



**imagine • include • innovate**

# **Giant Steps Sydney Annual Report 2017**

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## Principal's Report

With the Registration and Accreditation of the School due in 2018 the major focus for 2017 has been reviewing and reworking the Scope and Sequence across a seven year time frame, developing units of work that engage students. As part of the review process, staff also developed individual Scope and Sequences for each student to track student progress over time and each outcome now has a series of progressions to support the assessment process.

Ms Claire Cherrington, Ms Erin Cowie and Ms Jennifer Loughnan have led the process and are to be congratulated alongside the staff for creating such a body of work to enhance the learning opportunities for our student population.

In 2017 Ms Erin Cowie was also awarded and received a commendation for her Action Research project, Experienced Teacher – Independent Schools Teacher Accreditation Authority. Congratulations Erin.

There were many highlights across the year as detailed in the Program reports. The launch of the [www.theautismhub.net.au](http://www.theautismhub.net.au), a project headed by Ms Rachel Bowen was a highlight. The Hub seeks to deliver resources and information to parents, schools and the wider community to support children with autism. The information and resources have been developed collaboratively by Giant Steps staff, based on their experiences and professional backgrounds and are not attached to the sale or marketing of product/s. Giant Steps is committed to sharing work so that it is accessible to anyone.

In collaboration with the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, Giant Steps also delivered the first of its training programs and we are seeking to build on this initiative in 2018.

The work on **student engagement and emotional regulation** continues as a focus area with staff accessing the IABA course as the basic training and in 2018 this will continue with staff moving to the Longitudinal Study – a comprehensive functional analysis of behaviour.

Over the last 5 years Giant Steps have supported the **Leading From the Middle** professional learning program delivered by the Association of Independent Schools. Giant Steps considers all teachers and therapists to be leaders and so staff work together and each participant develops, implements and evaluates a project throughout the

year. The quality of this professional learning is directly related to improved student outcomes and staff satisfaction. A group of 12 staff completed the course in 2017 and a further 9 staff will complete it in 2018.



Ms Bronte Arns also completed her research, **Music Therapy Teaming and Learning: How Transdisciplinary Experience Shapes Practice in an Autism Specialist** and as part of a Masters Program illustrated the work of the Music Therapy Team within a school context under a transdisciplinary model. This piece of research has and will be delivered at conferences. Congratulations Bronte.

There are so many individual highlights throughout the year however the one that is a standout is the way in which staff work together to truly understand each other's profession and then weave those learnings in to our own work to develop richer, more meaningful and targeted programs to support each child's learning. The staff are to be congratulated on their commitment to their professional growth and collaboration with colleagues.

We are grateful to work with such a vibrant parent community, a committed and dedicated staff and an engaged Board of Directors. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of students.



**Ms Kerrie Nelson**  
*Principal*



**Ms Claire Allen**  
*Director of Administration*

## Secondary - Clocktower

In 2017, the Secondary Clocktower program consisted of five classes, with 27 students aged 12-18 years of age, welcoming 7 students from K-6 into the Clocktower. Four of these classes ran out of the Clocktower building, while one made use of Cartier Cottage.

It was another busy year in Clocktower with a range of exciting and enriching programs on offer, all aimed at developing life skills and preparing our young adults for life beyond Giant Steps. The Secondary program implemented the first year of the new 6-year 7-12 Scope and Sequence, with all classes learning parallel units of work. Programs were developed to allow students to access a greater range of focus areas, while individualising learning goals and teaching and learning sequences. Some Units of Work included German, Travel, Chemical Reaction Changes, Energy, and Medieval Europe. The Outdoor Education Program continued to be implemented, with all students participating. Students went bushwalking on trails of varying length and technicality, and swimming in a variety of waterholes, rivers, lakes and beaches. The class running out of Cartier Cottage developed a program to prepare three of the four students there for life after Giant Steps School, with a focus on Work and the Community and integration into post-school programs.

