

Forestville
MONTESSORI School
Thriving beyond...

2023 Annual Report



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“The greatest gifts we can give our children are the roots of responsibility & the wings of independence.”

Dr Maria Montessori

ABOUT FMS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON AND THE PRINCIPAL



Photo: Chris Rehn and Denice Scala

2023 SNAPSHOT

Stabilising the school following the unprecedented impact of COVID was our focus during 2023. We worked on bringing back harmony and connection amongst our community. For students, we designed and introduced enhanced wellbeing programs. Appreciating the benefits of caring for animals in our environment, an assistance dog, Monty, joined the team. Equine leadership workshops were introduced for our 9-12 Years students. Staff were trained in the student wellbeing program called 'Grow Your Mind'.

We continued to support staff financially in their professional development. Of significance in 2023 was the attendance of 6 staff at the 29th International Montessori Congress in Bangkok, Thailand.

5 years ago we set out to refresh and develop our facilities. To this end, significant capital investment

totalling over \$850,000 was made to fulfil our strategic promise to stakeholders. This included:

- A newly refurbished 9-12 Years learning space named Terraulong (Blue Gum Tree in Wannangini (Guringal) language, including purpose built joinery for Montessori materials and new furniture, opened for students in Term 2 2023. Founders' Day was chosen as the Official opening
- A complete refurbishment, external and internal to create a new 3-6 Years learning environment, Buran. Buran means Stringybark in Wannangini (Guringal) language.

The design elements incorporate all key elements of the Montessori approach. From every window and door, students can look out to nature and have access to beautiful gardens. Indoor and outdoor flow is effortless with lots of natural light. Independent self-care is nurtured by the provision of internal bathrooms, easily accessible without leaving the classroom. Personal belongings all have a place and children access these independently. Kitchen areas are provided.

Further work included:

- Enhanced accessibility and flow around the campus including upgrades to paving and drainage facilities. Accessibility of our site is now complete to ensure we are fully inclusive and meeting regulatory standards including the installation of a new elevator
- Bespoke joinery for easy access to Montessori materials
- Updating Reception area

In addition, a significant investment was made in purchasing new Montessori materials.

Beyond Today - the school's strategic plan has 5 priorities with goals to achieve over 5 years, 2021-2023. The Plan is tracked by management and reported on at each Board meeting. This report also includes an update on progress. A copy of the strategic plan is available on the school's website.

A joint Board and Management strategic directions workshop is planned for February 2024.

Thank you to our Board Directors for their ongoing wise counsel and governance:

Nivethan Sivapalan, (Treasurer until September 2023), Shyamala Bastianpillai (Treasurer from September 2023), Chris Rehn (Chair), Idette Warburton, Tomaj Bayat, Genevieve Lang, Ian Howe and Bill Conway (Directors).

“Of all things, love is the most potent.”

Dr Maria Montessori

We hope you enjoy reading this Annual Report and encourage you to contact the school on (02) 9452 2044 or visit our website www.forestvillemontessori.nsw.edu.au to find out more.

Follow us on social media:



Denice Scala
Principal

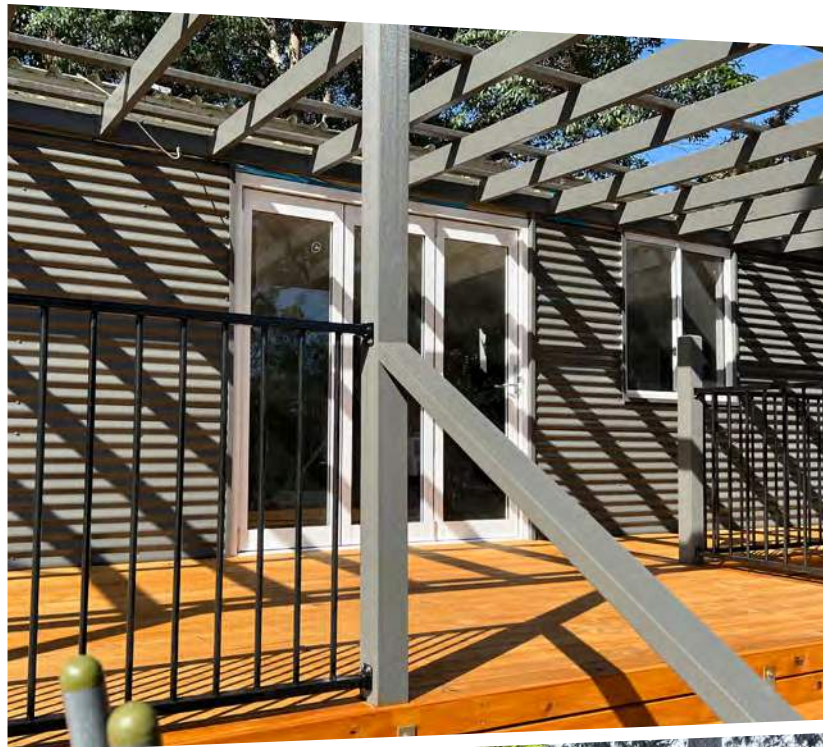
Chris Rehn
Chair, Board of Directors



2023 Capital Works

“There must be provision for the child to have contact with nature; to understand and appreciate the order, the harmony and the beauty in nature. That the child may better understand and participate in the marvellous things which civilisation creates.”

Dr Maria Montessori





“The child should live in an environment of beauty.”

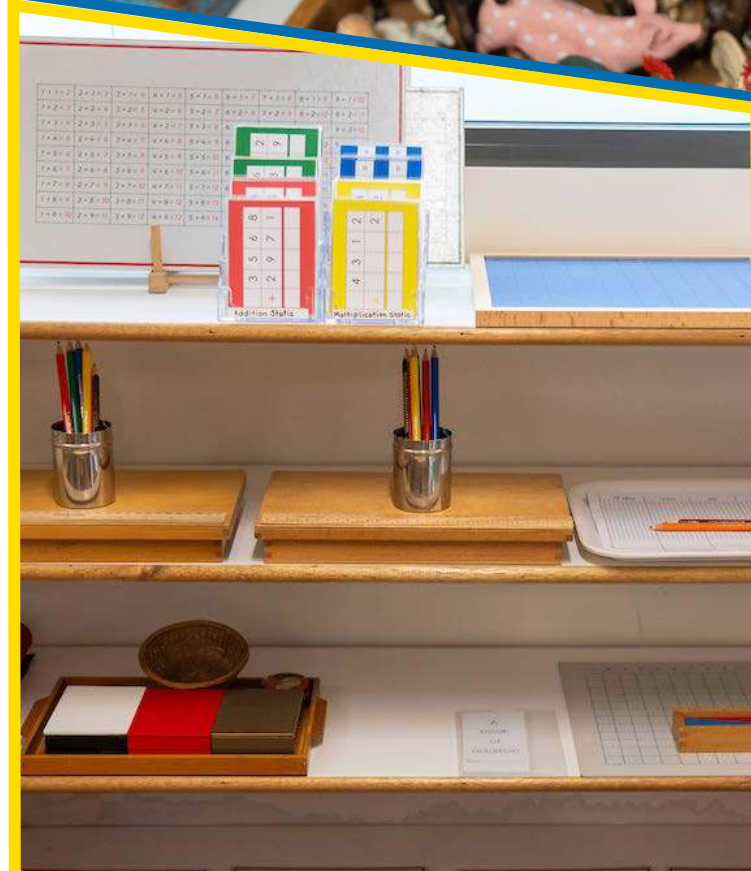
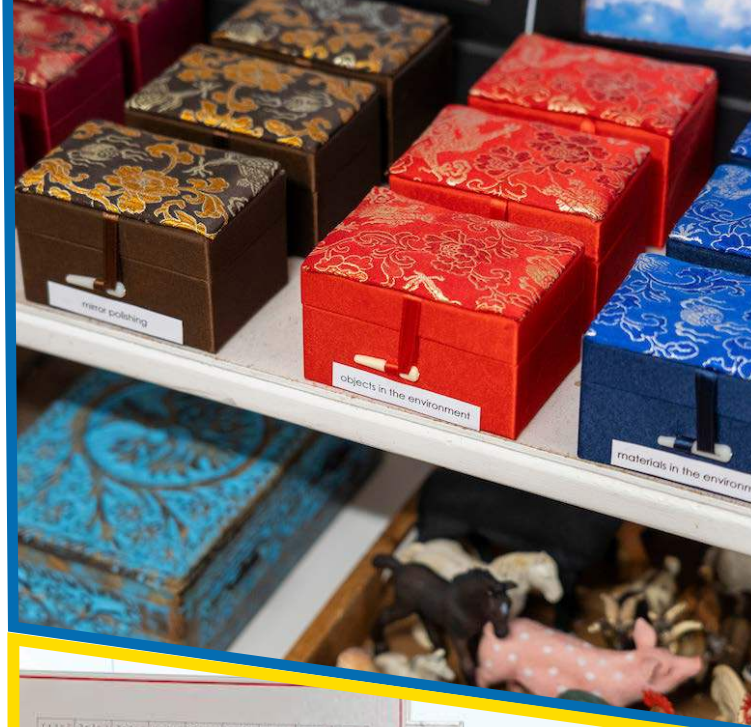
Dr Maria Montessori

- Nature is visible from every window and door
- Access to our beautiful organics gardens
- Effortless indoor/outdoor flow
- Abundant natural light
- Independence is nurtured
 - Internal bathrooms
 - Internal areas for personal belongings
- Kitchens for cooking
- Accessibility to water
- Large floor space
- Uncluttered aesthetic with natural resources that are respected and cared for by the children
- Children can mix freely with one another, move between spaces safely, connecting to each other in multiple ways

“The prepared environment should bring the world at large and thus the adult world, within reach of the child at whatever stage of development it is, at the given moment.”

