



# School Annual Report 2019

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*The journey  
starts here...*



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## Introduction

The Hills Montessori School is a community based preschool/ kindergarten located in the leafy Hills District in Sydney.

The Hills Montessori Society was established in 1979. Since that time, it has expanded to provide Early childhood education for three (3) pre-primary classes for children from 3-6 years of age and a Montessori Full Day Program for 3-4-Year-old children, five (5) Parent / Toddler sessions. We also offer before and after school care. Up to 90 children per day attend in an intimate setting with pre-primary classes for children aged 3-6 years old including the kindergarten class

The school delivers a program based on the philosophy of The Montessori method of education along with the curriculum of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). The school meets all the requirements to be registered with NESA and we pride ourselves in the wonderful program we offer due to the dedication of our staff and the commitment of the families attending our school, both past and present.

The Montessori program includes the learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework, the National Quality Standards Education and Care Services National Regulations by ACECQA and the key learning areas stated by NESA.

The 2019 annual report provides information about the programs and performance of Hills Montessori School. It has been written for accountability purposes and is part of our process of self-evaluation, reporting and planning for both the present and future needs of the school.

## Mission Statement

We believe a lifelong love of learning is instilled in children through an environment that caters to each child's unique strengths, interests, abilities and potential. To facilitate this, we follow and abide by the principles of Dr Maria Montessori's method to create authentic Montessori programs for children ranging from infants to 6 years old in our community.

Our child centred approach enables children to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, physically and creatively to become successful, competent and capable individuals. We believe in establishing peaceful and aesthetically pleasing prepared environments using our philosophy expertise and genuine Montessori materials. This enables children to develop their critical thinking skills, problem solving abilities, build self-esteem and grow pro-social and emotional intelligence that will prepare them for future learning and life success. We recognise the rights of each child and actively deliver inclusive programs for all.

As teachers we observe and interpret children's experiences and use assessment practices to plan for and present Montessori lessons based upon individual learning styles, strengths and dispositions. Our experienced, dedicated and loyal teachers hold both Montessori and Early Childhood qualifications and continually update their professional knowledge, proficiency and skills.

We embrace the sociocultural values of our families and affirm the rich diversity of our community. Strong partnerships with families are made through open communication and information sharing which further enhances children's learning and achievement. Families endorse our efforts to actively transition children smoothly as they progress between age appropriate programs.

We acknowledge the Dharug people as the traditional custodians of our local area and show respect for the Indigenous and Torres Strait Island communities by embedding their cultural heritage and customs into our program and professional practice to teach children Indigenous perspectives and our shared history.

Our natural outdoor learning environments afford children the capacity to grow their understanding of sustainability, with our many interconnected living systems, and by engaging in the care for the environment through practical life work and scientific exploration. The welcoming open spaces encourage physical activities that promote psychological wellbeing and a healthy lifestyle. We view the outdoor environment as an extension to the indoor classroom and a classroom of its own right.

Faculty and staff understand high quality early childhood education promotes superior educational outcomes for children. Our national 'exceeding excellence' rating is underpinned by embracing best practice and adhering to the high standards set by three official governing bodies, making us unique leaders in our field.



## Philosophy & Program

The Hills Montessori School follows the Montessori Philosophy, providing an environment that is best suited to the development of the child through the basic principles of freedom of choice, independence, individual learning, and discipline from within the child which are an integral part of the child's experience.

This philosophy is based on the knowledge that a child growing in an atmosphere of respect and understanding for each other and the natural world will develop those values into adulthood.

It is our understanding of the sensitive periods that occur during the development of the child which guides staff to introduce materials and activities that are best suited to the child at the time. The child is then able to best utilise the materials to provide the challenge to maintain their interest with sufficient opportunity for success to encourage their confidence and self-esteem.

Our peaceful environment and compassionate staff nurture respect for self and others, foster a strong sense of community, and stimulate independent thinking. Students carry with them a solid record of academic achievement, a belief in the dignity of work, and a sense of responsibility for their own development as happy and productive human beings.

This environment is designed to foster the natural development process for the child, providing stimulus and freedom to explore according to their changing developmental stages. We understand that children have a natural love and curiosity for knowledge and through their own exploration and discovery, utilise their imagination and creativity. The child will internalise that knowledge, understanding and skills required to ascertain their place and contribution to the world and humanity.

Specially designed equipment provides the child with the freedom to explore concepts and attributes at their own pace and according to their needs and particular skills. They offer the child beauty, exactness, and opportunity to further develop and understand concepts and acquire skills in a sequenced order.

