their mainstream peers access. Autism specific supports and strategies, including therapy support, are layered onto the curriculum within the classroom setting, to ensure our programs are engaging and motivating to our students to enable them to be active learners. Individualisation of these supports and outcomes also allow for students to be at their edge of learning, while still remaining part of the social context of the classroom. Giant Steps does not follow a single delivery model, but instead takes a humanistic and flexible approach to teaching students, aiming for the maximum development and independence that our students can achieve.

Giant Steps aims to build a community around our families, who often become isolated when a child is diagnosed with ASD. We work closely with families to understand how our students function across the whole 24 hours of their day, as all this information affects their ability to learn. We encourage connections with our local community and opportunities for our students to interact with and experience a variety of environments and people. We also provide evidence based and best practice training to other agencies and community groups to develop opportunities for our students in the wider community.



PRINCIPAL'S REPORT



ANDREW FRAKES

Principal

The NSW Education Standards Authority, Registration and Accreditation process formed an integral focus for the school in 2023. The school is required to undergo a compulsory process of external inspection in 5-year cycles and in 2023, this process created an opportunity for the Giant Steps Sydney team to demonstrate some of the wonderful work we do across the planning, programming and assessment cycle to support the individualised learning needs of the diverse range of students we support. We were fortunate to be able to showcase our efforts to two inspectors as part of the onsite inspection, including the Director of Regulations and Schooling. The inspectors were particularly impressed at how the staff team make the curriculum accessible to our students and actively seek to give them the breadth of experience that their typically developing peers access. The inspectors also commented on the many layers of support that exist for each student in the way we develop and support access for our students to the curriculum.

There were upgrades across the site in 2023. The highlights were the upgraded bathrooms and new primary school courtyard playground. The much-needed bathroom upgrades increased accessibility and usability for both Primary and Secondary students.

The bathrooms were carefully designed in collaboration with the Occupational Therapy team to support students' skill development in activities of daily living. The Primary School courtyard playground upgrade expanded both the footprint and range of activities available. Students loved the new fixtures and the extra space to move.

We acknowledge the crucial role that schools such as Giant Steps can play in advocating for the experiences of our student population being represented and included in research. In 2023 the team continued to foster partnerships with universities by engaging in relevant research opportunities. The advocacy for inclusion of our student population in high quality research will continue to be focus for the school.

Our remarkable parent body were once again incredibly successful at fundraising the necessary funds for the operation of the Giant Steps School Program. As documented later in the report, the families with the support of our small fundraising team raised over \$3.5m. This incredible effort is inspiring for the staff team and testament to the family's commitment to Giant Steps.



PRIMARY



CAITLIN MILLAURO

Co-Director, Primary



SARAH RAWLINS

Co-Director, Primary

In 2023, the primary school consisted of ten classes across lower and upper primary with a total of 44 students across the program. We started the year with 52 students enrolled across the program and saw the commencement of our new Early Years program in Term 1, with 12 new families enrolling in the program in its first year. As the year progressed, we welcomed 2 new families to the primary program (one in upper primary and one in lower primary). It was a delight to support these new families to transition into the primary program and Giant Steps community, more broadly.

In Literacy, we implemented the Units of Work 'Where the Wild Things Are' & 'Pamela Allen', in alignment with the new NSW K-2 syllabus with a strong focus on the 'four blocks model'. Our 'Pamela Allen' unit explored a range of classic childhood texts and focused on developing vocabulary and the use of descriptive language in texts. Students enjoyed the opportunity to engage in craft and cooking activities related to the texts while making connections with their own experiences and drawing upon their comprehension of the stories to demonstrate their understanding of literature.

In Numeracy, with the implementation of the new NSW K-2 Mathematics syllabus 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, forming groups, two-dimensional spatial structure and non-spatial measure such as mass. The primary school introduced a set of ipads for classes to supplement literacy and numeracy lessons with technology-based activities to support learning.

