Annual Report 2014

“Here for the children since 1975”
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Introduction

The Children’s House Montessori School is a non-profit, parent/staff run entity. Our objectives are to establish, maintain and develop a school based on the philosophy and educational methods of Doctor Maria Montessori. The school operates two classrooms for three to six year olds. Students who are turning five participate in the kindergarten program that runs five full days a week.

Rationale

This report is required in order to meet the educational and financial reporting obligations of the Board of Studies of NSW. The details are provided in the Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual February 2010 (incorporating changes from 2004 to 2009), which regulates Kindergarten through to Year 12.

Application

Only a small proportion of our students are affected by the educational and financial reporting obligations. In most instances, it is not possible to isolate information specific to the Kindergarten program. Therefore, information is provided relating to the entire school.

Period of Report

This report covers the 2014 calendar year.
Chairperson’s Message

The Sydney Montessori Society, through The Children’s House Montessori School, continues to provide Montessori education to children aged between three and six years old at its North Ryde premises.

The year’s average enrolment was again down from 46 the previous year to 40 in 2014. This change is attributable to a number of factors including changing needs of the community, whereby it is increasingly difficult for parents to manage 3 hour schooling each day. The school has recognized and is planning to cater for such changes to ensure its long-term viability in the future. This includes seeking ways to provide longer schooling hours and improved marketing to showcase the benefits of the school program.

With the execution of a new lease for 5 years from the City of Ryde, the school is now able to plan for its long-term future and cater to the demands of the changing community. One of the most significant improvements was the construction of the new playground, named the Denise Underwood Playground, in recognition of the Principal’s longstanding dedication to the school. Other improvements to the building are also currently being investigated.

Education of both the child and parents is an important part of the school’s approach. Families were able to witness the benefits of the Montessori approach by attending one of the two Guest Days and/or the two observation sessions. Parent Information nights were also well attended by parents. These information sessions give an insight into the Montessori Method and help families understand and appreciate the skills and knowledge their children will acquire.

Parent participation is vital to our school being a parent-run, not-for-profit organisation. Our major fundraising event, despite being lower key than previous years, was still a success with parents enjoying a mixture of trivia and games, a magic show and live auctions. The evening was an example of a good balance between satisfying fundraising needs and building and the maintenance of a strong community spirit.

Parent participation was strong with many parents volunteering to help in the various needs of the school. This included maintenance days, fundraising efforts (such as Bunnings barbeques), various social gatherings, the book club and library and special talks. The members of the School Council also worked well as a team to ensure the efficient running of the school.

The School Council has started the 2015 school year with a list of priorities and actions. This includes new marketing/PR initiatives; the introduction of a toddlers program to act as a feeder for the school; and continued focus on improving the school. These are embodied in the recently updated Business Plan, which lays out the goals and actions for the school over the next 3 years. The plan is arranged into 4 broad categories – Staff, Students, Environment and Partnerships. Having a structured plan also provides for continuity for the school despite having different members of the School Council each year.

Finally, our dedicated staff continued to deliver outstanding education outcomes for all children in a positive and caring manner. On behalf of the parent body, I extend the utmost of thanks and appreciation for their efforts.

Brad Chan Chairperson
Treasurer’s Message

At a consolidated level, the school made a profit of $5,199 in 2014 financial year (± $9972). In view of the future directions for the school optional building fund contributions are being included in invoices of term fees, plus additional voluntary contributions continue to be sought from parents. The parent body has been very supportive and contributed generously to the building fund.

In addition to tuition fees and the Department of Education and Care funding the school’s fundraising program is an important additional source of revenue. The 2014 program raised approximately $10,985, with the majority of funds coming from the School’s Trivia night (our major fundraising project). The Trivia night revenue came from ticket sales, donations and auction items from local businesses. The fundraising program is managed by parents and supported by the wider school and local community.

The School’s families also raised money through a number of smaller fundraisers, and raising funds via a Bunning’s BBQ. Many parents will devote time and energy to this important task again in 2015. Furthermore many local businesses in the community provide financial and other support to assist make the fund raising a success.
Teaching Staff Message

The teaching staff was stable in 2014. The ability of The Children’s House to recruit and retain qualified and committed staff is a key strength of the school.

Teaching staff were provided training on in-service days and many worked towards new qualifications in 2014, with 2 teachers attaining their Cert 3 in Childcare. Our Principal, Denise Underwood attended several external professional development opportunities as did the other teaching staff.

Directresses provided parents with the opportunity to experience the Montessori Method through the information evenings. They also attended the monthly council meetings and long term planning meetings, prepared and wrote columns in the newsletters and regularly updated parents with regards to their children’s development.

Twice a year, they prepared written assessments of the children’s progress and undertook parent interviews to discuss them.

The teaching staff has and will continue to ensure that the School meets the curriculum outcomes set by the NSW Board of Studies for our Early Stage 1 children.
Reporting Area 1: Contextual information about the school

There are currently 40 children enrolled in the program between three to six years of age of boys and girls. Most of the families are from the Ryde and surrounding area.

The Children’s House Montessori School is set up under the Sydney Montessori Society, which is incorporated as a Company limited by guarantee and is therefore regulated by the Corporations Act 2001. As a Not for profit entity it is endorsed to access the following tax concessions, GST, Fringe Benefit Tax Rebate and Income Tax Exemption.

Reporting Area 2: Standardised national literacy and numeracy testing.

