



Annual Report 2024

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“Here for the children since 1975”

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Our philosophy	3
Rationale	4
Application	4
Period of Report	4
Sydney Montessori Society	4
Message of key school bodies	
Chairperson's Report	5
Treasurer's Report	6
Principal's Report	7/8
Contextual information about the school	
Teaching Staff	9
Summary of Professional Learning of Teachers	9
Workforce composition	9
Characteristics of the student body	10
Student attendance rates / non-attendance	10
Post school destinations	10
School policies	
Enrolment policies	11
Student welfare	11
Behaviour management	12
Reporting complaints and resolving grievances	12
School Performance	
Initiatives to promote respect and responsibility	13
Parent, student and teacher satisfaction	13
Priority areas for improvement/ achievement of priorities for 2022	14
Summary financial information	15/16

Introduction

The Children's House Montessori School is a not-for-profit community based entity located in North Ryde, Sydney. Our objectives are to establish, maintain and develop a school based on the philosophy and educational methods of Doctor Maria Montessori along with the curriculum of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

The school operates one classroom for three to six year olds. One class for three and four year olds and a toddler group that runs three mornings a week. Students who are turning five participate in the kindergarten program that runs five full days a week.

Our Philosophy

We believe children:

- Are unique and valued individuals who develop in different areas at different rates and with different styles.
- Should be encouraged and supported in the pursuit of their learning interests and abilities.
- Develop positive self-esteem by having the opportunity to experience and accept new challenges in a safe and encouraging environment.
- Have an innate capacity for learning and desire to learn.

As teachers our aims are:

- To enhance each child's strength, competencies and self-esteem.
- To facilitate the development of the total child with the integration of the intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual and social aspects of life.
- To develop the independence and adaptability of the child as we see education as an aid to life and preparation for it.
- To provide a learning environment that is active, experimental, individually paced and self-correcting, independent and unlimited in scope.
- To provide a range of experiences, challenges and beliefs that contribute to their understanding, empathy and acceptance of others without bias, regardless of their ability, gender, culture, family structure or economic status.
- To maintain a safe healthy environment that will enhance our children's autonomy, initiative and self-worth.
- To help children learn to interact effectively, and in doing so to learn to balance their own rights, need and feelings with those of others.
- To acknowledge the worth of the cultural and linguistic diversity that children bring to the environment.
- To encourage families to share their knowledge of their child and to reciprocate by sharing our knowledge of children with parents so that there is mutual growth and understanding in ways that benefit the child.
- To understand and have respect for their dignity and worth as a person.

As a community:

- We encourage families to contribute as volunteers to provide ongoing support to enable our preschool to run effectively and flourish.
- We actively cultivate respectful, supportive relationships among children, teachers, parents and the community.
- We welcome visitors to our school in a friendly courteous manner.
- We are keen to be involved in local events as a means to give back to our local community.

Rationale

This report is required in order to meet the educational and financial reporting obligations of NESAS. The details provided follow the prescribed list in the Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual September 2023, 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 2024 calendar year.

Sydney Montessori Society

The Sydney Montessori Society manages the Children's House Montessori School. Each family with a student at the school is required to be a member of the Society. A Council of Directors administers the Society. The Council is elected by the members of the Society at the Annual General Meeting held in May each year.

The School Council consists of a minimum of seven Council Members, six are Society Members and one who is the current Principal.

Current Council Members are:

Ariana Neuman	Chair
Renee Collins	Vice Chair
Selina Li	Secretary
Shikha Chadha	Treasurer
Leah Weiss	Fundraising
Alessia Viscomi	Member
Denise Underwood	Principal

Chairperson's Report for 2024

The Sydney Montessori Society (SMS), through The Children's House Montessori School (the "School"), provides Montessori education to children aged between three and six years old at our North Ryde premises (three-year program). As a parent governed school, the support from our parents is critical to our school being able to function effectively. I wish to thank all the parents and staff for participating in maintenance days and fundraising events and generally caring for the school.

Business Operations

We had full enrollments in 2024 and anticipate full enrollments for 2025. This is mainly due to the pre-preschool classes offered for toddlers and parents as an introduction to our school. We were also encouraged to find that one third of our school attended the kindergarten class.