Secondary students also engaged in four camps, continuing the success of the previous year with another overnight hiking camp, along with camps to Milson Island, Canberra, and Myuna Bay. These camps were specifically tailored according to student need, interest, and ability, and were incorporated into supporting student engagement, and provided something of a break point from the regular routine and program. The secondary students always love these camps, enjoying the more relaxed feel, and getting to spend more time with their peers in very different environments.



**Ms Claire Cherrington**  
Secondary – Clocktower  
Director



**Mr Toby Shi**  
Secondary – Clocktower  
Director  
Occupational Therapist





## Secondary - Laneway

2017 saw the creation of a new 'Senior Laneway' program consisting of ten students split across two senior school classes and one K-6 class. This hybrid program was created to best cater for the changing needs of a group of young people at various stages of puberty and adolescence. The major focuses of the program consisted of outdoor education, process driven tasks and student engagement support. It was fantastic to see students of a variety of ages (10-18 years) participate in a range of activities that were tailored to their individual needs, often working in mixed classroom groupings. The program highlights included Chemical Reactions and German (Secondary) and My Water World and Pirates (K-6). At the end of the year we celebrated with our Laneway Camp at Myuna Bay. The students loved the activities, including the giant swing, kayaking, swimming, bushwalking, campfire and our morning pancakes!



**Mr Daniel Snow**  
Secondary – Laneway  
Director  
Occupational Therapist



## K-6

In 2017 the Giant Steps primary program consisted of six primary classes. Each of these classes followed the Primary Year A scope and sequence delivering all Key Learning Areas of the Curriculum. Learning experiences included both onsite activities, and offsite activities within the community. Once again, each K-6 class program included a selection of active physical activities promoting healthy living, gross motor skill development and positive social

interactions in the wider community. Primary Structured Play lessons continued to build students competencies in Social Foundation Skills within a motivating and fun environment. In addition to the structured play equipment, the components of the play lessons include access to highly preferred activities like live and recorded music, sensory play, and equipment encouraging co-operation.

**Throughout the year each student participated in the following programs:**

Key Learning Area	Programs
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library (all year)</li> <li>Assembly (all year)</li> <li>Handwriting (all year)</li> <li>Pirates (semester one)</li> <li>Roald Dahl (semester two)</li> </ul>
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Morning Meeting (all year)</li> <li>Transport (semester one)</li> <li>My Water World (semester two)</li> </ul>
History, Science (including Technology) and Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toys (semester one)</li> <li>Animals (semester two)</li> </ul>
Creative Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Africa (Music, Dance and Drama – Semester One)</li> <li>Africa (Visual Arts – Semester Two)</li> <li>Rock n Roll (Music, Dance and Drama – Semester One)</li> <li>Rock n Roll (Visual Arts – Semester Two)</li> </ul>
Personal Development/Health/Physical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities of Daily Living</li> <li>Swimming</li> <li>Sports and Games</li> <li>Becoming Me</li> <li>Cooking and Healthy Eating</li> </ul>

Throughout these units of work, students had the opportunity to engage with the all aspects of the NSW curriculum. One of the most popular units for 2017 was the Pirates program. This program was fun, interactive, and consisted of students dressing up like Pirates and acting out Pirate activities (e.g. walking the plank).



During 2017 the primary program participated in two overnight camps. Six students took part in a 1-night camp in Canberra. These students visited Questacon where they explored various science concepts and had the

opportunity to engage in various science experiments. During this camp students stayed on a rural property where they had the opportunity to explore the grounds and look at the horses. Thirteen students also participated in a two night, three day camp to Dubbo. During this camp, students participated in a visit to Western Plains Zoo as part of the Animals program as well as going out to eat at a restaurant and participating in Outdoor Education activities.

**Ms Erin Cowie**  
Director K-6





## Early Learning

The Early learning program in 2017 comprised of 3 classes, two full time and one part time class with a total of 15 students. We welcomed 8 new families to the Early Learning program and 4 to our playsteps program, a playgroup offered once a week to families who have had a recent diagnosis at age three.