In History, Science and Geography our 'Magical Potions' Unit of Work provided some interesting 'hands on' opportunities to engage students in their learning. Students explored various safe ingredients to create potions, anticipating a reaction and exploring the observable properties of various materials. They became familiar with scientific processes by learning to observe, record and participate in several experiments. In second semester the 'My School' Unit of Work provided students with opportunities to visit significant places in their local community. We also participated in onsite incursions where local services such as the police and fire department visited the school to provide an educational, hands-on learning experience for the students.

We studied artforms and culture from Asia and Ireland across the year in Visual Arts. Music and Dance explored popular 'TV and Movie' themes and songs as well as 'Electronica' in the second half of the year.

We were able to continue accessing a wide variety of offsite activities and locations as part of the 'GSSA' PDHPE Unit of Work. Classes accessed a number swimming pools and aquatic locations including a nipper's program at the beach to support our students with fundamental water safety skills.

We celebrated a number of whole school events including, welcoming of families onsite to celebrate Mother's Day with an afternoon tea, Father's Day with a BBQ breakfast and sports morning as well as our grandparents for high tea and to spend time within the classroom. Joey's Day early in the year was enjoyed by all upper primary students, they particularly enjoyed getting to know their buddies, going on the jumping castle, slide, pony rides and exploring the sensory art and craft station.

During the later part of the year there were upgrades made to the existing primary toilets and an additional toilet block was built which included two showers and three accessible toilets. These will be instrumental in providing opportunities for the students to work with the staff on improving daily living and self-care skills. As we look to 2024, we are excited to engage students in play opportunities in the newly refurbished courtyard playground which now offers new equipment including a swing set, climbing equipment and a sandpit.



SECONDARY

In 2023, the secondary program consisted of 51 students split across nine different classes, in two buildings, the Quad and Clocktower. A Middle School program was established in the Clocktower Building to support year 6 and year 7 students. 11 students across two classes were given the opportunity to begin engaging with the secondary curriculum. There were flexible groupings between the two classes, with teachers and therapists collaborating and teaching to their strengths. Students experienced different groupings for cooking, science, languages, geography and outdoor education and had the opportunity to generalize newly learned skills to different staff and settings. Student movement across the common areas of the two buildings for recreation and mealtimes fostered social engagement between students in various classes.

The Secondary program implements Life Skills courses which consists of Literacy, Numeracy, Science, Technology, History, Geography, Language, Personal Development and Health (PDHPE), and Creative Arts. Students in their final years of schooling also participate in the Work and the Community Unit of Work which provides students transitioning out of school in 2023 an opportunity to investigate a variety of post-school options, developing independent, vocational, and self-management skills that will broaden opportunities in their transition to leaving school.



The Outdoor Education program integrated within PDHPE and Geography provided opportunities for students to engage in a range of activities consisting of hiking, sailing, surfing, skiing and fishing. Classes accessed a number of swimming locations including indoor and outdoor pools as well as a nippers program to support our students with fundamental water safety skills.

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. Middle School students attended their first camp where they headed to Canberra to visit Questacon, Canberra Zoo and the Australian Institute of Sport.

Highlights throughout the year included two language immersion weeks, where we celebrated German culture, language, food, costume and arts. Students also explored various artforms such as sculpture, ceramics, appropriation, caricature, and pop art in Visual Arts programs 'Extraordinary Creatures' and 'Make it my Way'. Students had the opportunity to visit the New South Wales Art Gallery to view exhibitions of artists they have studied. We were able to maintain our accessible arts program where we were treated to performances by the Australian Ballet Company for 'The Story of Pomi and Gobba', 'SOMOS' by the Sydney dance company and a wonderful performance of the Wizard of Oz at Riverside Girls High School.

During the latter part of the year there were upgrades made to the existing secondary toilets, which included a shower and four toilets. These will be instrumental in providing opportunities for the students to work with the staff on improving daily living and self-care skills.



Secondary School Outcomes

Higher School Certificate

6 students attained their HSC

RoSA

9 students attained their RoSA

Literacy & Numeracy Assessments

In 2023 no students participated in the state-wide national testing. All students had an Individual Plan with a particular focus on the communication outcomes (Support Document - Communication NESAs).