The school leases its premises from the City of Ryde. Although a new lease has not been agreed upon, there is no indication that the School Council plans to vacate the school in the near future. We would like to acknowledge the support we have received from the City of Ryde with lower than commercial rates for our lease. The School Council remains committed to nurturing our relationship with the City of Ryde, including plans to extend an invitation to our upcoming 50th anniversary year celebration (Friday September 19th).

Financial snapshot

The school's healthy financial situation has provided the School Council with the opportunity to identify and undertake several key initiatives within our 2023-2025 business plan, which is set to be updated this year. One of the major projects completed in 2024 was the redevelopment of the school's playground, at a cost of \$50,000, which now features a beautiful mural painted on the back wall.

Looking ahead to 2025, we have planned several capital improvement programs to enhance both the building and outdoor spaces. These include urgent plumbing work scheduled for term 2, and the replacement of carpet in the reading nook, both funded by contributions from our building fund. These initiatives are partially supported by our successful fundraising efforts from 2022-2024.

We hope that these improvements, along with other planned projects, will ensure a welcoming environment that continues to support our children's Montessori education and overall well-being.

Staffing

Our dedicated staff continues to deliver outstanding educational outcomes for all children in a positive and caring manner. Staff morale remains high; turnover is low and professional development for 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.

Ariana Neuman

Treasurer's Report

As per the financial report, the school reported a profit of \$183,535. in 2024. This is due to the higher number of kindergarten-student subsidies, as well as the receipt of key grants, i.e. for physical education/wellbeing. Grant monies that were not spent in 2024 will be applied to health and wellbeing activities in 2025 and staff development.

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's optional building fund contributions have been generous with donations amounting to \$10,000. 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 2024 program raised approximately \$7000, with most funds coming from Bunnings BBQs. The parents organise and manage the fundraising activities and the wider school and local community support these.

Many parents will devote significant time and energy to this important task again in 2025. These fundraising efforts are critical for our school's continued development, allowing us to undertake various projects aimed at improving the educational environment. With the support of our community, we can ensure that our facilities remain top-notch and provide a nurturing space for our children.

Furthermore, local businesses in the community generously provide financial support and other resources to assist with our fundraising events. Their contributions help us not only meet our goals but exceed them, creating opportunities for additional enrichment activities and enhancements. This partnership between the school and local businesses is a testament to the community's commitment to fostering a positive and productive educational experience for all students.

Together, with the dedication of parents and the support of local businesses, we will continue to thrive and provide an exceptional Montessori education that promotes the overall well-being of our children.



Principal's Report

The year 2024 had many accomplishments. Our main objective was to continue educating and caring for our children and providing a safe place to be amidst all the comings and goings in the community. I believe we did in fact achieve this. Although we still have a locked gate policy, parents were invited into the school on a much more regular basis.

Each term, apart from our individual Montessori work, the children have projects to work on. Term one projects are based around countries of the world, famous artists, colors, magnets, and life in the sea. Term two projects were people in the community who help, Australia, weather and climates, mapping, natural and manufactured products, and zoo animals. Term three projects were things that grow, continents of the world, and classification of living things. Term four projects were on electricity, soluble and insoluble, water cycle and erosion, solar system, timelines, and volcanoes. It was so nice to see in the timelines what each child was like as a baby and to have their growth documented in this way to the current day. Thank you to the parents for providing the pictures. The children enjoyed sharing them with their peers and teachers.

We were able to have three parent information evenings in 2024 and these were well attended. It gave us an opportunity to discuss with our parents, the Montessori philosophy, and how it promotes child development in all areas. We were also able to have a family fun day at the end of the year. This was well attended. We communicated with our families through many photos of our activities, so they felt part of their children's journeys. For new enrollments, we made a video of our classroom and put that on our website. This enabled us to establish enrollments for 2025.

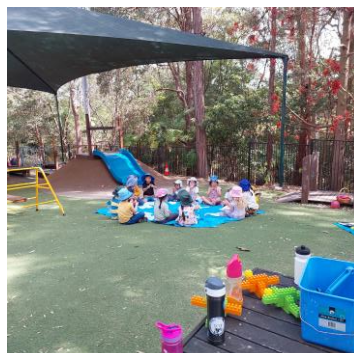
The students gained an understanding of the larger community beyond the walls of the school through excursions to the Sydney Aquarium, the Sydney Zoo, the Botanic Gardens, and the Museum, which we did towards the end of the year. We continue to travel by minibus to eliminate any safety concerns that could occur with travelling in several cars. It also provides the children with a different experience. We will continue using the bus for 2025.