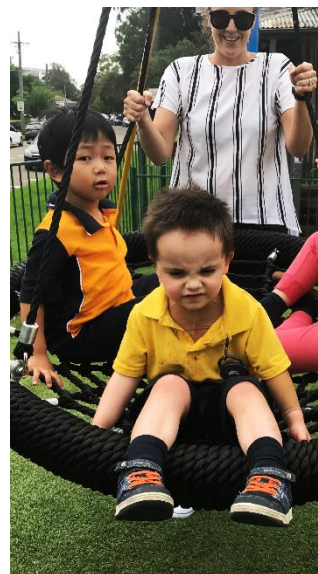
Once again we had a very busy year with four children transitioning to other settings including local primary school, private school and aspect. In addition 4 students transitioned up to our K-6 program at Giant Steps with the remaining 7 returning to Early Learning full time for 2018.

As a Kindergarten class our full time class followed the Key Learning Areas Curriculum, with a fast paced mix of classroom, desktop and wider community based lessons delivered. This class followed the K-6 curriculum topics, including the much loved Pirates program for English and Animals for History and Science. Much of this program centred on building the individual students confidence, social and play skills with an additional emphasis on classroom skills and being part of a group. As part of the school readiness focus, students and staff also attended integration at Putney Public school, a fabulous opportunity to further build on confidence and social interaction with peers in a larger classroom setting.

The part time class and remaining full time class worked under the Being, Becoming and Belonging framework. With this cohort all new to Giant Steps much of the focus was on establishing routines, encouraging independence and self care, and social foundation skills. Lots of music, singing and dance was intertwined throughout lessons, always popular. Communication and emotional regulation was a focus with staff working closely with the therapy team to establishing individual communication folders and assessing sensory profiles for each student.

There was a strong focus on working closely with families, particularly in relation to self-care skills. Staff conducted in-home visits and families were invited to attend workshops as a means of sharing strategies and knowledge between school and home.

Some of our students attended other settings and therapy centres to complement their days at Giant Steps. Staff from the Early Learning program worked closely with other settings, visiting schools and preschools, having private therapists come and visit us at Giant Steps and assisting students towards the end of the year when transitioning to another school setting. All this support ensuring students were met with a consistent approach and that any move was as smooth and stress free as possible.



We had many highlights across the year with a visit to the Opera House, the Zoo, Balmoral beach, Central Gardens and many fabulous playground visits as part of the wider community access program. The most significant highlight was attending Nippers at Clovelly each Monday. This was such a fabulous program supported not only by Giant Steps staff but also the lifesavers from the Clovelly club. The students practiced their nipper skills such as flag races, sand races and water safety. Many also loved the opportunity to hop on the rescue boards and paddle out a little deeper with the Clovelly life savers.

At the end of 2017 with 4 families transitioning to other settings and 4 to our K-6 program, we welcomed 9 new families to Early Learning for 2018.



**Mrs Jenny Loughnan**  
Director  
Early Learning Program

## Occupational Therapy

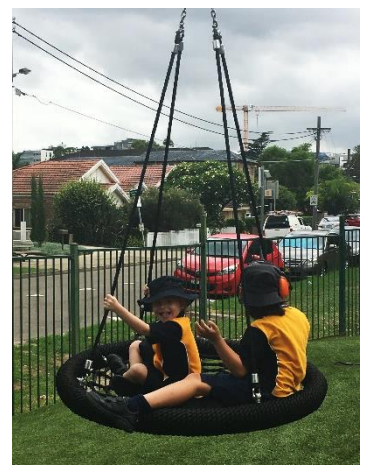
In 2017 the Occupational Therapy Team continued the work we had started in 2016 of defining and articulating our model of practice. This work sought to achieve the following:

- To describe and communicate what occupational therapy services contribute at Giant Steps.
- To specify areas for future evaluation of occupational therapy services in order to make evidence and practice-informed decisions about the directions of service planning and delivery.
- To make effective decisions about the role and scope of Occupational Therapy intervention if this program is to continue.
- To contribute to knowledge development, dissemination, and information sharing about the collaborative model of practice used to deliver occupational therapy services at Giant Steps.

