



The Children's House Montessori School

Annual Report 2016

"Here for the children since 1975"

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Introduction

The Children's House Montessori School is a not-for-profit community based 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 one classroom for three to six year olds. One class for 3 and 4 year olds and a toddler group which runs 3 mornings a week. 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 NESAs. The details are provided in the Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual March 2017 (incorporating changes from 2004 to 2017), 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 2016 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 has continued to show vacancies, however also showing strong signs of improvement compared to previous years. The lower numbers have been well documented in recent years, largely due to factors including continued competition from other facilities as well as more families moving into the area with both time and financial constraints. The school has been planning for such changes for some time and initiatives such as the introduction of a toddler program and voluntary extended hours (known as home environment) have proven to be successful in attracting new families. In addition to the shift in marketing focus from direct marketing to social media, we anticipate that future enrolments will be strong and allow the school to return to financial sustainability.

The school currently leases its premises from the City of Ryde and this provides us with some certainty of tenure in order to plan for the long term future of the school. The school continues to maintain a good relationship with the City of Sydney and we do not anticipate any changes to our strong ability to renew the lease in 2019. Ongoing capital improvements to the building and grounds continue to be discussed and planned for at monthly school council meetings.

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, with parents taking advantage of these opportunities to witness how their children behave, learn and interact in the classroom. 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.

As a parent run school, the participation from our parents is vital to our school being able to function effectively. Our major fundraising event this year was held as a family day at the school with face painting, live music, and the children's artwork auction. With much positive feedback, the day was successful in achieving a good balance between satisfying fundraising needs and building and the maintenance of a strong community spirit.

Parent participation continued to be 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, and the book club and library and special talks. The members of the School Council also worked well as a team to ensure The School Council has started the 2017 school year with a list of priorities and actions. This includes new marketing/PR initiatives; reviews of the business plan and its priorities; and the continued focus on improving the school. The Business Plan, currently arranged into 4 broad categories – Staff, Students, Environment and Partnerships remains the primary guidance document for the school in terms of its strategic priorities. 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. Staff morale remains high, turnover low and professional development of our teachers continues to be a high priority for the school council. 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 loss of \$76,332 in the 2016 financial year (2015: \$82,342). In view of this our current priorities (both short and long term) are centered on ensuring strong student enrolments, ensuring staff capacity and development, as well as continued building improvements. The school optional building fund contributions have been generous with donations amounting to \$12,000. We will continue to seek these contributions in the future from parents.

In addition to tuition fees and the Department of Education funding the school's fundraising program is an important additional source of revenue. The 2016 program raised approximately \$8,000, with the majority of funds coming from a raffle and the selling of children's art work. 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 such as Bunning's BBQ's. Many parents will devote time and energy to this important task again in 2017. Furthermore many local businesses in the community provide financial and other support to assist our fund raising events.

The marketing and communications strategy developed in 2016, with the aim of raising the school profile and understanding of the school and Montessori education in the broader community has started to bring in many new enrolments. We look forward to full classes by the middle of this year.

Teaching Staff Message

The teaching staff was stable in 2016 although 1 staff was on maternity leave, one staff member has been engaged and is training in the Montessori Philosophy. 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 continued to work towards new qualifications in 2016. 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, 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 NESAs for our Early Stage 1 children.

Reporting Area 1: Contextual information about the school

There are currently 34 children enrolled in the program between three to six years of age and 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 8 children who were eligible to attend the Kindergarten (Early Stage One) program at the beginning of 2016. By the end of 2016, there were 6 children due to children moving on to big school as they turned 6.

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.

Both teachers are accredited with the NESAs.

Annual expenditure on Professional Learning for 2016 was \$3,800

Reporting Area 4: Workforce composition

The schools' workforce is made up of six staff with two teachers, 3 teaching assistants and one administrator. 85% are from an English speaking background with 15% from non-English speaking background. All of the staff are of the female gender with an average age of 42 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 2016 was 94%.

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 extended leaves of absence.

Reporting Area 6: Post school destinations

Two of the children moved onto local public primary schools. Two children moved onto a Montessori Primary School. Two children moved to private primary schools, and two child 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 students attending at the kindergarten stage at our School, 5 are boys and 3 are girls. All students speak English fluently. 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. Policies continue to be updated on a regular basis to bring them in line to the NESAs requirements.