Dr Maria Montessori

- New Montessori materials, freely accessible to the children, kept in a logical place and in good order and in Terraulong, bespoke shelving and storage space
- Reflects a ‘sense of place’ with Terraulong resting amidst the blue gum trees and Buran sitting amongst the gardens and connected to our two other Children’s Houses
- Designed to facilitate self-directed learning-freely chosen with appropriate limits
- Spaces that support individualised and cooperative learning
- The opening of Buran in October 2023, brought our three children’s Houses into a shared space, with interconnected areas for movement, social interactions, practical life, gardening, play and celebration of community



OUR STORY

OUR IDENTITY

We are a Montessori School educating children for life and for peace.

OUR VISION

To be the launchpad for every child to lead a fulfilling life.

OUR MISSION

To provide an exemplary Montessori education for all children by:

- Presenting an enriched, intentionally prepared environment that embodies Montessori principles
- Nurturing individual growth and development
- Fostering independence, self-discipline, personal and social responsibility
- Enabling natural curiosity to thrive and develop into a love of learning
- Designing learning that promotes a child's own explorations, discoveries, imagination, and creativity
- Making positive contributions to the world beyond school.

OUR VALUES

Our core values inform all that we do from our day-to-day practices to our decision making and long-term thinking, at every level of our school.

Respect: Acknowledging, accepting, and celebrating others' differences

Relationships: Bonding with others, conducting ourselves with dignity and sincerity

Integrity: Knowing right from wrong, taking responsibility for our actions

Scholarship: Competent, confident, and smart thinking that leads to empowered, capable doing

Citizenship: Seeking ways to contribute to society locally and globally

Community: Sharing a sense of belonging by connecting and collaborating



From our Community Team



Hello, my name is Valerie Gutenev and I have had the honour and pleasure of being the Community Team Leader at FMS in 2023.

The FMS Community Team is a group of parents who actively nurture and build our school community. Each person brings their unique skills and contributions. It is with the investment of time, effort and love of these incredible people that we have been able to hold such a diverse range of events within our small but strong community. I want to acknowledge each of these wonderful parents and extend the gratitude of all of us who have experienced these events for all the effort, time and love that went into creating them and bringing them to fruition, thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Throughout 2023, we had coffee mornings, allowing parents to chat and connect after dropping off their children, sometimes with some yummy treats made by a parent or the children.

In term 1, we had a whole school picnic with an energising DJ Kit Kat getting the dance floor moving. FMS families provided the food with a BBQ and cake stall, plus face painting brought to you by Thomas Hale, one of our dads.

In term 2 we held a few events in the theme of sustainability.

FMS parents Jade McKellar and Bright Pryde-Saha talked to Kindergarten, Lower and Upper Primary students about the Sustainable Development Goals. These are a collection of 17 interlinked objectives designed to serve as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

I invited the recycling company, Whirl, to show children how recycling works hands on. The children took apart computers and discussed where different parts could be repurposed. Whirl also collected all unwanted electronic goods to recycle them.

Annaliese Hawkesford and volunteers organised a Clothes and Toys Swap, a wonderful opportunity for children and families to choose toys they no longer play with or clothes they no longer wear and swap them for something that they will use. This was a highlight of for many children who have since been asking about the next one.

Vanessa Jerah brought us Father's Day bingo a fun way for FMS dads to get to know each other. We also held our first parent and teacher cheese and wine evening – a great way for families and FMS staff to connect. Thanks to Marsha Howe for bringing this idea to fruition.

We ran a very successful BBQ fundraiser at Bunnings thanks to the huge effort of Rowan Huppert, Bright Pryde-Saha and all the volunteers that came on the day (including those who came as customers!)

The Art Auction was, as always, an incredible collaboration between teachers, children and parents to make beautiful artwork. Thank you to Tamlin Howard for your guidance. A huge shout out to Bright Pryde-Saha who single handedly collected thousands of dollars' worth of donations from our local community and created our online auction space – a mammoth effort that resulted in a highly successful auction.

For the first time, we had children from the Koorowull and Terraulong classes join us for some of our community team meetings. It has been incredible to hear their voice and experience their contributions to bringing our community together. Another contribution from the children has been some creative advertising for some of our events!

Children from Terraulong ran a survey at the school gate in May about how parents would like their events - thanks to the answers where many voted for an adult only event on school site during the week, the community team brought the cheese and wine evening.

I've mentioned some incredible parents who have done so much to enrich our community with their ideas, their enthusiasm and hard work - I haven't mentioned April Harris, Michelle Pastor and Emma Randle who have made a huge contribution as well - thank you! I would also like to thank Alena Swinbourne and Christina Gaertner who have done a great deal of work behind the scenes to make all of these events happen. They, together with Tamlin Howard and the other staff, literally make the FMS world go round.

At the start of 2023, we set ourselves the task of fundraising money to contribute to the purchase of materials in the 3-6 spaces and the renovating of the space that is now the Terraulong classroom. We made a whopping \$945 at the cake stall, \$3,590 at the Bunnings BBQ and \$5,472 at our online Auction. Some of this money goes to cover some of our events but the majority (over \$7,300) will go to fund those things for the school.

Now that you know what we have achieved in 2023, I invite families at the school to join us and bring your contribution - we all have different pieces to the puzzle that is our incredible community!



APPRECIATION

Thank you to our Class Parents for their dedication to enhancing our community connections across the school:

Terrigal – Nelly Wong

Buran – Emma Randle

Kutukulung – Bright Pryde-Saha

Wirra Wirra – Michelle Pastor

Koorowull – Rowan Huppert

Terraulong – April Harris/ Marsha Howe

Thank you to our Board Directors for their ongoing wise counsel and governance: Nivethan Sivapalan, (Treasurer) Idette Warburton, Ian Howe and Bill Conway

“We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe and are connected with each other to form one whole unity.”

Dr Maria Montessori



From our Students

A SNAPSHOT FROM OUR 2023 UPPER PRIMARY STUDENTS

Hi I'm Aleana, I moved to FMS in 2021. I've had a lot of fun and learnt a lot over the almost 3 years I would like to thank all my teachers that I've had Sally, Anahita, Lau-chi, Xarifa, Lauren, Tamlin, Meghan, James, Tamara, Sharon, Anthony, Ayesha, Denice.

I really hope I can visit FMS next year.

I would also like to thank my parents for sending me to this school and driving the 40 minutes every day to and from school. And last, I would like to thank my friends for being there for me especially the Nachos, a group of friends I had with Kayla, Neste, Toby, Harlem, Kai, Abi, Sage, Avika, Phoenix, Grace and me!

And I can't forget my friends from this year, Grace, Toby, Kai, Avika, and Harlem. I have many other

friends but too many to name now because I have around 30 seconds left. So my last words are:

He i wa o ta mo tsu Japanese

Ka pa ya pa a n out Filipino

Paché fori Italian

Peace out (in English accent)

Hue ping Chinese

Pa koi she Russian

Rush dart Dutch

Ha e ra Kia ora Maui

Ets span dich German

Ah hu I hoy Hawaiian

Aleana, Graduation Speech

Terraulong

9-12 Environment, 2023

My name is Bara and I have been at this school since 2020.

I really like sports, Japanese, equine, and music. I have been taught by Xarifa, Tamlin, Meghan, Anthony, Lau-Chi, and Sharyn.

Bara

Terraulong

9-12 Environment, 2023

I love this school because I got to work with the younger children, and I got to do fun art activities. I will miss my friends.

Thank you, FMS, and Denice. I won't forget my time here.



From our Students

HERE ARE SOME COMMENTS FROM OUR 9-12 STUDENTS ABOUT CAMP:

"I liked going kayaking and mountain biking on camp. I got to see animals I haven't seen before in the lake. The food was great!"

- **Harlem**

"I loved the food! It was so yummy. We got to see all sorts of water animals in the lake."

- **Mason**

"I really liked making damper and archery. The food was great."

- **Ben**

"I loved the food. The raft building was really fun. I liked the place we went to. It was really fun!"

- **Henry**

AND THIS IS WHAT THEY LIKE ABOUT FMS:

"I like going on excursions and going outs."

- **Jonny**

"I love it! It's the best school. We have a lot of choice and friends."

- **Isaac**

"I really like the excursions."