In other words, being able to develop as leaders in the area of school-based practice and to share evidence-informed practices with others. The result of this work was presented at the Occupational Therapy Australia National Conference by Sarah Monch and Andrew Frakes. In 2018 we hope to continue to share our model more broadly.

Sarah Monch led the OT team in piloting the SOS fussy eating program. Sensory issues often result in fussy eating for individuals with autism. Whole staff training and an initial pilot program showed promising results and we look forward to expanding the program in 2018.

The OT team was pleased to assist families with their NDIS planning meetings as the scheme was rolled out for a number of our students. Quality report writing was able to assist families in identifying goals for their children.



**Mr Andrew Frakes**  
Occupational Therapy Director



## Music Therapy

### Research

In 2017, the music therapy team participated in a Masters Research project, exploring the experience of music therapists in transdisciplinary team. The data analysis revealed key findings about how therapists integrate knowledge into professional teams, and the benefits and challenges of role release between professions across school programs. As a result, the results clarifying transdisciplinary practice in our context have been disseminated through presentations at the Australian Music Therapy Conference in Brisbane, publication, lectures at Western Sydney University and the University of Melbourne, and with KidsXpress.

### Events

Across the year, students engaged in two music therapy programs based on the music, dance and drama of Africa and of the Rock n Roll era. The African unit drew on the rich, rhythmic traditions of drum circles, with plenty of opportunity to address goals around joint action, imitation and shared attention. To complement this unit, we invited an interactive performance group to the school, bringing a drum for every person, and they led an energetic and engaging rhythmic experience for the school community.



The Rock n Roll unit saw a focus on amplified instruments typically seen in a rock band, along with the swinging partner dances of the era. Students explored the playing of records on a turntable and produced wonderful works of art including record album covers, miniature sculptures of 1950s food and 3D works inspired by Robert Rauschenberg. These were displayed at the end of year Rock n Roll celebration event where families enjoyed snacks from the Rock n Roll era, watched and tried hula hooping and danced to the sounds of a live band, the Fridays.

### Arts Access

Access to a rich range of arts experiences remains a priority for the music therapy team. This year, the collaboration with the Sydney Opera House continued, with students attending an inclusive performance of Dot and the Kangaroo in the Studio Theatre. It has been so pleasing to see the model of autism-friendly performances introduced into a large number of arts venues over the last few years, and our visual supports used as models to support students with additional needs.



To expand our students' access to the arts, Vanessa Lucas formed partnerships with both the Australian Museum and the NSW Art Gallery. Through these relationships, the Australian Museum held an incursion at Giant Steps, and hosted an autism-friendly experience at the Museum itself. A number of students also visited the NSW Art Gallery and participated in hands-on arts exploration, supported by the staff with tailored visual resources.



**Ms Bronte Arns**  
Music Therapy Director

## Speech Therapy

An exciting year for the speech therapy team with a number of the key initiatives being implemented in addition to our core work with students. In 2017 The Speech Department were able to offer our first external professional development course, through a partnership with The Renwick Centre at RIDBC. The course "Implementation of Multi-Modal, Individualised Communication Systems for individuals with autism and intellectual disability" was well attended with over 40 teachers, therapists and educators from external organisations attending the course in person or by remote access. The feedback from participants was universally positive, with requests for further professional development courses to be offered around topics such as positive behaviour support and curriculum differentiation. This course was developed in response to the success we have had in developing individualised, multimodal expressive communication systems for each student in the school. This process has involved collaborative assessment, planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation from all members in each child's class team, and has resulted in a bespoke and personalised set of strategies and communication supports that each individual student can own and access in order to communicate a range of messages and for a variety of purposes. The types of systems vary according to each child, and usually involve multiple modes of communication, such as picture or object exchange, picture or photo books, 'talkers' (devices with picture/text to speech output), speech and gesture, for example. We are looking forward to continuing to share our skills and knowledge with the broader autism community in 2018, and already have a number of courses advertised for the New Year.