In 2024, we initiated several sustainability projects to instill environmental consciousness in our students. These included setting up a composting system, reducing plastic use in the school, and creating a vegetable garden that the children maintained themselves. We also held workshops to educate students and parents about recycling and conserving resources. Our commitment to sustainability is aimed at fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment in our children, ensuring they grow up with an awareness of the importance of preserving our planet.

I would like to thank the School Council for their support through 2024 and look forward to another eventful year in 2025.

Denise Underwood

Principal



Contextual information about the school

Teaching Staff

The teaching staff were consistent and stable in 2024. Both Early Childhood Teachers are accredited with NESAs as proficient and continue to attend professional development activities. Both Teachers have Bachelor of Education (ECE) degrees with one Teacher also holding a Master's degree in Primary Teaching and an MBA. Teaching Assistants have Montessori Diplomas and Children Services Diplomas. The ability of The Children's House to retain qualified and committed staff is a key strength of the school.

Teachers provided parents with the opportunity to experience the Montessori Method through three information evenings. These sessions gave parents an insight in child development through the three to six age range. Then how our school focused on following the child, allowing the child to develop socially, emotionally and academically to the best of their abilities. Teachers also attended the monthly council meetings, prepared, wrote columns in the newsletters, and regularly updated parents about their children's development.

Teachers observed and interpreted children's experiences, used assessment practices to plan, and present Montessori lessons based upon individual learning styles, strengths and dispositions. Twice a year, they prepared written assessments of the children's progress and undertook parent interviews to discuss them.

Professional Learning:

Teaching staff continued their professional development participating in many online courses through NESAs to maintain their teaching accreditation. Most of the courses through NESAs centered on the delivery of the school curriculum and assessment practices. One educator is studying for the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. The annual expenditure on professional learning for 2024 was \$6500; due to staff attending conferences. Staff attended fortnightly staff meetings to discuss Pastoral Care, Work Health and Safety, administration necessities, and curriculum and policy development.

Workforce Composition:

The school's workforce is composed of six staff with two teachers, three childcare-trained educators and one administrator. Eighty-five percent are from an English speaking background with fifteen percent from non-English speaking background. One hundred percent of the staff are of the female gender with an average age of 50 years.

Staff have all completed the working with children check upon appointment, and all hold a current first aid certificate. Staff upskill yearly on Mandatory reporting procedures. Staff attendance has been excellent due to our healthy environment. Long-term staff ensure a great stability with the children and the overall program.

Characteristics of the student body

There are currently 36 children enrolled in the program between three to six years of age with approximately equal number of boys and girls. Most of the families are from the Ryde and surrounding area.

In 2024, twelve children were eligible to attend our kindergarten class (Early Stage One). Out of the students who attended at the kindergarten stage, five were boys and seven were girls. All students speak English fluently. There are no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students currently enrolled at the school.

All children met the curriculum outcomes set by the NESA. Teachers closely monitor student's transition to their next stage of schooling. Opportunities for these children to visit their respective schools were arranged and any lack of readiness was addressed.

Student Attendance Rates

The attendance rate for the school population of kindergarten children for 2024 was 95%.

Student non-attendance

The school monitors the daily attendance and absences of students in the school by maintaining a daily register for each class. The School Administrator identifies and records any student absences from classes. The School Principal follows up any unexplained absences in the appropriate manner with the parent/guardian. 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. Parents are encouraged to show their commitment to the value of education by ensuring their child's regular and ongoing attendance at school.

Post school destinations

Six of the students moved onto Catholic Independent Schools. Two students moved onto NSW Public Schools in the area and two students moved onto the Montessori Primary School in Turrumurra. One child moved to an Independent Anglican School and one child remained at our school.

School policies

Enrolment Policy

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 in the year they turn five before 1 August.

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.

The School admits students of any race, gender, religion, national and ethnic origin in line with Montessori learning and philosophy.

New students to the school start individually allowing opportunity for staff to assist with the transition from home to school.