There were 16 children who were five years or more by the end of 2014, who were attending the Kindergarten (Early Stage One) program.

All children met the curriculum outcomes set by the NSW Board of Studies. Transition of these students to their next stage of schooling was closely monitored. Opportunities were arranged for these children to visit their respective schools and any lack of readiness was addressed.

Reporting Area 3: Summary of Professional learning of Teachers

Both teachers employed by The Children’s House Montessori School have the appropriate teaching qualifications as determined by the Minister of Education and Training.

The teacher in charge of the Kindergarten class gained her Masters in Primary Education in December 2011.

Annual expenditure on Professional Learning for 2014 was $2500.
**Reporting Area 4: Workforce composition**

The schools’ workforce is made up of six staff with two teachers, 3 teaching assistants and one administrator. 70% are from an English speaking background with 30% form a non-English speaking background. All of the staff are of the female gender with an average age of 40 years.

All of the staff have completed the working with children check upon appointment.

**Reporting Area 5: Student Attendance rates**

The average attendance for the school population of kindergarten children for 2014 was 91%.

**Student non-attendance**

The school monitors the daily attendance and absences of students in the school by maintaining a daily register for each class. Student absences from classes are identified and recorded in a consistent manner by the school administrator. Unexplained absences are followed up in an appropriate manner with the parent/guardian by the school principal. Where unsatisfactory class attendance is identified the attendance issue and any action taken will be according to the Student Attendance Policy.

Parents are responsible to notify the School of absences due to sickness and also to notify and seek permission prior to planned extended leaves of absence.

**Reporting Area 6: Post school destinations**

Eight of the children moved onto year one classes at local primary schools. Two children moved to Catholic primary schools, four children moved to Anglican primary schools and two children will remain at school until they are 6.
Reporting Area 7: Enrolment policies

Our students commence at the School when they turn three. Prior to commencement parents observe in the classroom and are given the opportunity to ask questions about the Montessori Method and our curriculum. It is expected once their child has commenced that they proceed from the three and four class to the Kindergarten class.

Reporting Area 8: Characteristics of the student body

Out of the 16 students attending at the kindergarten stage at our School, 11 are boys and 5 are girls. Only one student comes from a family that speaks another language in addition to English at home. There are no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students currently enrolled at the school.

Reporting Area 9: Regarding School Policies

The welfare of the children is of paramount importance. This is covered in several of our existing policies including:

- Anti-bias
- Behaviour management
- Children with special needs
- Confidentiality
- Educational and Financial Reporting
- Fire safety and Education
- Multicultural
- Occupational Health and Safety Duty of Care
- Regarding Staff Student Relations
- Safe and Supportive Environment

These policies are reviewed regularly and can be found in our ‘Policy Folder’.
We also cover the responsibilities of employees, including our Code of Conduct, in our Staff folder. A full review of policies took place in 2010 resulting in several changes to bring them in line to Board of Studies requirements.

Subsequent changes have been made to update policies in 2014.

Discipline is covered under our Behaviour Management Policy.

Reporting complaints and resolving grievances:
The procedures to follow both by teachers and parents are outlined in the Parent Handbook. A copy of the complaints procedure is displayed on the information noticeboard.
Reporting Area 10: Priority areas for improvement

The Children’s House’s priority areas for improvement in 2014 were all addressed throughout the year. They included:
1: Establishing a lease for a further term of 5 years with Ryde City Council.
2: Upgrading of the outdoor area.
3: Fundraising continued to be a major focus of the parent body towards our long-term goals.

Priority areas for improvement in 2014 are:
a. Establish a parent toddler programme.
b. Build a new classroom.
c. To provide the community with a financially stable foundation for the community and our staff.
d. To build a social culture that is tight and provides our parents with a support network and in turn develops lifelong friendships.
e. Commitment to communication, which is robust, and two ways.
f. Commence the development of a local profile.

Reporting Area 11: Initiatives to promote respect and responsibility

Respect and responsibility are the founding stones of the Montessori philosophy and teaching principles. Central to Montessori philosophy is giving the children the freedom for spontaneous activity. The materials are self-correcting and the child can gauge his or her own performance. Children develop independence, responsibility, persistence and confidence in their own abilities.
They use a special set of educational materials, choosing their activity themselves, guided by their teacher, and can engage in that activity until they feel they have completed it. They discover a love of learning. They mentor younger children and explore their world in a cheerful atmosphere of orderliness, calmness and purposeful work.
Reporting Area 12: Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

The Children’s House Montessori School is a parent-governed school. The Board consists of seven parents who have been parents of the school for between one and six years. As part of the parent body they report back on parent satisfaction or non-satisfaction. To date there have been no issues with dissatisfaction with either, the teaching staff, the curriculum or the environment.

There seems to be a general consensus that parents are satisfied with the decisions that the Board are making. Parents have the opportunity to discuss any issues with the Principal at any time.

Teachers meet with parents twice a year at formal interviews to address any concerns they may have about their children and to report on progress. This gives parents the opportunity to give input on the curriculum and its delivery. Many parents say how surprised they are on how much their child has learnt.

The School is very grateful for the long standing support of the staff. Two staff have been at the school for over twelve years, one for nine years, two for six years, one for 5 years and one for three years. This demonstrates a commitment to the school, parents and children and shows their satisfaction re working conditions.
Reporting Area 13: Summary financial information

Revenue for 2014

Percentage of total revenue
Expenditure in 2014

Expenditure as a percentage of Total

Expenditure as a percentage of Total