The Autism Hub, an information and resource sharing platform, was launched in 2017 with families and professionals both from within the organisation and more widely accessing the content. The Autism Hub provides information and resources spanning

the breadth of work that we do at Giant Steps, including therapy, student engagement support and curriculum. The staff across the school have been so generous in sharing their knowledge and work for the broader community to access, and we will continue to share what we do via this site. It has been a great way to champion what we know to be 'best practice' as well as further enhance the profile of the school as a 'hub' of innovation.



The Therapists in Disability and Schools Network, which held its inaugural meeting in term 2 of 2017, is an initiative developed by Delna Pryde. Therapists from across disciplines and organisations meet each term to discuss key topics of interest, including models of provision, the NDIS, student engagement support, as a way to build professional knowledge and develop professional relationships with the other professionals working in the disability and schools sector. The network meetings are very well attended with more than 60 individuals registered and we look forward to continuing in 2018.

### Accrediting Therapists and Educators - ISSTA

Giant Steps has continued its work alongside Ms Estelle Lewis, the Head of the ISTAA Council, to establish an external accreditation process for both therapists and educators at each career stage following the development of the Professional Standards for Therapists and the Professional Standards for Educators. In 2017 a number of therapists successfully fulfilled the requirements to be accredited as Proficient Therapists. A number of therapists will again go through this process in 2018 at both the Proficient and Accomplished career stages.



**Mrs Rachael Bowen**  
*Speech Therapy Director*



## Student Welfare and Family Support

### Stepping Stones Triple P

Stepping Stones ran for its fifth year in 2017, being offered to families in Early Learning and Playsteps. This year eight families attended the program for nine weeks, learning about creating positive interactions, autism specific strategies for understanding, communicating and planning, strategies for managing misbehaviour, how to plan for community access and new experiences. Feedback from the parents who attended was very positive and highlighted the practicality of the strategies, having time to discuss difficulties and sharing ideas with other families in similar situations.

### The Rob Llewellyn-Jones Clinical Centre

2017 marked the fourth year of the Rob Llewellyn-Jones Clinical Centre operating onsite at Giant Steps, with 16 clinic days across the year. Due to the complex medical and mental health needs of many of our students, our visiting psychiatrist and developmental paediatrician worked collaboratively to see the 49 students across Early Learning, K-6, Secondary and College who accessed 144 appointments at the clinic in 2017. This included the return of some alumni families seeking assistance options were limited in both private and public systems. Some students have required regular appointments to the clinic, while others now only attend an annual check up, allowing space for other students to join the clinic. The doctors visited students in their classrooms or the playground, allowing them to see more natural behaviour patterns. The clinic team (made up of the visiting doctors, myself and Andrew Frakes, head of Occupational Therapy) then meet with the student's family, key staff members and if applicable residential care staff, to go over the data collected and observations. This high level of collaboration across all environments helps ensure consistent data collection, medication regimes and gaining a clear understanding of the behaviours of concern. The onsite clinic has allowed for longer appointment times and more frequent follow ups, access which is almost impossible in both the public and private mental health sectors. Wait times for appointments were greatly diminished and student and family stress around the consultation process has been greatly reduced. The clinic has proved to be extremely beneficial for students, families and school staff, with positive parent feedback and increased student engagement.

The ongoing presence of the clinic at Giant Steps has opened up the dialogue about mental health for both families and staff, and the need to consider it as an essential component to our students' wellbeing. The clinic and how we support our student's complex needs was presented at the IABA 2017 Invitational International Conference in Dublin, Ireland, with papers presented by myself, Andrew Frakes and Erin Cowie.

A paper about the clinic and its success was published in the Journal of Mental Health for Children and Adolescents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

<http://www.schoollink.chw.edu.au/journal-of-mhcaidd/>

As part of the clinic, my PhD research continues into how anxiety manifests in children and young adults with ASD and an Intellectual Disability.