Student Welfare

The welfare of our students is of paramount importance. The quality of care creates an atmosphere in which our students feel secure, valued and encouraged in their learning, growth and social development. Our existing policies inform and reassure parents that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and healthy environment.

Anti-bias

Behaviour management

Confidentiality

Fire safety and Education

Multicultural

Work, Health and Safety Duty of Care

Regarding Staff Student Relations

Safe and Supportive Environment

These policies are reviewed regularly and updated when necessary and can be found in our 'Policy Folder' held at the school. Updated policies can be viewed on our website. Please see links below:

<https://sydneymontessorisociety.nsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Child-Protection-Policy-2021.pdf>

<https://sydneymontessorisociety.nsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Appropriate-Behaviour-Policy-2021.pdf>

<https://sydneymontessorisociety.nsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Complaints-Handling-Policy-and-Procedures-2021.pdf>

<https://sydneymontessorisociety.nsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Enrollment-and-Membership-procedure.pdf>

We also cover the responsibilities of employees, including our Code of Conduct, in our Staff folder.

Behaviour Management Policy

The aim of a Montessori environment is to help each child develop inner self-discipline. This development is fostered by the ordered organization 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 student gain skills in self-discipline within a controlled environment. Limits are set for the benefit of the group and each student's individual development. Setting limits helps students 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.

Reporting complaints and resolving grievances

The procedures to follow by both teachers and parents are outlined in the Parent Handbook. A copy of the complaints procedure is displayed on the information noticeboard.

In general, the teacher will endeavor to find a suitable resolution to an issue raised within five working days. If the complaint is of a more serious nature, it may have to be escalated to the next step sooner.

A parent may lodge a complaint or grievance with the Principal if the teacher has not been able to address the situation to a satisfactory conclusion.

If not resolved the parent can take their complaint or grievance to the Vice-Chair who will then discuss it with the Principal and Chairperson.

If the problem has still not been resolved to their satisfaction, following the steps given above, parents can contact:

NSW Department of Communities and Justice
<https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au>

The Office of the Children's Guardian
<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au>

School performance

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.

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 four years. As part of the parent body, they report 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 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 22 years, two for over 15 years, and two for 6 years. This demonstrates a commitment to the school, parents and children and shows their satisfaction re working conditions.

Priority areas for improvement

The Children's House' priority areas for improvement in 2024 were all addressed throughout the year. They included:

- 1: An upgrade to the school playground
- 2: Making afternoon sessions available to more parents.
- 3: Communication with parents and community.

Priority areas for improvement in 2025 are:

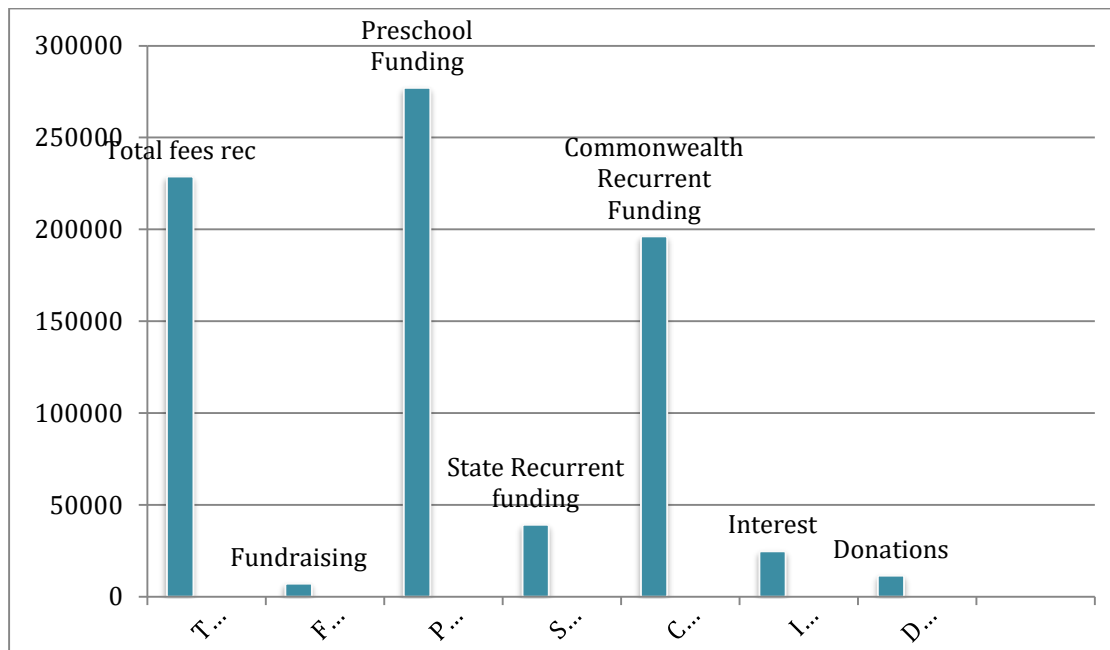
- a. To continue to provide the school with a financially stable foundation.
- b. To continue to build a social culture that provides our parents with a support network and in turn develops lifelong friendships.
- c. Continue to market the school and ensure enrolments.
- d. To repair the path from the road to the front gate
- e. Replace the old noticeboard.