Subsequent changes have been made to update policies in 2016.

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 2016 were all addressed throughout the year. They included;

- 1: Maintenance of the grounds.
- 2: Replacement of the roof.
- 3: Fundraising continued to be a major focus of the parent body towards our long term goals.

Priority areas for improvement in 2017 are:

- a. Replace the side deck to allow children access in all weather.
- b. To provide the school with a financially stable foundation.
- c. To build a social culture that is tight and provides our parents with a support network and in turn develops lifelong friendships.
- d. Commitment to communication which is robust and two ways.
- e. Continue to market the school and build enrolments.

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.

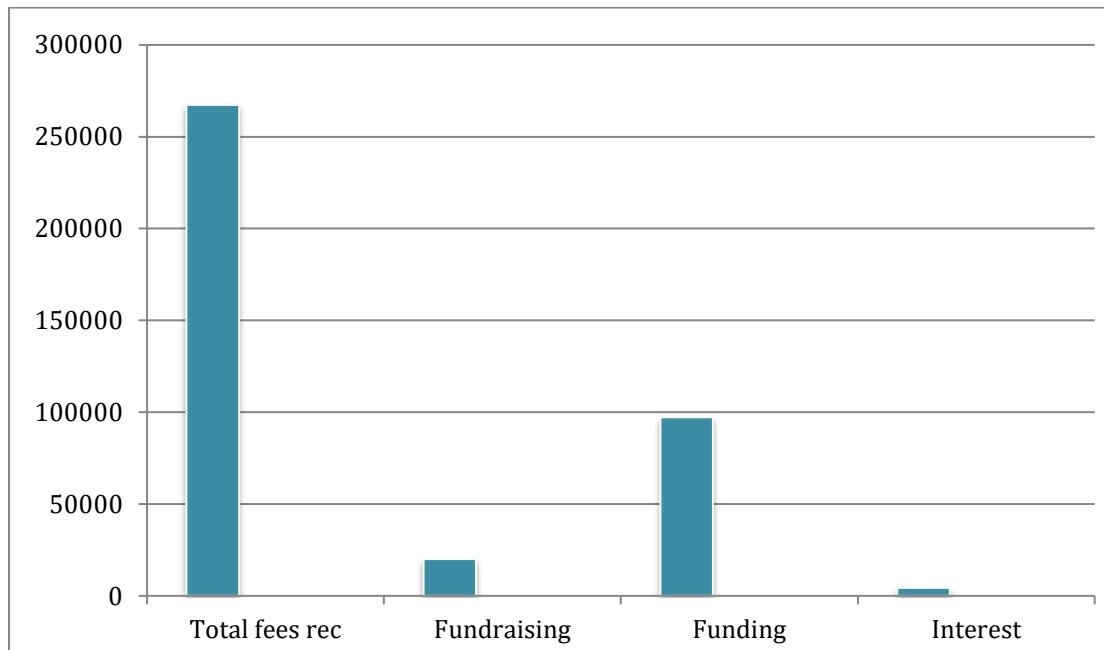
There seems to be a general consensus that parents are satisfied with the decisions that the Board are making. Parents have the opportunity to discuss any issues with the Principal at any time.

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.