### National Disability Insurance Scheme

With the NDIS rollout continuing across Sydney in 2017, supporting families to access the scheme and adequately prepare for the planning process has been a key focus. On average each family requires 20-30 hours in preparation of supporting documentation from therapists, as well as several meetings. This support has enabled the majority of our families to access the NDIS and then make meaningful decisions about the appropriate supports for their child and family. Many families now have access to funds and opportunities for their child that had been impossible in the past, making a real contribution to the ongoing development and wellbeing of our students and the stability of the family unit.

**Ms Helen Appleton**  
*Director of Student and Psychological Services*



## Art

The art program at Giant Steps Sydney is based upon the units of work that the teachers develop for our students in each school year. 2017 was another exciting and creative year as our students engaged in art activities that related to themselves and the world around them. All students participate in both structured and sensory based art activities which are themed and modified to suit each individual student across each program.

The students also participated in creating art works on canvas for the 2017 Giant Steps Annual Ball.



In Semester 1 of 2017 our students explored 'Africa' with all its fabulous patterns and colours. Then during the second semester, they developed art based around the theme of 'Rock and Roll'.

As well as providing a structured and themed art program, the students also enjoy exploring a variety of sensory based art materials which allows them to engage in the raw process of art making.

The students at Giant Steps Sydney are provided with the opportunity to discover what they are good at, what they enjoy and to build a new confidence in knowing they can achieve and create.



**Ms Pamela Honeyfield**  
Art





## Outdoor Education

In 2017 the outdoor education programs have continued to be rolled out throughout the school and college programs. A particular focus has been on the establishment and scale up of the programs with our younger students in Primary (K-6) and the development of more accessible locations and activities for all of our students.

The building of a greater repertoire of activities and locations has helped support greater access of all students to program streams. The mapping, risk assessments, building of resources, skilling up of staff around activities as well as safety equipment has allowed the access of students with additional needs (epilepsy etc.) to participate safely. The activities can range from flat hike trails along a road for 3-5kms, up to semi-remote, highly technical hikes, where students are required to carry supplies for up to nearly 20km, which happens on the hike camp program. Swim activities can range from harbour baths, beaches, dams and rivers, to isolated water holes and waterfalls.

As it stands, Giant Steps students have access to hiking, wild swimming, river hiking/canyoning, camping, cycling, kayaking and SUP, surfing and snorkelling programs. Currently we are looking to expand with snow and boating activities. With the large number of different activities, the students have access to a number of seasonal programs to explore and test their skills and expand their horizons. This variety has been identified as an important element in keeping students engaged and building skills, knowledge and confidence.

In conjunction with our off site activities the creation of the bike track and native garden on site has given us a unique opportunity to link learning and experiences. As the space develops, students will learn to identify and use different plants in recipes and look to find them on outdoor education activities, creating a natural transition linking activities in and out of the classroom.

The near future of the outdoor education program will be focused on consolidating the established programs, adding snow and boat activities and the continuous training of staff around implantation of programs, safety, and working knowledge within the programs.



**Mr Ben Bowen**  
*Outdoor Education Specialist*



## Library

The library program has continued to develop over 2017.