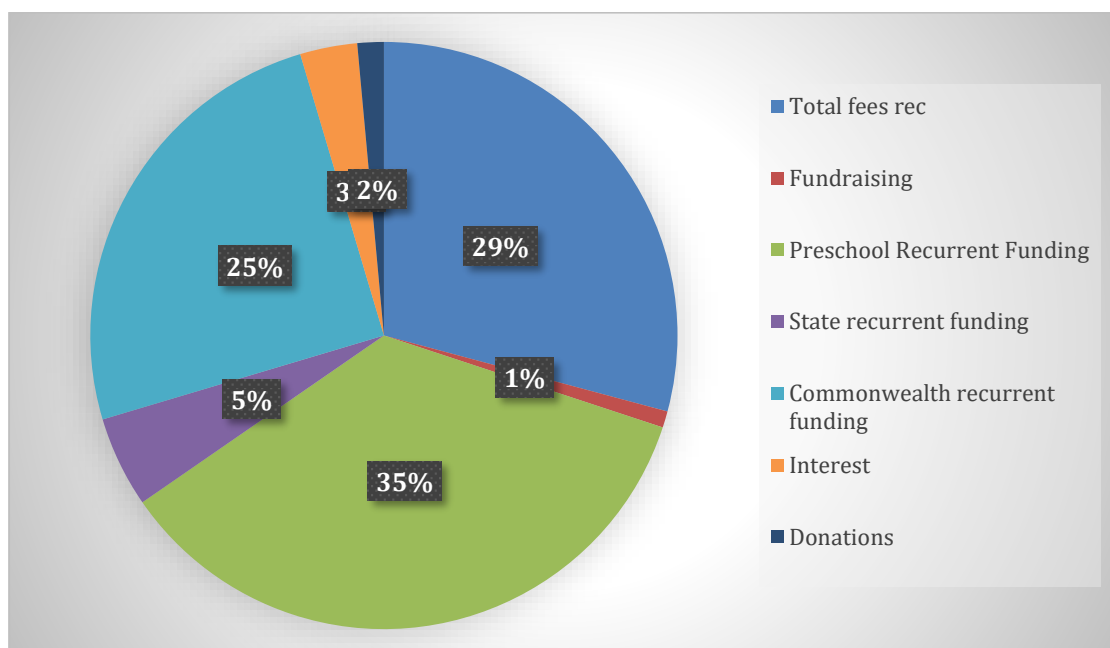
Fundraising artwork made by Kindergarten students