Post School Destinations

All our graduating students were supported in transitions to community participation programs funded by the NDIS for 2024. Five of our students joined Giant Steps Adult Autism Services either in full time or part time capacities.





OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY



CHERYL TOTH
Director of Occupational
Therapy - Secondary



CASSIE ROBERTS
Director of Occupational
Therapy - Primary

In 2023, the occupational therapy team have continued to extend knowledge and upskill by participating in a range of external and internal professional development as well as developing new programs across the school. This year we introduced one new OT to the team, Orion, as we wished Cassie good luck on her maternity leave. Orion has been a great addition to the Therapy team and is valued with his fun playful nature.

Delivery of Program

2023 was the year of make-overs across the school with the OT room, courtyard and toilets all getting an upgrade of resources for our students. The OT room was updated with new paint and sensory boards from Taubman's and the Paramatta Eels, providing our students with a splash of colour creating calm and emotive atmospheres in each area. The courtyard also had a full make-over with selective equipment placed around the yard to best engage students gross motor and sensory needs.

The new toilets across the school have also had a great impact on programs providing resources for students to practice ADL skills such as toileting, showering, brushing teeth and hygiene, within the environmental context, to best support understanding. This has also allowed for a lot of collaborating across the programs, pairing music and visuals to support everyday living activities within these new spaces.

Professional Development

Across the year the OTs have had opportunities to develop presentation skills and sharing knowledge by presenting Sensory Processing in Autism Training Essentials, and presenting training for the Autism Hub Early and School Years with Managing Sensory needs. Many of our OTs have also had an opportunity to complete relevant training and development focusing on sensory approaches, DIR Floortime approaches and attending the Occupational Therapy Australia National Conference to learn about current research and strategies. A big focus for the year was developing understanding around cognition and how this effects occupational performance. Cassie and Cheryl completed the Perceive, Recall, Plan and Perform (PRPP) course looking at task analysis, cognition and occupational performance and how this relates to our students.

Refining Assessment Tools

Development of assessment and looking further into occupational performance, the OT team have started to look at functional cognition or how a person's thinking skills affect their performance of everyday tasks. This framework allows us to implement best practice and how we evaluate everyday tasks being performed in the classroom and out in the community. The team have started to gain understanding in looking at cognitive domains such as attention, memory, planning and performance. The team are excited to further gain more knowledge in this area and think about assessment areas.

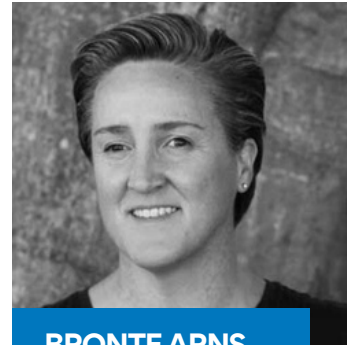
Hair cutting Program

Introduction of the Haircutting Program across the school has provided our students an opportunity to get a professional haircut at school. In term 4 2023, Giant Steps collaborated with Emma Dean Salon, offering haircuts to a handful of students who needed support accessing a hair salon in the community. The outcomes of the hair-cut program may look different for each student, but the overall aim is to build students' tolerance and confidence with getting a haircut while being supported. This collaboration has also allowed hairdressers to gain knowledge on autism and types of support needed. This also has allowed students to have an experience to develop their skills before going out in the community.

MUSIC THERAPY

Community Connections

2023 saw the music therapy team making connections with the community through arts access, and special events. Riverside Girls High School invited our students again to attend a Relaxed Matinee of 'The Wizard of Oz'. This is wonderful opportunity for Giant Steps students to experience supported live performance events, and also contribute to Riverside students learning about adjusting performances to making the arts accessible for everyone. Students accessed the Sydney Dance Company production 'Somos', as well as an Australian Ballet production 'Pomi & Gobba', followed by a wonderful, interactive dance and movement workshop. The year ended with a surprise visit from Australian actor and children's music celebrity, Justine Clarke. This was a great chance for students to experience songs they have loved over the years performed and shared by the composing artist herself.