- **Ben**

"I like FMS because we get to wear whatever clothes we want to wear. I also like FMS because we don't have to sit in a class and look at a board. We get to choose our own work and sit all around the room with different people every day instead of the same person on the same table. FMS is a great school for many reasons. In FMS each term we get to go on our excursions to a cool place for the whole term and it's always so fun. Every Friday we do music, Japanese, gardening, and sports. We also do art. We get to vote on what before schools sports we want to do."

- **Aliya**



Students at FMS

By the end of Term 4 2023, the school has 108 students in total from birth to 12 years. FMS students come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, including many with language backgrounds other than English. Students with diverse learning needs are fully integrated, accessing all aspects of our programs.

FMS operates a Birth-3 Program from 3 months of age, a Parent Toddler program from 18 months, a Toddler Program from 2-3 years and a Pre-Primary Program for 3–6-year-old. The school attracts Pre-Primary students from its Parent Toddler and Toddler Program, and Primary students from its three Pre-Primary Program classes.

The school follows an authentic Montessori philosophy and practice of education, attracting families who wish to educate their children within this philosophy and methodology.

Our students mainly reside in the Northern Beaches and Upper and Lower North Shore of Sydney, coming from the following postcodes, in order: 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2071, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2090, 2092, 2093, 2095, 2096, 2099, 2100, 2154, 2570.

During 2022, we welcomed international students from the Netherlands and France.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE FOR 2022

Term 1 Average	93%
Term 2 Average	91%
Term 3 Average	92%
Term 4 Average	93%

Infant program	89%
Preschool	91%
Lower Primary	94%
Upper Primary	92%

MANAGEMENT OF NON-ATTENDANCE

Absences from students currently enrolled at the School are identified and recorded in a consistent manner using the Minister's codes by the delegated staff member. Attendance is monitored daily by teachers and trained administration staff and recorded in digital records Xplore or hard copy against student records.

The Principal may exercise the Minister's delegation under section 25 of the Education Act in relation to granting and cancelling a certificate of exemption from being enrolled and attending school in certain prescribed circumstances.

REGISTER OF DAILY ATTENDANCE

The School maintains a register of daily attendance of all enrolled students which records information about each enrolled student in line with the Education Act and NESA requirements. Staff entering the details in the register of daily attendance enter compliant codes that align to the Education Act and AIS accordingly. The register of daily attendance is retained for a period of seven (7) years after the last entry was made. Daily attendance figures are viewed by the Principal, Deputy and Coordinator of Birth-6.

STUDENT OUTCOMES IN STANDARDISED NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY TESTING

Performance on NAPLAN is documented on the My School website. Many FMS parents have consciously opted out of standardised testing for their children.



Assessment in a Montessori School

“We continue to afford the children the opportunity to learn through the activity of the mind.”

Maria Montessori

When it comes to assessments, Montessori teachers don't rely on standardised tests; they rely on the power of observation. They have notebooks brimming with evidence of what their students have mastered, need more support with, and are curious about. They are constantly recording what they notice children working on, how that work is being executed, and ideas they might have in anticipation of a child's next steps.

assidere: (Latin) to sit beside

Montessori teachers exemplify the Latin meaning of assessment, *assidere*, which means “to sit beside”. **Assessment** in a Montessori school means to sit beside the learner.

They sit beside a child and determine exactly what they know about a wide range of content areas.



FMS Teachers are Highly Qualified

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MONTESSORI TEACHER?

What, exactly, is the role of the Montessori teacher? How is it so different from that of any other teachers?

Sometimes it's easiest to begin by explaining what a Montessori teacher *isn't*.

A Montessori teacher is less like the traditional idea of an instructor, and more like a gentle guide. They don't consider it their job to give a child information. Rather, they lead children in the general direction and give them the tools they need to find the information themselves.

Maria Montessori once said, *"The greatest sign of success for a teacher ... is to be able to say, 'The children are now working as if I did not exist.'"*

MONTESSORI TEACHERS CULTIVATE INDEPENDENCE

In a Montessori classroom, rather than seeing a teacher at the front of the classroom giving the same lesson to every child, the teacher will be working quietly with individual children or small groups. While that is happening, the rest of the children are free to spend their time doing the work that calls to them. A Montessori teacher works hard to create structures that allow children to be independent and to trust themselves as learners.

One large part of what a Montessori teacher does is to intentionally prepare a classroom environment that is developmentally appropriate, is inviting to children, and supports them on their journey to work independently. This environment is constantly changing in tiny ways as the teacher notices new and evolving needs of the students.

MONTESSORI TEACHERS ARE TRAINED TO THINK LIKE SCIENTISTS

Parents should know that Montessori teachers are exceptionally well trained. Most have recognised Montessori credentials in addition to their university

degrees. Here at Forestville Montessori School, all our teachers hold one of the most highly regarded Montessori credentials: Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) Diploma.

To be a certified AMI Teacher means a teacher:

- **Understands** child development and acts as a guide to help children find their natural path
- **Creates** a hands-on, self-paced, collaborative, and joyful classroom
- **Transforms** lives by implementing the principles of Montessori education
- **Believes** in education that meets the child's physical, emotional and intellectual development
- **Guides** children to enthusiastically follow their interests and passions whilst developing strong academic skills, leadership, self-discipline, responsibility and independence
- **Trains** rigorously and has graduated with a set of high-quality skills
- **Connects** to a global network across numerous countries with trainers and teachers to continuously develop their craft.

Montessori teacher certification programs are intensive and demanding; one might compare them to the equivalent of another university degree. These training programs don't just teach Montessori educators how to use the specialised materials; there is extensive coursework about Montessori philosophy, child development, and integrating the arts.

All of our Teachers at Forestville Montessori School hold Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) Diplomas, which means that we have a consistently high-quality approach to teaching from Birth to age 12, with all of our teachers speaking the same language about child development and pedagogy.

MONTESSORI TEACHERS THINK LONG-TERM

Students remain with their teachers for a three-year cycle. This means that teachers have the unique ability to consider the big picture when working with students. There is a natural tendency to allow the children to genuinely learn at their own pace. Getting to know a child and their family well over the course of a few years really supports this approach.



MONTESSORI TEACHERS ARE OFTEN CALLED 'GUIDES' ...

... and for good reason. While children in Montessori classrooms have an abundance of choice in their educational pursuits, Montessori is based on the idea of 'freedom within limits'. It's the Montessori teacher's job to carefully craft those limits. Children rely on having a certain amount of structure in place. This gives them comfort and a safe place in which they can take risks and try new things. Montessori teachers set boundaries and then carefully help students navigate within them.

What if your child loves to read but tends to avoid mathematics? Their Montessori teacher will find ways to ensure the mathematics still gets done. Sometimes this involves a gentle discussion with a child about time management skills, priorities, or setting goals. We call these discussions student conferences. Sometimes the teacher will find a way to integrate the child's interests into the less desirable work. Sometimes all it takes is a minor change in the environment. Montessori teachers give children freedom, but they assist children in finding their way to success in this environment.

Montessori teachers value independence, self-reliance, and intrinsic motivation.

They also value 'grace and courtesy' – cooperation, kindness, and strength in community.



Professional Learning 2023

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING 2023	PARTICIPATION NUMBER
AMI 3-6 Diploma Course	1
AMI Administrator's Course	1
AMI 6-12 Orientation Course	1
Training of Trainers Seminar for Assistants to Infancy	1
AIS Governance symposium	1
Supporting Children with Reading difficulties	1
Elementary (6-12) Montessori Bootcamp	4
Primary (3-6) Montessori Bootcamp	1
Heart First Aid Course	All Staff
Child Protection	All Staff
Joint Montessori Staff Day- 9th June	All Staff
MSCA Head 2 Head Conference, Adelaide	1
Montessori Australia Early Childhood Educators Conference	3
MSCA Grassroots, Melbourne	1
AMI Theory into Practice Series	4
Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	1
Montessori Dance Workshop for Educators	1

The average expenditure on professional learning per staff member in 2023 was \$1,933. This was higher than the average over the previous three years (\$1,130 per staff member).

TEACHER ACCREDITATION AUTHORITY (TAA)

FMS has engaged the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) as its Teacher Accreditation Authority for Proficient Teacher. By way of background:

- NESA has approved AISNSW as a Teacher Accreditation Authority to make Accreditation Decisions in accordance with Part 4 of the ACT
- The School may only engage teachers who have gained Accreditation
- The school has requested AISNSW to provide Accreditation Services
- AISNSW has appointed authorised Delegates to make Accreditation Decisions
- An agreement sets out the terms on which AISNSW will provide the Accreditation Services to the school through ISTAA.



WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

SCHOOL STAFF 2023 (EXCLUDING CASUAL ASC STAFF)	
Teaching staff	11*
Full-time equivalent teaching staff	8.7
Class assistants	8
Full-time equivalent class assistants	7
Admin staff	7
Full-time equivalent admin staff	6

*The number of teaching staff reduced to 9 (FTE 7.4) by the end of 2023. These vacancies were not filled due to the lower number of enrolments.

There are no Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff.

TEACHER ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

Teachers at FMS are highly qualified, dedicated and committed educators. There were minimal changes to the teaching staff appointments:

- 2 teachers resigned due to personal circumstances – the positions were not filled.
- 1 teacher is on extended leave.