Due to the complexity of the curriculum, key learning areas regularly overlap due to themes, projects or learning processes involved. While the child is introduced to skills and concepts on an individual basis, these are slowly built upon and developed to allow the child to be able to call on an increasing range of skills and information in dealing with the activities and learning experiences in a collaborative and co-operative community.

While each child has a specific program as an individual, it is based on a general program which is found in each teacher's curriculum album. These have been written up during training and added to during in-service courses taken later.

The materials are specifically designed to represent concepts and information in concrete form, enabling the child to interact directly, allowing him/her to develop skills, understand concepts and explore alternatives as an individual or with a small group.

Children are not limited to timed work schedules except by the schools operating hours. Children who require further time to understand concepts or develop skills have that available, within the constraints of the operating hours, along with any assistance they may require. Those children who grasp and understand the concept or information quickly are allowed and provided with materials to move on. It is understood that most children are not likely to have strengths in all areas of the curriculum and the flexibility of time allows the child to work on the weaker areas as needed. This means that each child has their own individual program and work schedule according to their needs.

The child has the opportunity to develop qualities of self-esteem, self-reliance, self-direction, self-discipline, and independence and to build the habit of concentration, research and orderly work pattern.

The Montessori Method also fosters a social awareness and responsibility in children. The three-year cycle for pre-primary and the integration of additional needs children offer a microcosm of society within which children have the opportunity to develop skills essential for interacting in the wider community. This environment promotes individuality, independence, interdependence, awareness of and consideration for the needs of other human beings, which leads to an appreciation of life.

The Hills Montessori School actively encourages the child to appreciate and contribute to the care and conservation of the environment creating an approach of sustainable and ecological practices.



## Hills Montessori Society

The Hills Montessori School is managed by the Hills Montessori Society, a public company limited by guarantee and a non-profit organisation. The society is regulated by the Corporations Act and is endorsed to access the following tax concessions – GST concession, Fringe benefit Rebate, income tax exemption and payroll tax exemption.

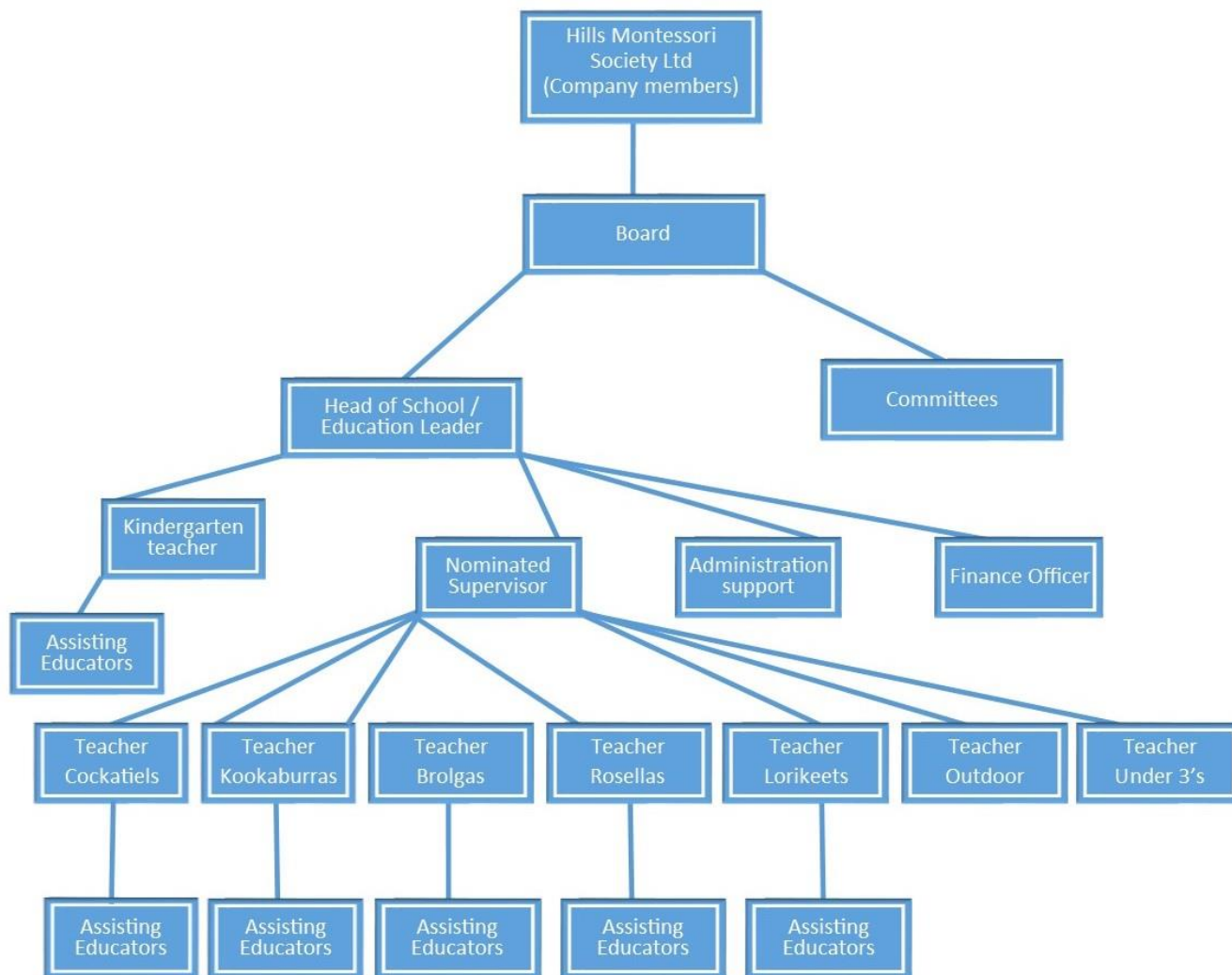
Each family with a student at the school is required to be a member of the Society. A Board of directors administers the Society. The Board is elected by the members of the Society at the Annual General meeting held in April each year.