BRONTE ARNS
Director of Music Therapy

Music Therapy Practice

Music therapy programs focused on two themes in 2023. The Movies and TV unit saw students focus on a range of learning goals through motivating songs and dances from films and TV shows. The Electronica unit drew on student's natural interests in technology to maximise learning about shared social activities and concepts of music. These themes also filtered through to Adult Autism Services, where the music therapist integrated new instruments, equipment and content into the adult program. The music therapy team also focused on advancing music skills in the form of monthly skills workshops using voice, guitar and piano. This flowed on to using more technically challenging preferred music, particularly for older students. The Sydney team, and for the first time, the Melbourne team, also provided music therapy practicum placements for students at the Western Sydney University course and the University of Melbourne. Supervising students is beneficial for music therapists in terms of developing reflective skills and upskilling others in using the techniques and strategies of music therapy.

Professional Development

The team continued to engage in both attending and providing professional development for a range of audiences. The Autism Hub course 'Engaging Autism – Resources for Music Therapists' was well attended, and new staff continue to benefit from the Essentials session on Music and Play when getting to know students. The Melbourne team shared learnings from their attendance at the 'Music Therapy in Schools – Recent Breakthroughs' workshop run by Dr Meg Steele, and re-connections were made with the Music Therapy in Schools Network for Victoria, opening the doors for further collaboration with music therapists working in special and mainstream schools. The highlight of the year was Lene Jeffrey and Vanessa Lucas presenting at the World Congress of Music Therapy in Vancouver, Canada. Lene presented on 'Using Audio-Visual Supports to Develop Independent Living Skills in Autistic Children' – demonstrating how our most effective resources are designed through collaboration between therapy and teaching disciplines. Vanessa drew on the results from research conducted as part of her Experienced Therapist accreditation, to show 'The Relationship Between Interests and Engagement for Autistic Students.' Giant Steps presentations are always well attended at conferences, particularly by those working with individuals with significant support needs, and the information gained from attending these events serves to enhance the music programs for students and participants.



SPEECH THERAPY



In 2023, the speech therapy team focused on refining and expanding speech therapy practice, reflecting on and learning new approaches, and enhancing collaboration with other disciplines and external entities.

Refining and Expanding Practice

Supporting students to express themselves using multimodal means of communication was a continued focus this year. The speech therapy team continually reviewed and evaluated supports alongside the staff team and families for each individual student. This ensured that the supports used are relevant, meaningful and appropriate to the individual to develop their expressive communication particularly the range of pragmatic categories including requesting, negating, commenting and giving their opinion.

The speech therapy team refined the assessment and documentation processes to outline the decision making and critical thinking that occurs when establishing strategies and AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) tools. Speech therapists create a Communication Profile Summary that is based on the Participation Model which takes into consideration the individuals communication preferences and other areas that can impact their ability to communicate including sensory needs, visual literacy, interests/motivation, executive functioning skills, object permanence and theory of mind. Speech therapists share this information with the class team to deepen their understanding about the nuances of each student's communication preferences and styles. This year also saw an expansion of the speech therapists that provide services to Autism Adult Services to mirror the growth in the number of participants that access this service. With growth, comes the need to refine the processes and procedures and the team have been establishing goal setting alongside families and participants, assessment and reporting procedures, upskilling staff and developing and implementing supports across the program.

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Giant Steps' work around comprehension supports and expressive communication was showcased on an international stage this year at the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) conference in Mexico. A single case study of a student's expressive communication journey was presented to explain that the expressive supports that are selected need continual revising and modifying according to the needs and preferences of the individual. Another presentation involved the importance of supporting a student's functional comprehension – the understanding of their role on the world – through a range of core supports including visual lanyards, visual schedules, routines and musical cues. This work was also published in an Australian publication – AGOSCI in Focus.