Staff absenteeism returned to normal

In November 2023, we bid farewell to Deputy Principal Anthony Milano, after 17 years of service at FMS. In his resignation letter, Anthony shared the following thoughts: “2023 marks my 40th anniversary in education, and 29 years serving the Montessori community. I am filled with immense gratitude for the enriching experiences and meaningful connections I have made. I am also profoundly thankful for the opportunities and support I have received during my tenure at FMS.”

Anthony expressed his heartfelt appreciation to all the students, parents, and staff members he had the pleasure of working with over the past 17 years and expressed the following to staff and the extended FMS community:

“Your dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment to Montessori education have inspired me every day. I carry with me cherished memories of our shared accomplishments and the joy of witnessing the growth and development of our students.”

We acknowledge Anthony’s significant contribution to Forestville Montessori School and wish him every happiness for the future.

FMS is known as a school that retains its excellent staff. Every year, of course, it is natural for some staff to move to new positions, make changes in their lives, achieve promotions or retire from the workforce.

LEVEL OF ACCREDITATION	NUMBER OF TEACHERS
Conditional	0
Provisional	2
Proficient Teacher	9
Highly Accomplished (voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0



TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

(Types of qualifications & Montessori qualifications)

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	NUMBER OF ASSISTANTS
Bachelor Degree from an Australian University or overseas equivalent	8/11	4/8
Masters Degree from Australian University or overseas equivalent	3/11	0/8
Diploma qualified from an Australian Higher Education Institution or overseas equivalent	3/11	6/8
Certificate IV or III from an Australian Higher Education Institution or overseas equivalent	3/11	2/8
Montessori Qualifications – AMI Diploma or equivalent	8/11	4/8

STAFF PERFORMANCE AND REVIEW

Teachers share a significant responsibility in preparing young people to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Both national and international evidence indicates that a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on students, with a broad consensus that teacher quality is amongst the most important factor influencing student success. Regular staff reflection is therefore an ongoing part of our review.

We seek for staff to reflect in an open and ongoing way on their professional responsibilities and performance, both towards their students and colleagues. Work continued on mapping the Australian Professional standards for Teachers with the Montessori Assessment Playbook instrument designed for teacher appraisal.

Ordinarily our educators would regularly visit other Montessori schools to participate in observations however, that was again restricted during 2022 due to ongoing impact of COVID

STAFF BENEFITS

FMS is known as a great place to work. Superior working conditions for staff mean that we continue to retain great teachers and attract talented educators when we are seeking to recruit. We actively strive to recruit educators with the highest standard of Montessori credentials.

The administration team is structured to ensure teaching staff are provided with support that reduces administrative loads in favour of time to plan and teach. Assistant educators work in every classroom from Birth to 12 Years, providing ongoing support to prepare the environment and work with children.

In striving to provide benefits for our staff, we offer:

- An attractive award rate that has seen year-on-year percentage increases above inflation
- Access to flexible remuneration packaging
- Human Resources practices to support different needs
- Complimentary, confidential Employee Assistance Counselling services
- Negotiated leave, long service leave provisions,
- Professional Development budgets
- External observations at other Montessori schools and
- Regular social events including meals on Staff Days



Reflecting on Thailand

I was one of the lucky people to be invited to the 29th International Montessori Congress in Thailand 2023.

I attended many presentations which were truly fascinating but the one that really resonated and left a truly lasting effect was Sylvia Arotin.

Sylvia spoke with passion about the potential of the child from birth “Who are you?” - what a wonderful question(!) as the child is constructing themselves with their ever-widening experiences of the world exploring, experiencing life for the very first time.

Sylvia spoke about communicating with the children and not being transfixed to electronics/ phones. Taking time to spend with the child, being available and prioritizing the child show them how important they are.

One of my Pearl Moments of self-reflection from this trip was: *How can I be a better role model/ educator for our children?*

When I think about Thailand I have a very warm glow. The Congress was such a special event and

I met so many beautiful people whom I am still in touch with today.

Ishbel Riach
Assistant Educator
Birth – 3years community

My experience from attending the Montessori Congress was that we are as a collective striving towards an “Education for a new world”.

Returning to work for me, I felt a deeper understanding that the Montessori Method is a movement that helps children and adults trust in the process gaining better outcomes in many different facets of life. Hence giving me a deeper understanding and purpose to my work. I thank FMS for giving me such a wonderful opportunity to attend the Montessori Congress in Thailand.

Alison Carrabot
Assistant Educator
6-9 Environment



THEME - EDUCATION FOR A NEW WORLD

- 29th International Montessori congress
 - o 2-5th August 2023
 - o Bangkok, Thailand
 - o The Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre
 - o Australian educators have partnered with Thai educators to further the advancement of Montessori education since 2004
- The 30th International Montessori Congress will be held in Merida, Mexico in 2026

Thank you to the FMS staff who work tirelessly to see that our students are thriving beyond.



In 2023, we welcomed Monty to FMS

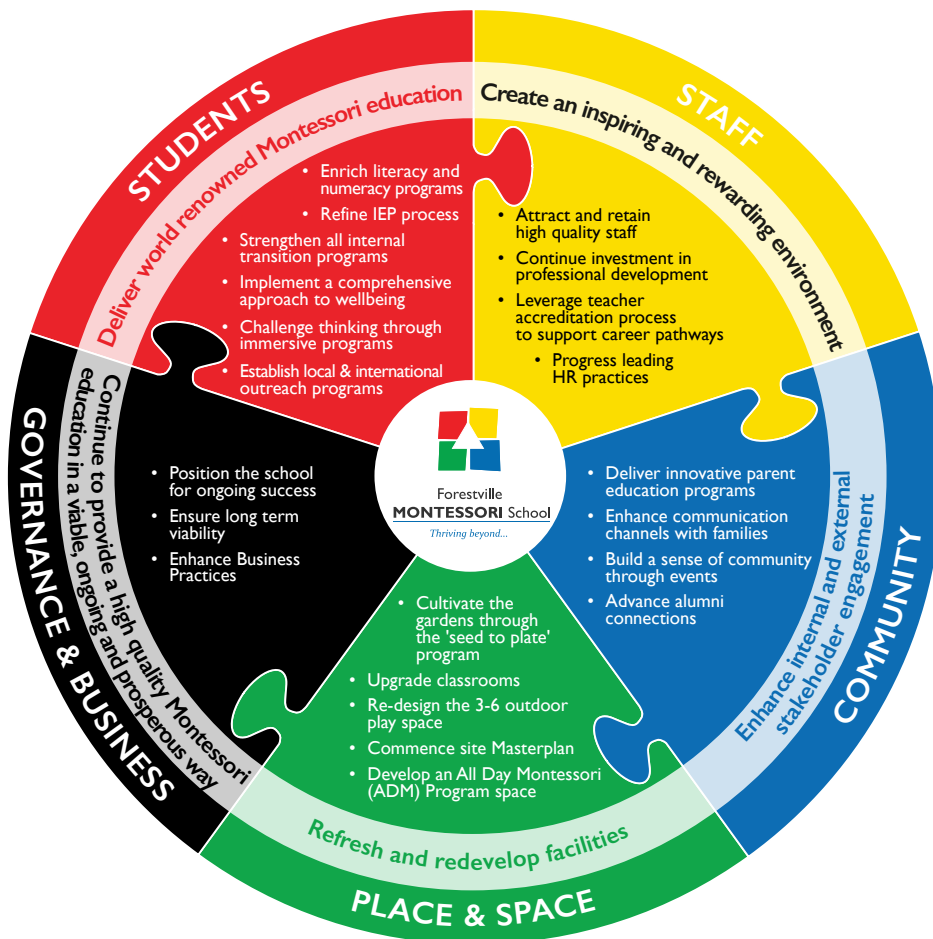




ACHIEVEMENTS, HIGHLIGHTS & NEXT STEPS

“Our aim is not merely to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorise, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core.”

Dr Maria Montessori



Beyond Today is the title of our strategic plan, outlining five priorities from 2018-2023. 2020 saw us taking significant steps to achieving our goals.