The Organisational Structure is the basis for the operation of our high quality Montessori Early Childhood Education and Care program. Our programs operate under a clear structure of accountable persons, known as the School Board (Board of Directors).

The School Board consists of a minimum of 6 Board Members, four are Society Members and are usually parents of current students and two of which are employees; Head of School & Treasurer / Finance Officer.



## Organisation Structure





## 2019 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

**President:**  
Jennifer Rufati



**Head of School:**  
Kylee Paddy



**Finance Officer:**  
Joanne Blissenden



**Secretary**  
Ariane May



**Marketing/Publicity**  
Hema Raman



**Social**  
Vacant

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

**Nominated Supervisor**  
Vicki Dempsey



**Administrative Assistant**  
Debbi Bridges



**Executive Assistant**  
Carmen Parker



**Finance Officer**  
Joanne Blissenden



## EDUCATORS:

**Christine**



**Carol**



**Dale**



**Ella**



**Jenny**



**Kylee**



**Marie**



**Michelle**



**Muna**



**Lisa**



**Lynelle**



**Saumya**



**Vicki**



## Head of School Report



Hills Montessori School is able to provide a variety of programs with increasing activities and opportunities for children's academic, physical, social and emotional development and support their love of learning. With the increase in the number of classrooms and additional staff we are able to offer more children an ability to share in our environment.

The children have an understanding of the larger community beyond the walls of the school through the many learning experiences offered. Members of the community are invited to come along and share their expertise with the children such as dental visits, police visits, dog safety programs and many more. Our Early Stage One class (Kindergarten) have opportunities to go out into the community on excursions allowing them to explore the wider part of the environment as well as demonstrating and further developing their social skills.

The School continues to expand the learning opportunities for children covering a diverse range of activities. Our outdoor environment has been our focus again this last year and due to fundraising efforts we were able to see a complete renovation of the outdoor space with better equipment for gross motor development, STEM learning and environmental studies.

I have been fortunate to be part of this wonderful school for over 30 years and recognise that the school provides a very special education which enriches and inspires all children who attend. We appreciate the importance of the families who trust us with their children on a daily basis and allow us into their family circle. We realise the privilege each year of sharing in their lives and watching their personalities grow and develop as they become active members of the wider community.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the 2019 Chair and Board Directors and all the staff for their support, guidance and commitment and I look forward to another great year.

Kylee Paddy  
B.Ed. (ECE) Mq. Uni  
AMI 3-6 Montessori Diploma AMTEF

## President's Report

As President of the Hills Montessori Society, I would like to thank all the board members and staff for their dedication and hard work that continues to ensure a bright future for the school and future generations. The School is in a healthy financial position thanks to the dedication of the board, strong management from the school executive and commitment of staff to ensuring a high quality learning environment.

To support the School Board and staff, we are currently seeking the following board members:

- Social Officer
- Maintenance Assistant to assist with maintaining the school grounds and repairs to our environments

In 2019 we celebrated our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and what a wonderful celebration it was of past and present children, families and staff. We certainly have much to celebrate as we note the wonderful environment being provided for our children created over the many years through the dedication of staff and parents. Our special thanks go to our dedicated staff and to the families who put in the extra time to ensure that it was such a special day.

This year we secured the remainder of the hall for the school office offering better space for working staff. This also provides easier access for parents to deal with administrative issues without having to cross through the whole site as well as provide a reception area that enables us to offer better communication on a variety of areas.