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 a group of teachers completed the Initial-Lit course run by Multi-Lit which delivers a whole-class teaching model of phonics, reading comprehension and handwriting. Following on from this, the speech therapists led a professional learning session on how to use this information and modify it to suit the individual learning needs of the students at Giant Steps. Class teams had the opportunity to collaborate to discuss how best to implement activities in the Literacy program. The speech therapy team also ran workshop sessions for new staff as part of the Autism Essentials induction program. Hands on activities are used to enhance the knowledge of staff particularly in reference to interaction styles with students, comprehension supports, routines and transitions.

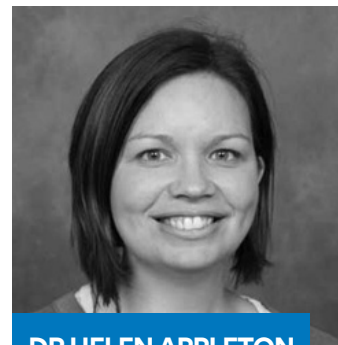
Relationships with Universities

Giant Steps has continued to recognise the important role the school plays in advocating for the experiences of our student population at Giant Steps to be represented and included in research. Fostering partnerships with universities through engaging in appropriate research opportunities has continued this year for the speech therapy team. Most recently, we facilitated a research project led by Sally Ryan and Jacqui Roberts at Griffith University investigating the functions of echolalia in students with complex communication needs through play-based language samples.

Giant Steps welcomed two Speech Pathology students from the University of Technology – Sydney (UTS) for a placement experience. Giant Steps offers a unique setting for university students to deepen their knowledge about autism and multimodal communication in a school-based (whole group) setting. University students learn key professional skills including collaboration, learning skills from other disciplines particularly occupational therapists and being flexible when critically thinking about evidence-based practice. The Clinical Educators also enhance their skills in delivering feedback and having clear and efficient communication channels. The team looks forward to welcoming more university students in the future.



STUDENT WELFARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT



DR HELEN APPLETON
Director of Student and Psychological Services



The Rob Llewellyn-Jones Clinical Centre

In 2023 we held 19 clinic days, seeing 68 students from K-6, Secondary and Adult Services over 181 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. Due to Dr Yvette Vella requiring medical leave for Terms 2 and 3, Dr Patrick Concannon (developmental paediatrician), returned to support the onsite clinic. 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 year also saw consultation with Dr David Dossetor, psychiatrist and Head of Psychological Medicine at Sydney Children's Hospital Westmead, who joined us onsite in Term 1. This ongoing collaboration with a range of experts in their field has helped the GS team to consider broader treatment pathways and ensure students have access to best practice medical and mental health support. The onsite clinic continues to be a highly valuable resource to our students and their 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 (generally 4-6 weeks)
- 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

The Stepping Stones Triple P program has been offered to families in the K-6 program since 2013, and has been well received and supported by families. Feedback has always been positive, and highlighted the practicality of strategies offered, as well as enjoying the group aspect and getting to know fellow parents. This year, Sydney Children's Hospital at Westmead offered scholarships to access training in program delivery to new providers. Two Giant Steps staff members applied and were granted scholarships, Sarah Rawlins and Sarah Robertshaw. They undertook the initial stages of the training program across Terms 3 and 4.

Siblings Group

This year saw the return of the Sibling Support Program at Giant Steps, with Family Support Coordinator Sarah Robertshaw taking over the management of this program. Two groups were run on Saturdays across Terms 2-4; Junior Siblings for 4-7 year olds and Senior for +7years old. Activities both onsite and offsite were completed, including Scavenger Hunts, cooking, bowling, art projects and archery. Also included in the sessions was group discussions around emotions and individual experiences, with activities inspired by the SibsWorks program from Siblings Australia.

NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme continues to play a meaningful, productive and essential role in the lives of the students at Giant Steps. Support has been given to families as they navigate the review process, including change of circumstance reviews due to individual/family changes and at key transition points, such as between K-6 and Secondary, and in consideration of post school programming. Supports can include; help preparing documentation for reviews, attending meetings or providing additional documentation outlining support needs and/of family capacity.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

This year we offered over 35 courses to ensure that each staff member had 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.