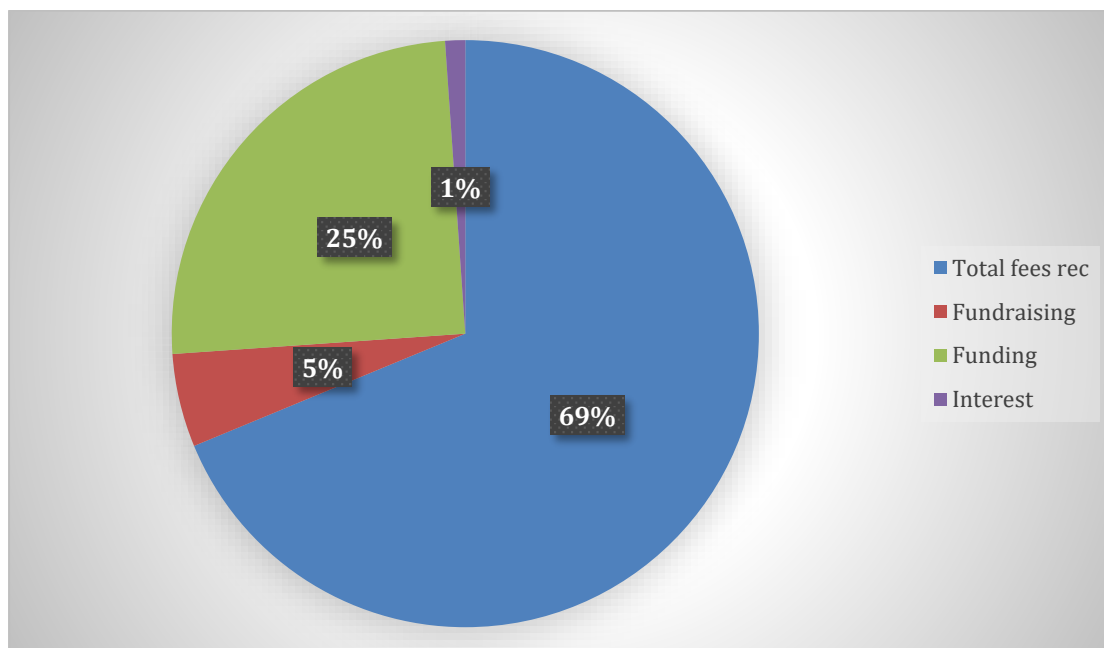
The School is very grateful for the long standing support of the staff. Two staff have been at the school for over 14 years, two for over 9 years, one for 8 years, one for 7 years and 1 for a year. This demonstrates a commitment to the school, parents and children and shows their satisfaction re working conditions.

Reporting Area 13: Summary financial information

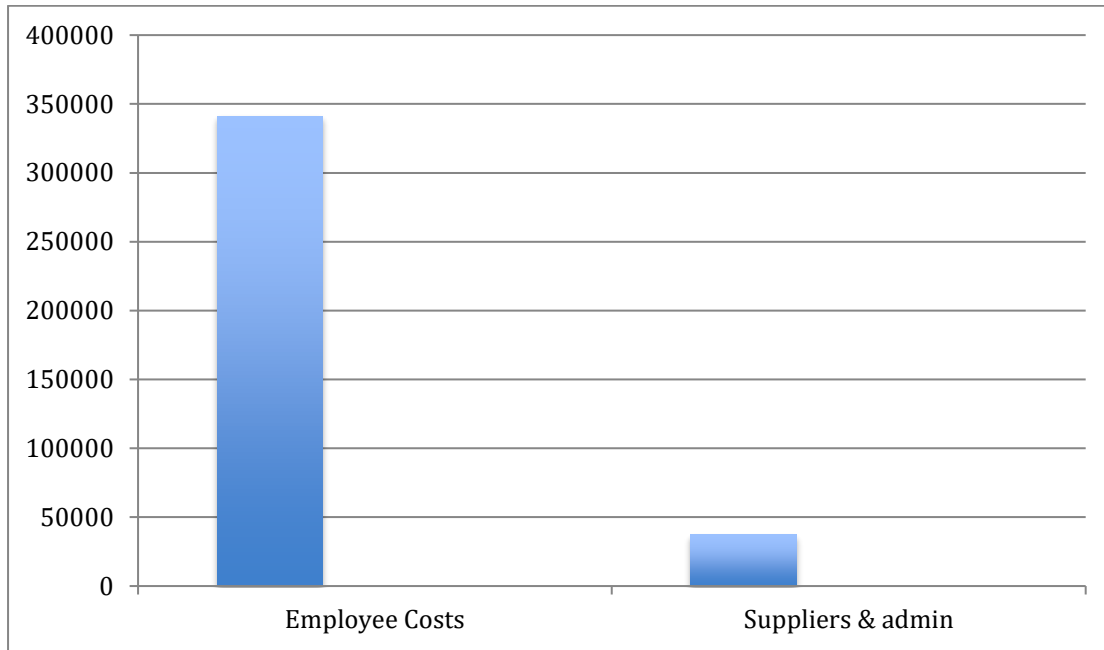
Revenue for 2017



Percentage of total revenue



Expenditure in 2016



Expenditure as a percentage of Total