I would like to acknowledge the parents' consistent contribution and dedication towards the school community, helping with working bees and participating in social events. Parental participation is cornerstone to Montessori and to all great community schools. The Montessori Method of education is strong, reliable and proven. The key highlight of this approach is to create a better everyday life for our children. As a parent I see such positive outcomes for the children as evidenced in the very special, thoughtful adolescents and young adults that they have become.

Over the past 8 years that I have had the pleasure to be associated with the school, both as a parent of two Montessori children and also as a board member, I continue to admire the spirit and dedication of the academic and administrative team to improving the learning environment for our children. I personally wish to thank these teams, without their selfless dedication the school would not be the success it is today.

Jennifer Rufati

## Parent Involvement

The School is a community-managed school. Each family is a member of the Association managing the School and therefore has the ability and opportunity to participate in its running with one vote per family for General meetings and the opportunity to stand on the Board. Other opportunities for parents to be involved in the school including Working Bees, Open days, social events and other occasions

## Staff

### Qualifications & Composition

The School's workforce - 17 staff.

- 7 trained teachers,
  - one combining the role of Head of School and Educational Leader as well as teacher in the classroom
  - one combining the role of Nominated supervisor and teacher in the classroom
- 11 Childcare trained educators
- 3 administrative staff composed of the administrative assistant, finance officer and executive assistant who is also a trained teacher

Composition:

- 100% of staff speak English
- 67 % are from an English speaking background
- 33% have Korean, Arabic, Palestine, European or Tagalog-Filipino backgrounds
- 100% of staff are female
- Average age of 52 years.
- Average time at Hills 9 years

Number of staff with following qualifications:	
Bachelor of Education / Teaching	7
Diploma of Montessori (3-6)	7
Diploma in Early childhood	3
Child Care Certificate	5
Montessori assistants Certificate	1
Diploma of Health Sciences	1
Diploma in Business Studies	1
Bachelor of Economics	1
Bachelor of Commerce	1

All of the staff have completed the working with children check upon appointment and hold a current first aid certificate. Staff attendance has been excellent due to a healthy environment created by adhering to our Work Health and Safety policies and the love of working in a Montessori environment. Long term staff employees ensure a great stability with the children and the overall program.

### Professional Development

Hills Montessori encourages and supports Professional learning amongst its staff. This is supported through fortnightly staff meetings where discussions cover Pastoral Care, Work Health and Safety, administration necessities, and curriculum and policy development. In addition, staff are required to attend workshops, conferences, seminars and other school observations.

The school has a Staff Training Policy that ensures our annual budget includes funding to cover ongoing staff development to allow staff to retain up to date training in all areas. Four pupil free days are allocated each year to each staff member to enable them to attend workshops and allowing additional professional development training during the year as required.

This last year

- one staff member is studying for the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education
- one staff member is about to complete her Certificate III in Childcare.

Total amount spent on professional development during 2019 was      \$12,600 –  
an average of \$840 per staff member.

Total number of hours of professional development during 2019 was      194 hours  
– an average of 14 hours per staff member





Professional Learning Activity	Focus Area	No. Of Staff Participating
Dr Justin Coulston	Anxiety in the Classroom	1
Fit Kidz Foundation	Behaviour Management	4
	Caring for Staff	1
Australian Training Institute	CPR Refresher	5
Dr Kristy Goodwin	Digitised Childhoods	2
Australian Training Inst / First Aid Pro	First Aid	12
IEU	Learning outside the classroom	1
AIS- Annual briefing	Management & Security	1
AIS – Governance for School Councillors	Management & Security	1
AIS – MEA Preparations	Management & Security	1
	Mindset Matters	2
MAF	Montessori Education Conference	1
Early Childhood Australia	Reconciliation symposium	1
	Reflective Practice	1
	Resilient Children	1
Fit Kidz Foundation	Sensory Processing	2
	STEM	1
Fit Kidz Foundation	Supporting Children with Speech Disability	2
	Supporting Language in the EC	1
	Understanding Aboriginal Art in EC	1
	Understanding high level accreditation	1