Summary financial information

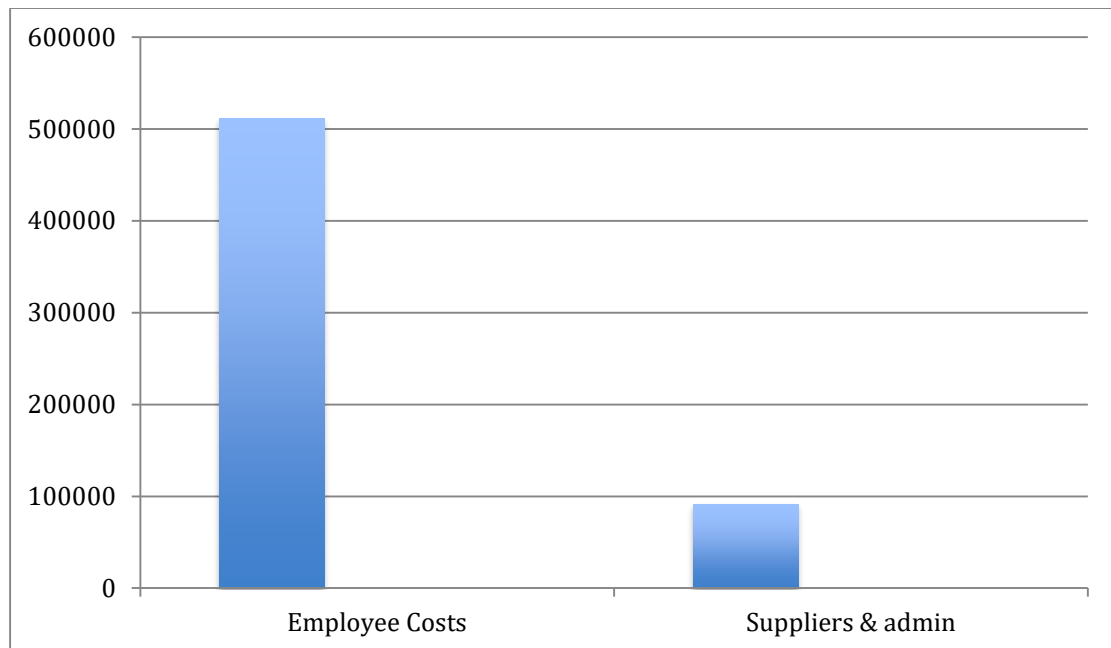
Revenue for 2024



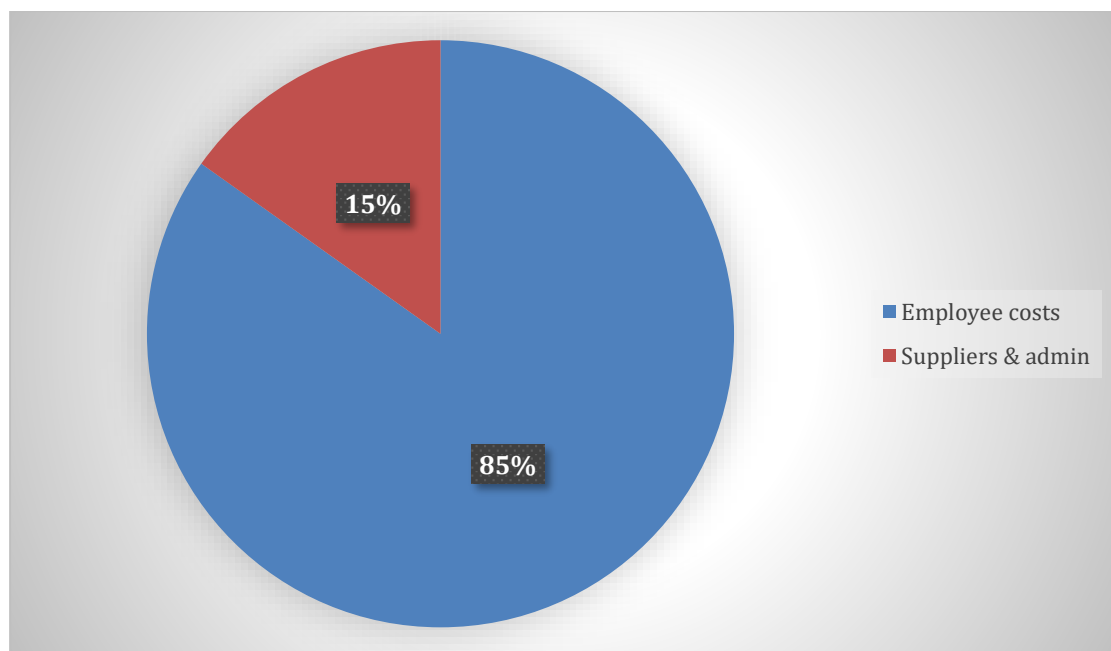
Percentage of total revenue



Expenditure in 2024



Expenditure as a percentage of Total



This report is published on our website.

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