Central to everything we do is our Montessori philosophy and our commitment to delivering world-renowned Montessori education. This is strengthened by our vision and values. Pivotal to FMS is our vibrant community.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN IS ORGANISED UNDER FIVE KEY PRIORITIES:



Tracking our progress: current priorities and improvements already underway

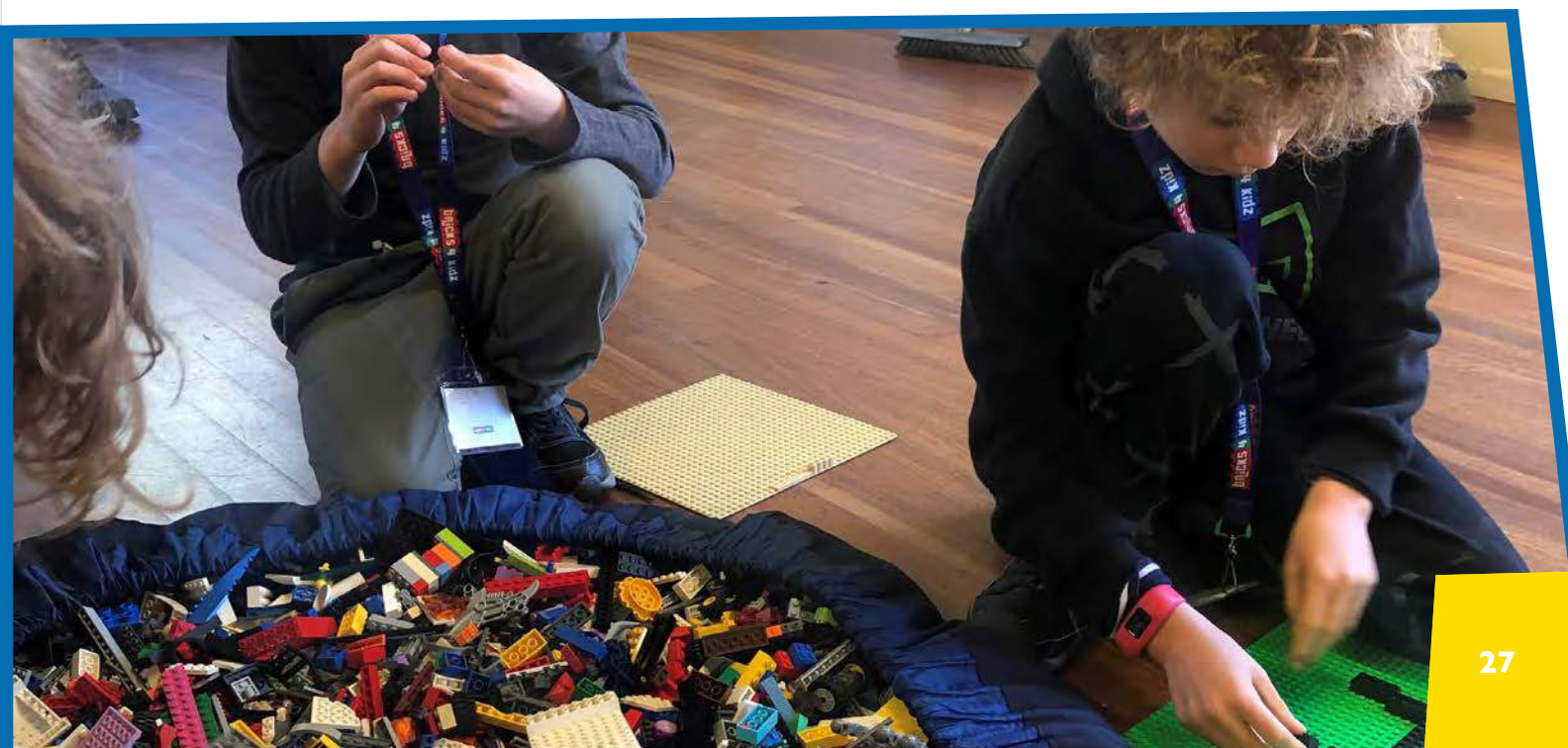
“We do not want complacent students but eager ones.”

Dr Maria Montessori

STUDENTS

Deliver world renowned Montessori education

FOCUS	ACTION
Inclusive education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy consultant engaged to assist with impact of COVID on literacy development
Student wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow Your Mind program introduced Monty- our school dog, joined the staff, bringing smiles all round Equine Assisted Learning introduced to develop social and leadership skills Sporting Schools Grant received in Terms 2, 3 & 4. Money used to employ a professional Judo coach and purchase sports specific equipment for Table Tennis, Athletics, Badminton and Tennis. Grant assisted in the delivery of 6 different sports chosen by the children for the before-school sports program.
Challenging thinking: Designing and introducing immersive programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chess club offered before school, Lego and Soccer offered after school
Citizenship endeavours: Establish local outreach programs Partnering with the Montessori community to offer international outreach experience Collaborating with Montessori schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local outreach partnership with Rotary Club, providing Christmas gifts to Manly Warringah Women’s Resource Centre, for the fourth year. Gifts were distributed to disadvantaged and homeless women and children, and victims of domestic violence across the North Shore & Northern Beaches region. Combined Montessori Sports Day held



OVERVIEW OF THE SPORTING SCHOOLS FUNDING RECEIVED IN TERMS 2, 3 & 4 2023:

The funding received was used to aid learning and provide experiences for children in the Kindy to primary programs. The funding enabled us to deliver programs in the following 6 sports:

Judo: Children who attended before-school Judo in term 4 learnt a variety of throws and techniques with Sensi Eddie in a fun 4-week program that the children really enjoyed and asked if they could do again next year.

Swimming: The 6-12 children attended an 8-week swimming and swim safety program at Terrey Hills Swim school where they learnt or improved on a variety of strokes appropriate to their own swim level and how to be safe in the water in an emergency or rescue situation. This is a repeat annual program that the children always look forward to.

Ultimate Frisbee: During their sport lessons on site the 5-12 classes participated in an Ultimate Frisbee coaching session from Janelle at Ultimate NSW for the first time at the school and really enjoyed the experience. They asked if the coach would return the following year and lots of children were seen playing frisbee in the playground during term 4!

Ten pin bowling: The 6-12 children visited Strike Macquarie on the last week of the school year and all children had a great day out and are excited to repeat this experience at the end of the 2024 school year!

Resources and program assistance was provided by Table Tennis Australia that were used for Tamlin to deliver table tennis sessions during wet weather days as part of the sport program. This has been a popular sport for a number of children in the 6-12 classes and is often requested on Wet weather day for sport lessons or even at play time.

Athletics: A range of equipment was purchased to use during the Athletics unit and across a range of sports during lessons. Soft blocks and 'Ninja warrior' style blocks for jumping and climbing were extremely popular with all age groups and children often request to use these to set up their own obstacle courses. Funding was also used to purchase equipment to use at the combined Montessori sports carnival in term 2.

Tennis: A new set of rackets and nets for each age group was purchased to enable the children to play with a size they are comfortable with to use during the tennis unit during lessons and play times. Tennis was very popular in term 3 and a core group of children played it regularly at play times in Term 3.

Tamlin Howard
FMS Sports Teacher/ 9-12 Visual Arts Teacher & Class
Assistant



Giving your child the wide view of the world

Experiences of relationships and participation in communities contribute to children's belonging, being and becoming. From birth, children experience living and learning with others in a range of communities. Through the primary and secondary years, this is strengthened by children developing a positive sense of identity and experiencing respectful, responsive relationships. This strengthens children's interest and skills in being and becoming active contributors to their world.

Over time, the variety and complexity of ways in which children connect and participate with others increases. When we create environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships with people and the environment, children respond accordingly. Children's connectedness and different ways of belonging with people, country and communities helps them to learn ways of being which reflect the values, traditions and practices of their families and communities. Over time, this learning transforms the ways they interact with others.

We believe that through our school we can reach out to the local and international communities to bring to life our core goals of Respect, Relationships, Integrity, Scholarship, Citizenship, and Community.

“An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking; it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live.”

Maria Montessori: Education and Peace, ch. 3, p. 30

STAFF

Create an inspiring and rewarding environment

FOCUS	ACTION
Widening professional development opportunities offered to staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in a joint Montessori Schools professional development day on 11th June • All primary staff involved in designing NESA units of work aligned with Montessori practices • In August, 6 staff travelled to Bangkok, Thailand to attend the 29th International Montessori Congress • The Principal & Deputy travelled to Udon Thani, Thailand to research opportunities for future journey of service for students • In September, the principal of Mori Mori school in Thailand visited FMS to observe in our 6-9 and 9-12 environments. Conversations have begun about building a partnership with the school so our staff can mentor their teachers
Leverage Teacher Accreditation process to support career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School continued to engage an AIS consultant to work with staff in the process of obtaining accreditation
Continuing investment in Montessori training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsorship continued for staff to complete AMI Orientation courses