# Financial Report

## HILLS MONTESSORI SOCIETY LTD ITEMISED PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2019

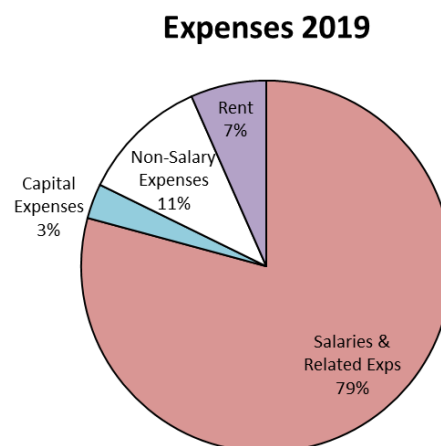
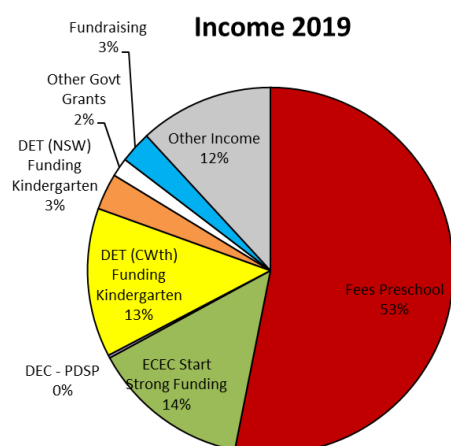
	2019 \$	2019 %	2018 \$	2018 %
Fees Preschool	804,584	53.1%	716,011	38.2%
ECEC Start Strong Funding	211,353	14.0%	418,750	22.4%
DEC - PDSP	3,818	0.3%	8,958	0.5%
DET (CWth) Funding Kindergarten	199,324	13.2%	486,906	26.0%
DET (NSW) Funding Kindergarten	48,618	3.2%	58,976	3.2%
Other Govt Grants	25,000	1.7%	22,000	1.2%
Fundraising	42,309	2.8%	35,305	1.9%
Other Income	179,359	11.8%	125,296	6.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,514,365</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,872,202</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

	2019 \$	2019 %	2018 \$	2018 %
Salaries & Related Exps	1,076,927	79.2%	981,521	80.7%
Capital Expenses	41,384	3.0%	30,245	2.5%
Non-Salary Expenses	151,591	11.1%	131,962	10.8%
Rent	90,000	6.6%	72,600	6.0%
	<b>1,359,902</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,216,328</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Surplus (Deficit)

**154,463**

**655,874**



The School reported a profit of \$154,464 for the 2019 financial year. Revenue from school fees was higher overall due to the popularity of the Montessori Full Day Program which was at capacity by year end. Government funding was almost halved as census data was based on enrolments from the 2018 year and after the backdated funding was taken in to account in 2019. Salaries increased as per mandated increases and using higher trained staff than required. Rent increased as per our lease agreement by a substantial 24%.

During the year we were able to finalise the playground redevelopment and purchase new equipment and furniture for the full day program, as well as setting up a new office environment for admin staff. At year end we were again fortunate to be able to transfer funds to reserves to enable sustainability and future growth and development of the school and staff.

*Jo Blissenden*

## **FUNDRAISING**

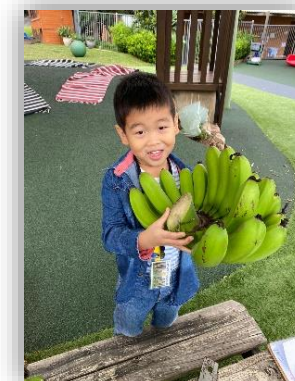
With the Fundraising Levy as well as making use of grants available from ECCMS we were able to do the following projects:

1. New equipment and furniture for the classrooms
2. Advancement of Aboriginal culture and understanding
3. Sound absorption on the walls to minimize sound transfer between classrooms in the hall

### **Our new playground equipment and renovation of the outdoor environment.**

What an exciting year for the children's gross motor development. Our new playground equipment has provided an amazing opportunity to develop a variety of skills in motor co-ordination, strength and stamina as well as their social skills in co-operative play. The newly designed sandpit and position gives the children ample space to explore and create in a peaceful space. The new softfall looks wonderful and provides better protection from enthusiastic play and blends in with our playground to give them uninterrupted space from one area to another. Our additional shade cloth areas expand the area children can play in protected from extended periods in the sun.

Outdoor activities have been increased and extended to incorporate environmental, geography and agricultural studies as well as the creative arts, incorporating care of the food and flower gardens and animal care of the chickens. All of these activities assist the child to develop skills in compassion, care, muscle tone and responsibility as well as the joy of a successful harvest.





## Kindergarten Excursions



Out to the Harbour for an excursion  
on transport (November)



Time at the Zoo -  
September



Our Giving to the  
Wishing Tree -  
December



Pet awareness with a visit from  
Jack the rabbit



Yoga with Gabi



Flower planting with Sabeen  
(Omar's mum)





## School Events

School events help to develop the community and allow parents and staff to get to know each other a little more. It is wonderful to see everyone participating and enjoying the opportunity to be together to celebrate each events.

### 40 YEARS

Our biggest event this year was our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary when people from past and present joined together to share in the wonderful memories of time at Hills. What an occasion it was with so many wonderful sights, sounds and tastes.