Some of the specific courses staff engaged in included:

- Autism Essentials Series
- 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
- Adaptive Leadership
- Women in Leadership
- Leading Evidence Informed Practice
- Courageously Navigating Hard Conversations
- Reportable Conduct
- Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting and Reportable conduct
- Safety Intervention Workforce
- Neuro-affirming practice and goal-setting
- Literacy Collaboration
- Understanding functional cognition through Perceive, Recall, Plan & Perform System (PRPP)
- Online Cyber Bullying
- Initial Lit (Tier 1 Literacy Intervention Program)
- Reframing Autism Conference on Inclusive Practice
- Australian Inclusive Schooling Conference
- Anxiety and Autism
- Successful Supervision
- NDIS Process and Compliance
- Triple P Stepping Stones Facilitator Training
- SibWorks Facilitator Training
- Work, Health and Safety in Schools
- Reframing Autism: Autism Essentials Online Course and Workshop

The school's professional development program promotes ongoing learning, reflective practice and innovation, and demonstrates our commitment to the ongoing professional development of all staff. In addition to driving quality into program, access to high quality, relevant professional development for staff is a supportive strategy for staff retention.

In addition to professional development for existing staff, a systematic and comprehensive staff induction program for all new staff joining the organisation has been implemented this year. This induction supports staff across a range of roles (including teachers, therapists and educators) to understand the philosophy and ethos, expectations, their role, transdisciplinary practice and skills required to be an effective staff member in the organisation. As new staff settle into the organisation, they attend Autism Essential training, which covers core topics such as sensory processing differences, anxiety, routines and transitions, communication and music and engagement. For teachers and therapists, their induction into the school also includes a designated mentor who provides a level of ongoing feedback, guidance and support.

Research and Community Partnerships

The school has continued to foster a number of research partnerships as we advocate for the inclusion of young autistic people with complex support needs into research, policy and practice.

This year, we have continued as a community partner in the Autism CRC funded project led by the Autism Centre of Excellence at Griffith University on developing a quality-of-life intervention that is directly informed by those with lived experience and their families. This project has included understanding what 'living your best life' looks like for those young people with autism, intellectual disability and complex support needs so that appropriate supports can be developed.

We have also continued to support research into understanding and sharing how best to assess, support and teach literacy to autistic children who are non or minimally speaking through an ongoing partnerships with Griffith University and Massey University. The school has also been involved in a research project looking at the functions of echolalia in students with complex communication needs through play-based language samples, alongside Griffith University.

Earlier this year we hosted a group of delegates from the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Indonesian Universities, as they looked at schools operating under models of best practice in supporting children with complex support needs.

STAFF

WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

In 2023 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.

Staff retention rate for 2023 was 86%.

TOTAL STAFF NUMBERS

| | NO. OF STAFF | FTE |
|------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Principal | 1 | 1 |
| Teachers | 27 | 24.4 |
| Therapists | 26 | 21.4 |
| Educators/ Teachers Aides | 51 | 43.2 |
| Administration | 13 | 12 |
| Total Staff | 118 | 102 |

TEACHER ACCREDITATION

DETAILS OF ALL TEACHING STAFF

| LEVEL OF ACCREDITATION | NUMBER |
|------------------------|--------|
| Conditional | 2 |
| Provisional | 4 |
| Proficient | 18 |





STUDENTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT BODY

In 2023 the school enrolled 103 (99.6FTE) 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 | 59 |
| Secondary | 44 |
| Total Males | 73 |
| Total Females | 30 |
| Student Total | 103 |

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION RATES

In 2023 the school enrolled 102 (99.6FTE) 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 2023, 6 students transitioned to post school options and one primary aged student moved interstate.

There has been a 100% retention rate over the last ten years for secondary students, 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 K-6 do not adequately reflect the movement of students who integrate into other educational settings as part of their transition plan. In the Primary years 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.