OUR COMMUNITY

Enhance internal and external stakeholder engagement

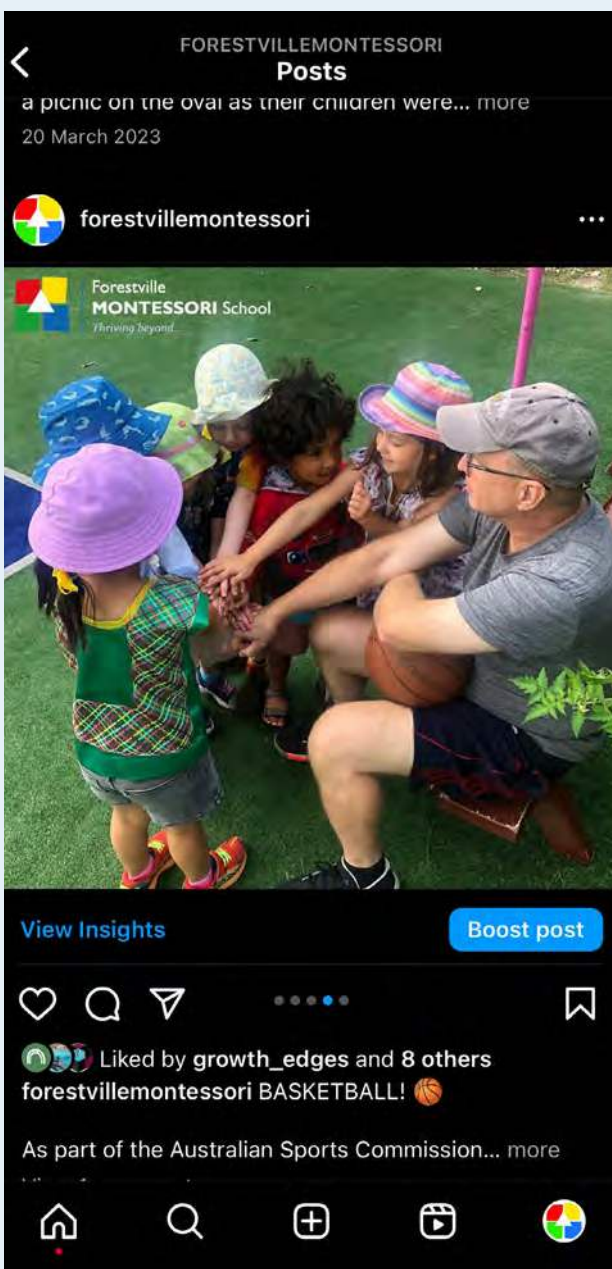
FOCUS	ACTION
Seeing an increase in parent attendance at events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With parent events back onsite, we began building our community connections again after COVID
Connecting with the local community to increase involvement and 'front of mind' school of choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus for our next strategic plan
Delivering innovative and comprehensive parent education programs including exploring more family-friendly ways to offer parent education about the benefits of a continuous Montessori education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematical Magic- an evening workshop was offered to parents
Introducing a fresh selection of community events aimed at expressing our gratitude for our parents and their contribution to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These events are now ell established and embedded in our annual calendar: • Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparent's Day • Annual family picnics
Strengthening alumni connections through introducing Alumni Q&A sessions for current families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alumni events will be held bi-annually
Enhancing the communication channels with parents; including introducing new ways to strengthen student transition between cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to promote weekly e-newsletters and the FMS Blog. • Internal transition policy continued to work well.
Expanding communication channels to parents by increasing the number and quality of parent interaction points; increasing information provided; and restructuring parent/teacher conference days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to send the weekly newsletter to all parents. • Parent / teacher conferences held via zoom and in person.
Designing and launching a new website helping to increase our reach and grow our reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed in 2020 • Updating the website as required throughout the year.
Developing a comprehensive marketing plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced annually • Now includes a social media plan



SOCIAL MEDIA

Our social media channels have increased in the level of engagement since 2018:

SOCIAL CHANNEL	ENGAGEMENT 31ST MAY 2018	ENGAGEMENT 30TH JUNE 2023	INCREASE %
Instagram	61	754	1200%
Facebook	189 likes	706	375%
LinkedIn	329	Focus for next strategic plan	



OUR PLACE AND SPACE

Refresh and redevelop facilities

“The child should live in an environment of beauty.”

Dr Maria Montessori

We lodged a noise Abatement application with the Department of Transport in December 2021. They accepted the application in January 2022. They confirmed that they would measure the noise from Warringah road for a full month from October to November 2022. By the end of December this work had still not been undertaken.

FOCUS	ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seamless indoor and outdoor learning Creating a place of beauty Continuing to enhance the gardens, food growing and sustainability practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composting continued and was increased Furniture, joinery for Montessori material shelves. Cost \$101,062 Upgraded reception area External paving and landscaping to meet accessibility standards Cost \$121,542 (green tick for completed) New chicken coop project started and will be completed in 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term planning Ongoing maintenance and capital works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buran – the refurbishment of a 3rd Children’s House was completed in October 2023 bringing all 3 Children’s Houses into shared community space. Cost- \$250,824 Refurbish multimedia room to create new 9-12 Years Environment. Cost- \$268,296 Elevator installed to meet accessibility guidelines. Cost \$106,176 <p>Capital expenditure in 2023 was \$828,864 which was higher than capital expenditure in 2021 and 2022 combined together (\$524,391).</p>





OUR GOVERNANCE AND BUSINESS

Ensure FMS continues to provide a high-quality Montessori education in a viable, ongoing and prosperous way

“Imagination does not become great until human beings use it to create.”

Dr Maria Montessori

FOCUS	ACTION
Positioning the school for ongoing success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capital expenditure - \$829K
Business practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing focus on continuous improvement in processes and systems to improve operational excellence. Xplore implemented to become eligible to receive CCS payments• Curtain & Co- Chartered Accountants engaged for third year as auditors

TRANSPARENT CLASSROOM

Designed by Montessorians for Montessorians, this online portal is a winner with staff and parents alike. Staff spend less time on administration and more time on planning their presentations and students' learning. Parents can see at a glance what their children are learning, who they are working with and what's next for their ongoing development. Now implemented across all programs from age 2-12 Years.

Educating children for life and for peace

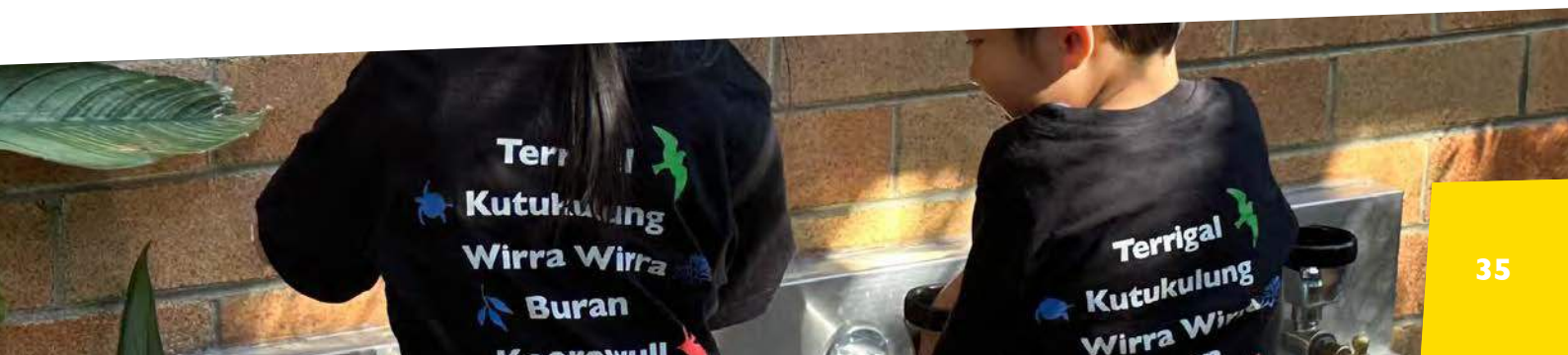
“Character education cannot be taught. It comes from experience and not from explanation.”

Dr Maria Montessori

The Montessori method fosters respect and responsibility as well as social awareness in children. The critical three-year cycle and the integration of children with special learning needs offer a microcosm of society within which children have the opportunity to develop skills essential for interacting in the wider community. The environment promotes individuality, independence, interdependence, awareness of and consideration for the needs of other human beings, which leads to the appreciation of life.

“When children come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength.”