## Community Events

Throughout the year the School hosts a range of courses, workshops and information sessions. During 2019 the following events were held -

- Information evenings held were:
  - a. Meet the teacher
  - b. Intro Montessori classroom
  - c. Digitized Classroom Vision
  - d. Orientation for parents
  - e. Open Day
  - f. Classroom tours



High Tea open morning



Mother's Day celebrations



Father's Day celebrations



End of year celebrations



## Premises

Maintenance of the Hills Montessori School premises is critical as it provides both a safe environment for the children to grow and learn, as well as being a warm and fun place for them to socialize.

This is supported by the strong support of the working bees that are held twice a year with parents, children, staff and friends. The working bees focus on both minor maintenance jobs, as well as major projects for the school.

The Working Bee program requires families to contribute a minimum number of hours to assist with maintenance of the school, the development of program activities and administration. This assists in keeping fees to a minimum as well as developing the community of the school.

In 2019 we were able to see the following maintenance areas addressed;

- Renovation of the playground
- Addition of shade sails



## Communication

Parent communication of the child's development as well as school events is enabled in the following ways:

- Child Portfolios available at any time for parent to look at digitally and copy given when child is leaving.
- Parent /teacher conferences formally twice a year and on request
- A newsletter is emailed out four times or fortnightly each term with updates and class news
- Posters on activities or events are placed up regularly in the sign in area and emailed out.
- Information nights held at least once each term to provide extensive information and understanding on child development, family relationships and the materials and activities of the program
- Sharing of information on Skoolbag App, Facebook and School website
- Opportunities to join the child in the class environment each year.
- Opportunity for daily conversation with parents.
- Photos from each class are regularly posted on the Hills Montessori Facebook page

## Student Attendance

### Demographics

#### Kindergarten

Enrolled students	23
Females	50%
Males	50%
Indigenous	0%
CALD	86%
Additional Needs	2 %
Attendance %	
Term One	92%
Term Two	92%
Term Three	63%
Term Four	84%

#### Pre-primary

Enrolled students	69
Females	52%
Males	48%
Indigenous	1%
CALD	85%
Additional Needs	0%
Attendance %	
Term One	90%
Term Two	85%
Term Three	81%
Term Four	73%

#### Parent: Child / Transition

Enrolled students	50
Females	54%
Males	45%
Indigenous	0%
CALD	80%
Additional Needs	0%



The Hills Montessori School is committed to working with parents to ensure that all children enrolled attend regularly. While children will occasionally be absent, regular non-attendance is disruptive both to the individual and the workings of the class, and may result in difficulties for the child in their ongoing development. Where there are genuine reasons for non-attendance on a long term basis, the school will work with parents to ensure that the child's education is continued

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during that time. The school's staff overarching concern is for the welfare of children. Parents are encouraged to show their commitment to the value of education by ensuring their child's regular and ongoing attendance at school.

The School actively discourages taking children out of school during term time for family holidays during their third year of attendance because of the disruption that it causes to the education of individuals and class groups. However, it is helpful for staff to know of such absences in advance and upon parental request offer advice on projects that the child can undertake while on holiday to complement the classroom program.

#### **Process for Noting Absent Days**

1. Parents are asked to ring the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent for the day or for a period of time. Phone messages and emails are passed onto the relevant teacher. Phone messages taken by staff from a parent must fill out an Admin. Absent Form for the day but still requires a signed note from the parent.
  2. Otherwise parents must produce a written note explaining their absence on the child's return. Forms are available to fill in at the school if necessary.
  3. Contact is made with the parent if a child returns without a written explanation. Notification of absences is placed in the child's file and kept for a minimum of 7 years after the child leaves the school.
  4. Parents of children who are absent for more than 3 days without explanation will receive a phone call from the Head of School. In the event a child is regularly absent, an interview will be organised with the parents to determine how to assist the child to attend on a more regular basis or the child's development while away from school.
- # Parents of school aged children are reminded of their legal obligation to ensure their child's attendance at school.



#### **Attendance Records**

1. A record of attendance is maintained each day.
2. An enrolment register is kept with the following information:
  - Name of child, age, address
  - The name and contact telephone number of parent(s)/guardian(s)
  - Date of enrolment and, where appropriate, the date of leaving the school and the student's destination
  - For students who have transferred from another school: the previous school or pre enrolment situation
  - For students leaving The Hills Montessori School: the next school they will be attending
3. Where the destination of a student above 6 years is unknown, evidence that a Department of Education and Training Officer with home school liaison responsibilities has been notified of the student's name, age and last known address.