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 attendance rate of 95%

FAMILIES

FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

Giant Steps acknowledges our families and friends for their unwavering support and dedication to the community. In 2023 the Giant Steps community hosted, supported and participated in over 20 fundraising events, in addition to making and facilitating financial donations to our school all of which helped fundraise \$3.5 million! The tireless efforts of all have not only raised crucial funds to support our programs, but the sense of community is deeply enriched by the remarkable commitment of all our school families.

PARENT 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, the leadership team and the Board. The PAG monitors parent satisfaction throughout the year. 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 2023 student attendance rates increased by 3%, to 95%.



POLICIES

The following policies are available on the Giant Steps website.

Child Protection Policy

<https://www.giantsteps.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Child-Protection-Policy-1.pdf>

Anti-Bullying Policy

<https://www.giantsteps.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Policy-Anti-Bullying-1.pdf>

Complaints Policy

<https://www.giantsteps.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Complaints-Handling-Policy-and-Procedures.pdf>

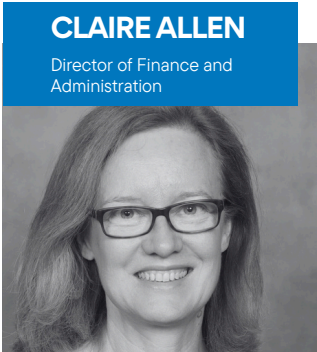
Enrolment Policy

<https://www.giantsteps.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/enrolment-policy.pdf>

Student Behaviour Support

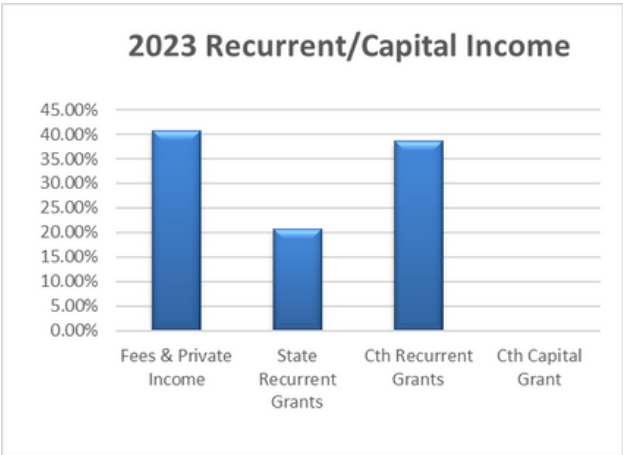
<https://www.giantsteps.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Guidelines-Student-Behaviour-Support.pdf>

SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION



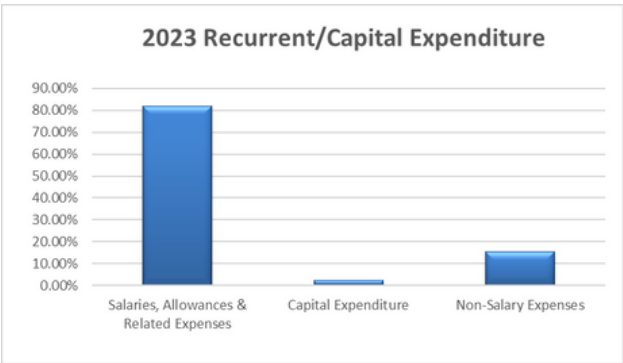
2023 Recurrent/Capital Income

Fees & Private Income - 40.66%
State Recurrent Grants - 20.75%
Cth Recurrent Grants - 38.60%
Cth Capital Grant - 0.00%



2023 Recurrent/Capital Expenditure

Salaries, Allowances & Related Expenses - 82.12%
Capital Expenditure - 2.34%
Non-salary expenses - 15.54%



Giant Steps Australia is a registered Charity and a Public Benevolent Institution. Each year Giant Steps has a full financial audit conducted by PwC.



THANK YOU



GIANT STEPS

Phone

9879 4971

Email

sydney@giantsteps.net.au

Website

www.giantsteps.net.au

Address

23 Punt Road
Gladesville NSW 2111