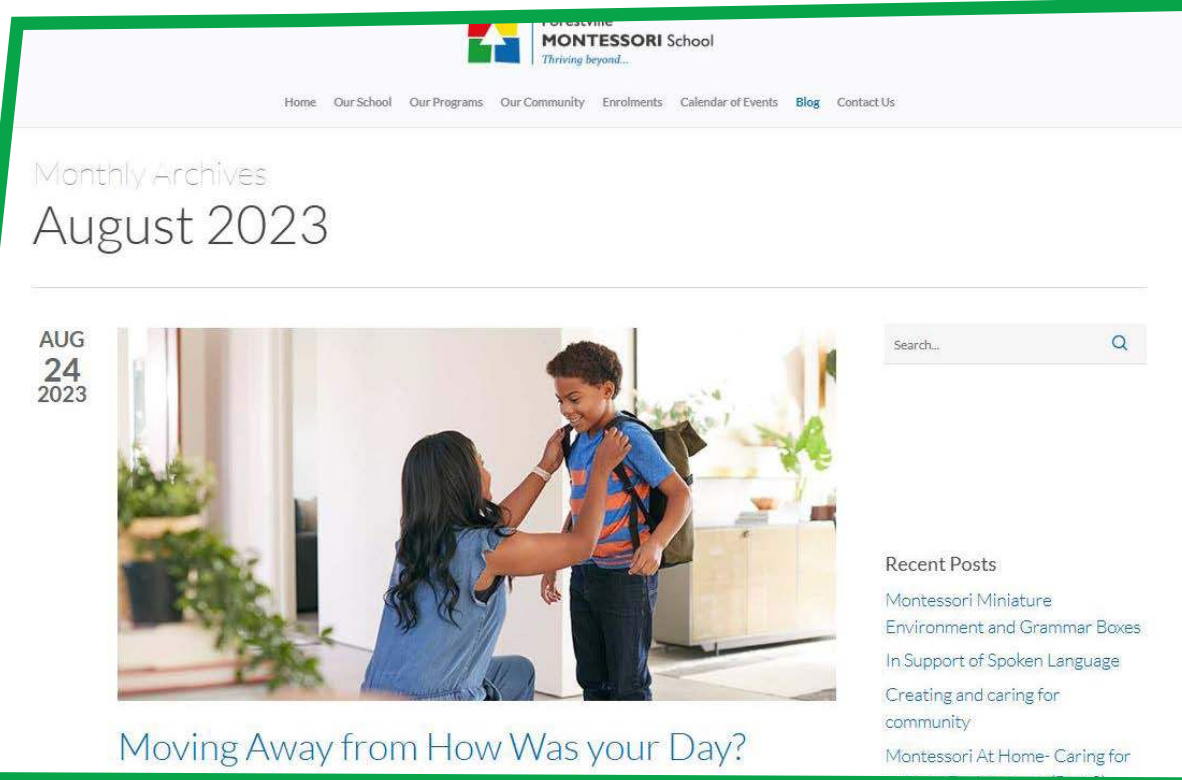
Dr Maria Montessori



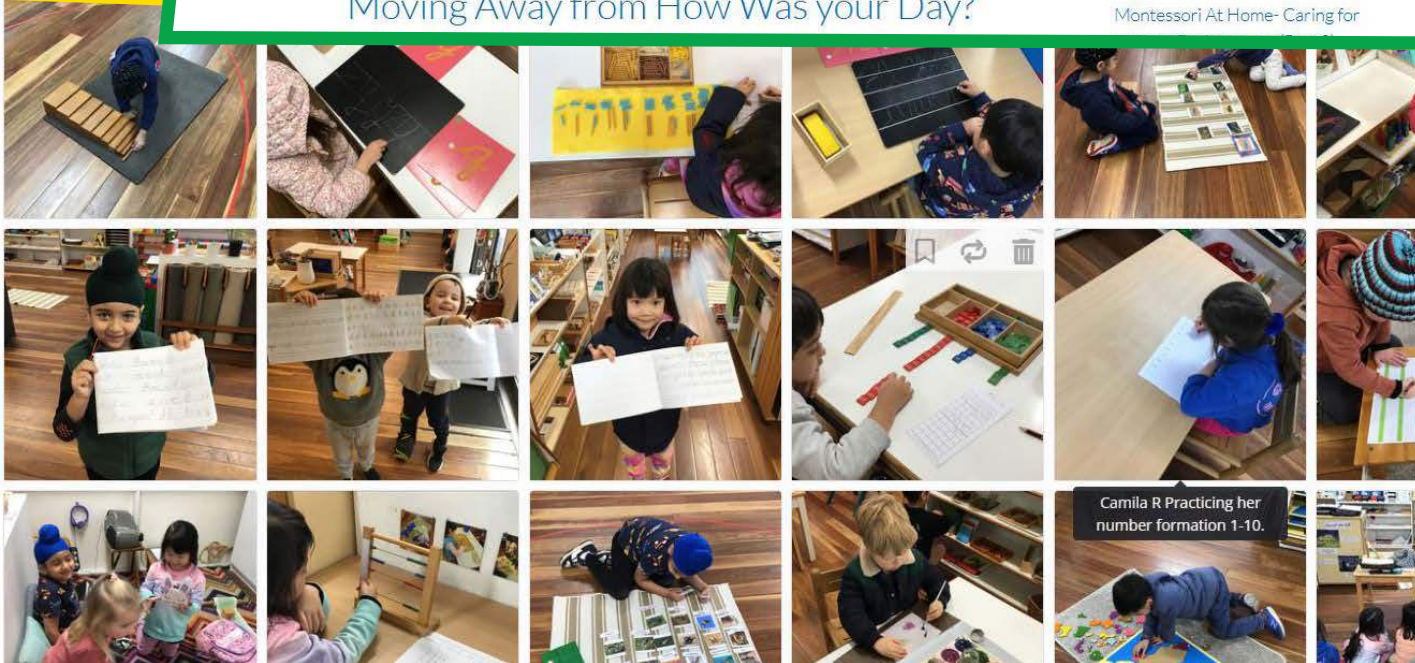
PARENT COMMUNICATION / INFORMATION

We are always looking for ways to respond to feedback from parents. 2023 was no exception

- Community Team Meetings
- Weekly newsletter
- Weekly bog
- Regular email distribution at time of need letters
- Staff communicate with families via Transparent Classroom
- Xplore used by Pre-School parents to sign in/out
- Audiri/ Skoolbag (mobile app)



Progress & Plan
Lesson Plan
Children
Lessons
Photos
Reports
Directory
Admin
Help
About



Camila R Practicing her number formation 1-10.



What people say

WHAT OUR STAFF SAY

Starting as an assistant teacher in the 3-6 classroom in 2020, I embarked on a rewarding journey alongside the most incredible children, supportive parents, and dedicated colleagues—truly the wonder women of FMS.

FMS has been instrumental in my professional growth, offering opportunities for self-development through a variety of short- and long-term courses. These initiatives not only keep me updated with the latest in practical and theoretical knowledge but also fuel my passion for Montessori education. Working under Denice's guidance ignites a collective desire to thrive and excel, fostering an environment where each of us can shine brightly.

I consider myself fortunate to be a part of FMS—a place filled with beautiful souls and endless opportunities for growth. My journey here has been nothing short of fulfilling, and I am grateful every day to contribute to such a nurturing community.

Ayesha Kalam,
Assistant Educator, Koorowull
6-9 Program

I am very proud to be a part of this school community not only as a teacher but as a parent for the last 10 years. I enjoy working at FMS because it is an environment that fosters a child's independence and autonomy. I want all children to be successful learners and working alongside Bonnie, I feel we have created a classroom atmosphere that is stimulating, encouraging and adaptive to the varied needs of each child.

Rosalie Dankbaar
Assistant Educator, Wirra Wirra
3-6 Program

Being part of the Forestville Montessori School community for the past 10 years has been, and continues to be, a fulfilling and exciting experience. I have enjoyed the privilege of watching the children I have taught advance through the years, and it has been a satisfying experience, one that I could only experience in the Montessori environment. FMS has given me the wonderful opportunity to follow the children as they went through their learning journeys, developing academically and into unique and flourishing individuals.

As a teacher, I have enjoyed teaching academic concepts to my students, but also developing positive and collaborative relationships with them, building shared ideas of what they want to learn, how they want to work, and what we can do in the future.

The collaborative environment also extends to my fellow staff, and I have enjoyed working with the other adults in the environment. We work well together to ensure that all the children can get what they need in the school environment.

Working with the families of the school community is a warm and welcoming experience. The families are involved in the school activities, both social and informative, and are helpful and encouraging of each other.

I am deeply thankful for the different experiences that I have been able to have whilst working here, and I look forward to many more.

Xarifa Gabales,
Director, Terraulong
9-12 Program

OUR POLICIES & PROCEDURES

All Policies and Procedures were reviewed and as necessary, updated in 2023. These included both ACECQA and NESA policies and procedures. 44 policies were included in the update with further revision to be undertaken each year.

ENROLMENT

Forestville Montessori School welcomes children of all backgrounds and abilities. In the spirit of Maria Montessori, we provide child-relevant programs to meet diversity, need and stage of development from 18 months to 12 years old. We are a non-selective, non-denominational school.

We updated our enrolment policy to reflect the philosophical foundations of the school and appropriate pathways for every child. Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis.

There are no pre-requisites for continuing enrolment, provided school fees are paid and enrolment conditions are being met.

Our [enrolment terms and conditions](#) are available on our website.

A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

FMS wishes to promote a learning environment where teachers and students should be mutually supportive. Respect is one of our core values and we expect students and teachers to respect each other and not engage in conduct that undermines this mutual trust and support, and also reflects the philosophy and values of the school. FMS encourages consultation between all members of the community in matters which affect them. In 2022, policies were amended to reflect COVID safe practices.

Code of Conduct

FMS has in place a Code of Conduct for staff which may be supplemented from time to time by specific rules and directives. In 2023, it was updated to reflect the school's expectations of professional relationships between employees and families and appropriate use of electronic communications and social networking sites. Changes were made when NESA expectations in relation to NSW Child Protection matters were updated.

Staff read and sign their acceptance of the Code of Conduct annually.

Complaints and grievances

Processes for dealing with complaints and grievances raised by staff, students, and/or parents are in place and available for community perusal. These processes incorporate, as appropriate, principles of procedural fairness. An update was completed in 2021 and reviewed in 2023 for whistleblowing procedures to provide a safe and confidential environment where students, staff and parents can raise genuine concerns regarding actual or suspected contraventions of our ethical and legal standards without fear or discriminatory treatment.

POLICIES SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLBEING

Our Privacy Policy reflects the Australian Privacy Principles and other amendments made to the Commonwealth Privacy Act. Updates were made to our welfare or discipline policies in 2023 in line with the normal review timeline. No significant changes were made.