Rolls are marked daily. All absentee notes must be signed and dated by the parent. At the end of each year, the rolls and notes are collected by the school secretary and stored in the archives. These are kept for a minimum of seven (7) years as prescribed by the Education Act and Department of Education and Communities Regulations.

## **School Policies**

We have all relevant school policies as required by NESA and Department of Education. These policies assist in maintaining a safe and inclusive environment, an ever developing and high quality program and ensures financial viability for the future. Our policies ensure that all aspects of the schools' mission, in providing for student's welfare, are implemented. Hardcopies of policies are held in the Office with some placed on the school website.

Policies reviewed or developed this year were:

- |                         |                              |                                  |                           |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| - Accident & Injury     | - Attendance & Absence       | - Kindergarten entry             | - Reasonable adjustment   |
| - Anaphylaxis           | - Child Protection           | - Maintenance                    | - Responsible person      |
| - Animal Care & Welfare | - Clothing                   | - Staff Professional Development | - Sleep & Rest            |
| - Arrival & Departure   | - Interactions with Children |                                  | - Supervision of children |

## Enrolment Policy

Most of our students commence in our pre-school when they are 3 years of age. Prior to commencement parents are invited to do an observation in a classroom and attend our annual Open Day in March. Parents of the students are invited to a New Parent Information evening in November. At this evening staff explain the school procedures and how to prepare their child for pre-school. Parents are also provided with a handbook, which includes all school policies and procedures.

A probation period exists for the first term of the child's commencement to enable a child to withdraw without financial loss. A withdrawal is agreed upon by both staff and parents and is a very rare occurrence.

Students are invited to continue into our Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten) class the year they turn 5 before the 1<sup>st</sup> August. From here children transfer to a Montessori Primary school or move into local public or private schools. There are no entrance exams into either the pre-school or the ES1 (Kindergarten) class. Enrolment requirements are as per our Enrolment Policy.



Parents have the opportunity to enroll their child for 3 years at Montessori. If the age of the child allows, children attend the Kindergarten group then move into Year 1 at the next school.

The school's policy on enrolment acknowledges the rationale and requirements of current legislation. It combines this with the processes of enrolment and responsibility for student welfare established in the school already. In particular it is the policy of the school that Hills Montessori School adheres to the legislated acts of the Anti-Discrimination Act (NSW); the Disabilities Act (1992); Occupational Health and Safety Act (NSW) 2000 and the NSW Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000.

The School admits students of any race, gender, religion, national and ethnic origin in line with Montessori learning and philosophy. We are proud to have such a diverse mix of people in our school community. All enrolments are considered individually, based upon the Montessori classroom environment, the existing number of children, and staffing.

Offers of enrolment begin in June each year with general conclusion in November followed by an orientation evening for parents on school policy and procedures as well as administration of starting dates.

New children to the school start individually allowing opportunity for staff to assist with the transition into the school. Admission of children usually occurs over a number of weeks in Term 1 of each year and intermittently through the year as vacancies arise.

## Grievance Policy

In the event of a grievance the following procedures should be followed:

Throughout the procedures all parties must be made aware of their opportunity to access the Department office ~ Children's Services Advisor – 9202 5330 at any time.

1. A parent should first lodge the complaint either verbally or in writing to **the appropriate person related to that concern.** e.g. problems regarding fees should be directed to the Finance officer or Head of School, and classroom issues should be directed to the teacher. If it is within that person's capacity to address the matter to the satisfaction of the parent, that person can direct action to avoid recurrence of the problem and **report the matter to the Head of School and/or the President.** If the complaint is about a person, that person should be informed and solutions discussed.
3. If there is a difficulty in doing this or if the discussions are unsatisfactory or unresolved, the matter should **be referred to the Head of School or President/Liaison Officer by the staff member or parent.**
4. If the matter is still unresolved, a meeting will be called between the **person/s involved in the concern, the Head of School and the President.** Time may be set aside for a meeting to occur without the person around whom the complaint revolves. That person would be given an opportunity later in the above mentioned meeting or at a later date to present his/her account of the incident.
5. **A committee involving the Head of School, President and two other committee members** may be contacted if the situation is still considered unsatisfactory.
6. If issues regarding the management of the school that have not been resolved at this level, the parent may wish to call an EGM in accordance with the Hills Montessori Society By-Laws
7. If still unsatisfied with the decision, the complainant may contact the Supervisor at Department of Education and Community Services 9836 9831 or Board of Studies for concerns regarding ES1 students on 9367 8341.
8. The Ombudsman; [www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au) / 02 9286 1000, may be contacted if the complaint is not resolved by communicating through the above channels.

## Pastoral Care

The quality of Pastoral Care influences the culture and feeling of the whole school. It creates an atmosphere in which children feel secure, valued and encouraged in their learning, growth and social development. It will inform and reassure parents that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and healthy environment.

Each person is respected and acknowledged as a valuable member of the School community. We seek to establish a relationship and partnership with staff, parents and students which promotes mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and acceptance. Pastoral Care is an approach to education which attempts to value and develop each member of the school community. It addresses the social, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and physical needs of the students so that each child has the opportunity to reach his/her potential, and acquire skills to cope with life.



The Montessori principles encourage the child to develop the ability to take responsibility for their own well-being and to care for others. The program allows quality teaching directed to the individual learning needs of the child and providing opportunity for the student to nurture individual growth.

The interest of the child is the primary concern at all times showing no bias to students with culturally and linguistically diverse or socio-economic backgrounds or special needs.

Staff have the responsibility of fostering quality interpersonal relationships amongst themselves, students, parents and support staff. Staff have a significant role of modelling the importance of building and maintaining relationships which are grounded in mutual respect, dignity, fairness, reconciliation, compassion and justice. Staff are aware of appropriate boundaries within teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships.

Pastoral Care is fully integrated into the school's daily routines and its curriculum. The safety, health and wellbeing of each member of the School community is of paramount importance.

## Behaviour Management

*"Let us remember that inner discipline is something to come to and not something already present. Our Task is to show the way to discipline. Discipline is born when the child concentrates his attention on some object that attracts him/her not only with the useful exercise but with the control of error."* **MARIA MONTESSORI: THE ABSORBENT MIND**

The aim of a Montessori environment is to help each child develop inner self-discipline. This development is fostered by the ordered organisation of the classroom and by the child's freedom to choose and work at an activity without interference. Guidance is given when appropriate.

This approach alleviates many disciplinary problems by helping the child gain skills in self-discipline and mediation within a controlled environment. The mixed age group of each classroom allows the younger children to emulate the more mature behaviour in the environment.

Limits are set for the benefit of the group and each child's individual development. Setting limits helps children to start what is hopefully a lifelong process of feeling secure, orienting themselves in the world, and finding appropriate expression for feelings that are hard to control. Positive reinforcement is used to foster acceptable behaviour and children are given words to assist them to express their feelings so that they need not resort to physical responses, for example, hitting. Children are encouraged to become independent in their dealing with one another as appropriate to their age. Adult intervention occurs when the situation demands. Children displaying unacceptable behaviour may be required to isolate themselves from their peers in order to reflect on their behaviour. They are free to resume their activity when they feel ready. Behavioural problems may be discussed in the group without referring to the offending child(ren) by name.

If deemed necessary, the parents of a child, who is behaving inappropriately, will be notified and advised of appropriate action. Written records will be kept of incidents of unacceptable behaviour or inactive or withdrawn behaviour, and of conversations and correspondence with the parents. Where a formal meeting is required with the child's parents, they are to be given a set of minutes taken at the meeting. The parents are required to sign the minutes as acknowledgement that the discussion took place along the lines contained therein. In severe or repeated instances, the offender's parents may be advised to seek professional help.

In accordance with the Education Reform Amendment (Corporal Punishment Act 1995), and in keeping with the Montessori philosophy, this School does not permit corporal punishment of students and does not support corporal punishment in any form.

## School Performance

At the beginning of the year a Strategic meeting was held to discuss operations and ideas for going forward. Our thanks to those who participated. This is very helpful in determining projects and procedures for the following year and the creation of new ideas in programming.

***For 2019 these items continued to be identified as the following strengths of the school:***

- Commitment to the children
- Community spirit
- Unique environment
- Quality of staff
- Holistic approach to teaching
- Understanding of staff for parent situations
- Class sizes
- Adherence to the Montessori philosophy
- Outdoor facilities



***Considerations for the following year are:***

- Provide greater opportunities for parents and families to connect
- Information nights covering a variety of topics including Montessori philosophy and program both at school and at home
- Continue with the outdoor environment
- Increase in school size to capacity
- Development of resources for administration staff

Many of these items and more have been included in the Quality Improvement Plan which can be viewed in the office.

## Student testing

Our students are not required to be state or nationally tested.

In house testing occurs on an individual and ongoing basis to indicate what knowledge has been acquired and determining the program for future learning. Children are encouraged to look at their progress and compare their work with a view towards improving their skills and knowledge as an open-ended development.



## Future Projects

The Hills Montessori School continues to look to developing the school environment for the children and families at the School as well as supporting the local community.

In 2020 we will be focusing on the following projects:

- Replacement of cubby house
- Construction of a wildlife garden
- Ongoing development and maintenance of the Food Forest garden
- Development of flower garden
- Ongoing development of policies and procedures.