Procedures in relation to the following policies and practices can be accessed via the School's mobile app or by contacting the school on (02) 9452 2044:

- Attendance and Absence
- Behaviour Management
- Communication Protocols
- Discrimination and Harassment
- Emergency Response Procedures
- Inclusive Education
- Privacy (which addresses the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* and *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012*)
- Student Transitions.

Anti-bullying policy

Our Anti-bullying Policy provides definitions and guidelines for responding to, and managing, allegations of bullying within the FMS community. The full text can be accessed via our website and information booklets. While this policy was reviewed in line with normal review timelines, no changes were made.

Procedure for resolution of serious issues

We are committed to ensuring a harmonious, fair and just working and learning environment. We take our values seriously and uphold our conduct in all matters accordingly. Most issues raised can be readily resolved by direct contact with the relevant staff member.

From time to time, however, a significant issue, concern, grievance or complaint may arise. In this instance, please discuss the matter with the Principal who can advise and outline the process FMS will take to resolve the matter.

Educational facilities and safe practices

FMS continued with a commitment to maintaining and enabling compliance with Workplace Health and Safety Acts and Regulations, relevant council and government requirements and environmental and land use guidelines which include:

- *The Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *The Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011*
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- *Privacy Regulations 2013*
- *The Building Code of Australia*
- *The Environment Planning and Assessment Regulations 2000*
- *The Food Act 2003*
- *The Explosives Act 2003*
- *Animal Research Act 1985.*

During 2023, our high level of compliance was achieved through the following procedures and activities:

- Termly evacuation and lock-down rehearsals
- Staff follow-up on student incidents, parental sign-off
- Documentation and compliance of risk management procedures
- Annual Fire Safety audit conducted by qualified, independent professionals and all electrical equipment tagged and tested
- Further development to our staff induction processes
- Planned responses to serious incidents
- All staff are First aid and CPR trained
- Regular updating of all first aid and student health records
- Register of staff first aid and anaphylaxis training
- Register of verified working with children checks
- Further improvements to the collection of student medical information
- Injury management and monitoring of student incidents
- Annual sign of acceptance by staff of Staff Code of Conduct

Safe and supportive environment – legislative requirements

Staff induction procedures for new staff and regular staff briefings throughout 2023, to ensure our staff are aware of their legal responsibilities in relation to Working with Children, Child Protection, mandatory reporting, reportable conduct, teacher accreditation and other FMS expectations.

Our Child Protection Policy was updated in 2023 and is available on the website.



OUR GOVERNANCE AND BUSINESS OPERATIONS

GOVERNANCE

The School is operated by The Peninsula Montessori Association Limited (PMAL), a company limited by guarantee.

There is a constitution for PMAL which complies with the Corporations Act. It sets out the objects of the company and provides provisions about membership, general meetings, voting, the appointment and removal of directors, audits and accounts, and other matters. The Constitution is available on the School's website.

In 2019 the Constitution was changed to make membership voluntary. An invitation to become a member of the Company is provided to our parents and stakeholders annually before the AGM. Six new members joined the company in 2023.



BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Overall Results

The School recorded loss of \$355,467 after showing sizeable surplus for a number of years. The loss was largely caused by reduced revenue due to a significant drop in the number of enrolments, mainly in the Primary School. The directors consider this a temporary factor, acknowledging management's increased focus to return the number of enrolments to a sustainable level.

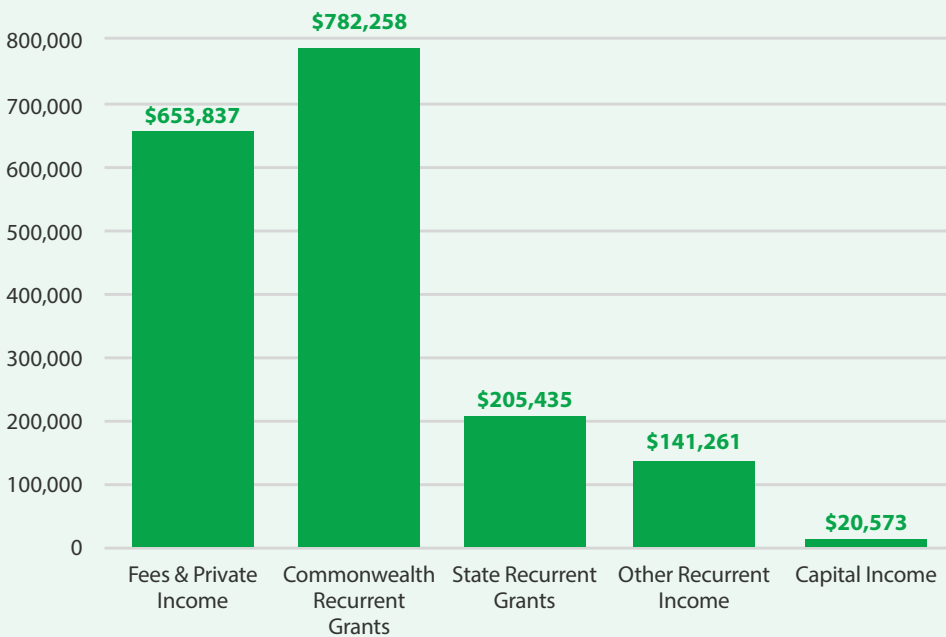
SUMMARY INCOME STATEMENT

INCOME	2023	
Tuition and Other School Related Fees	1,902,344	58%
Government Grants	1,270,106	39%
Fundraising and Other Income	113,475	3%
	3,285,925	
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Related	2,685,245	74%
Teaching Materials and Equipment	147,864	4%
Building and Grounds	218,794	6%
Office and Insurance	338,898	9%
Depreciation	218,045	6%
Fundraising Costs	32,545	1%
	3,641,392	
Net Deficit	355,467	

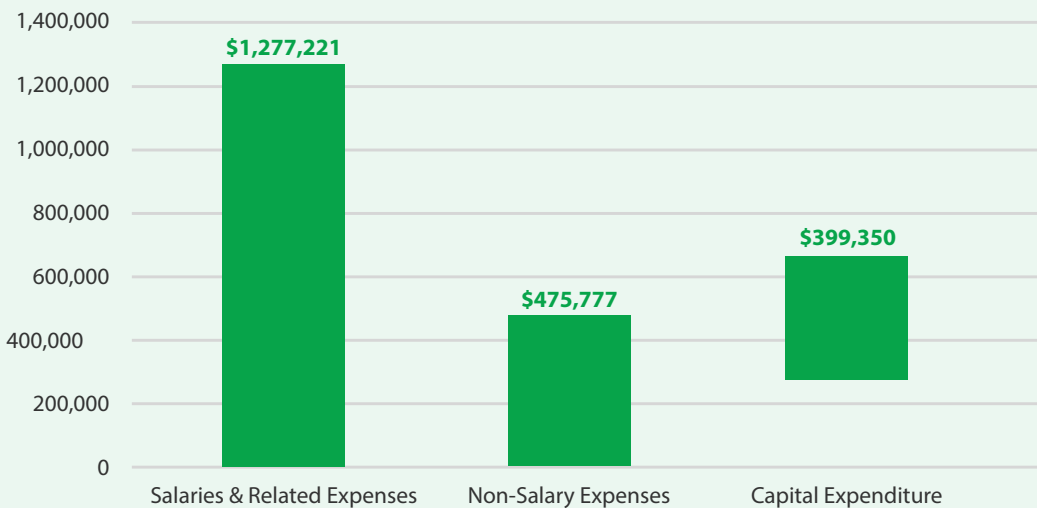
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REPORTING FOR THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

These graphs depict income and expenses reported in the Australian Government's Financial Questionnaire for 2023. The School has used the overall audited financial results above, and followed the published guidelines relating to the classification, inclusion, and exclusion of income and expenses for this specific reporting.

2023 Primary School Recurrent and Capital Income



2023 Primary School Recurrent and Capital Expenditure



Thank you to the FMS community of current and past parents, grandparents and friends who continue to support FMS and the benefits of a Montessori education. We really do appreciate all that you do. To our Board Directors, who are volunteers giving an immense amount of time and expertise to FMS, thank you for your wise governance.

Beyond Today

"Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment."

Dr Maria Montessori

What's Ahead

2024 will see us planning our next strategic directions including scanning the wider horizon to look at trends in the education sector and doing a deep dive into the external factors that may impact the school's business operations. We will begin with a Board workshop followed by a parent survey and a staff survey. The collective findings will feed into our decision making process.

2024 will also be the commencement of a new bargaining process for staff salaries. The Multi Enterprise Agreement negotiations are managed by The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AIS) on behalf of the school.

Forestville Montessori School is a vibrant community with a very special heartbeat. We hope you enjoy reading this Annual Report and encourage you to contact the school on (02) 9452 2044 or visit our website www.forestvillemontessori.nsw.edu.au to find out more.

Follow us on social media.



"Only poets and young children can feel the fascination of a tiny rivulet of water flowing over pebbles"

Dr Maria Montessori





Forestville
MONTESSORI School
Thriving beyond...

**Let us take your child
above and beyond.**

Forestville Montessori School
| Angel Place, Forestville NSW 2087
Phone (02) 9452 2044
www.forestvillemontessori.nsw.edu.au