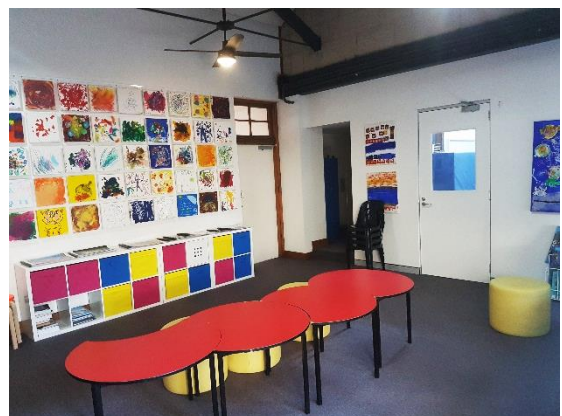
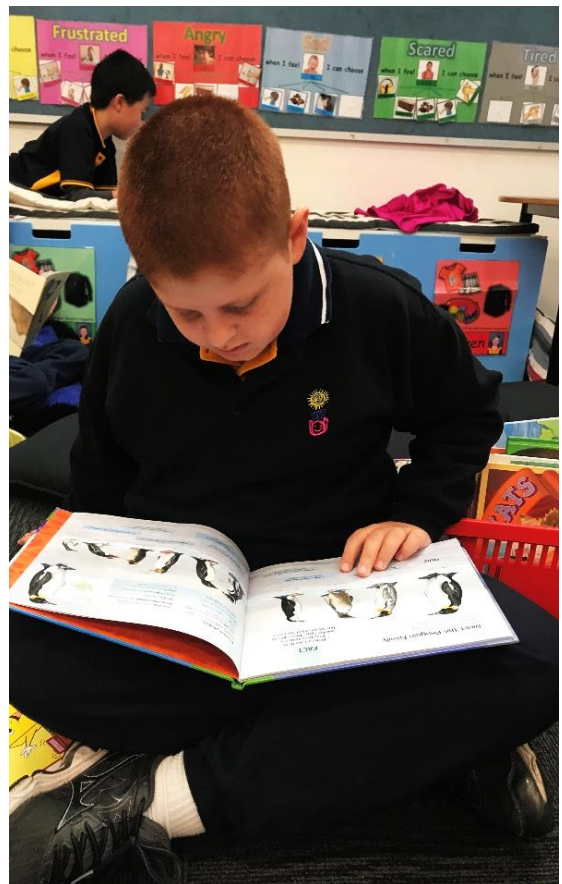
Currently all the students from Early Learning, Junior School, and Senior School are accessing books via the library. This occurs either in the library space or in the students classrooms. The students access the library space as whole classes, small groups or individuals.

The space is more inviting this year and students are beginning to be more independent in the library with self-selection and reading of books. The library teaches necessary skills that support the student to achieve English Curriculum goals and IP goals - specifically self-occupation skills.

The library has had a variety of seating options added including a sofa and bean bags. This takes into consideration the sensory needs of the students who find it difficult to sit in chairs. This also enables the students to relax and enjoy reading alone or with others. Books are on display with some favourite books having been made into large class books. Access to a variety of books has been increased with the introduction of a simplified classification system; this has enabled the students to find and put away books.

A selection of books is taken to classrooms for students that find it difficult to transition or use the library space. These lessons can vary depending on the program. Generally a book is shared with the class followed by time to select books and read alone or with others.

Next year I hope to improve the selection of books, including those that further expand particular interests of students, comfy seating options and further develop the Giant Steps classification system. It has been a joy to see students begin to independently select books and find a space to sit and read. I hope that the number of students able to do this will grow next year.



**Jo McPherson**  
Library





## Bike Track Renovations

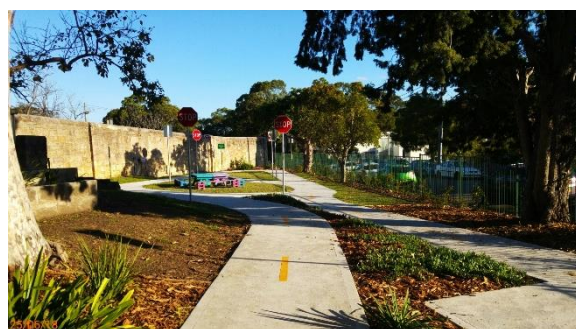
In past years, the grassed area adjacent to the circular driveway has been used to support a variety of short-term programs, but in recent years, has been under-utilised. Whilst bike riding has often been a preferred activity for our students, there has been a lack of level areas where our younger students can learn the skills and safety rules of riding a bike.

In 2016, Bronte Arns applied for a grant through the Department of Transport to rebuild the grassed area into a functional bike track with full sized road signs, and to develop a range of bike safety resources for students with autism. Having this track would provide an additional play area for junior students, and by connecting with the driveway and playground, provide a longer riding path for more experienced students. Road signs and line markings were selected to expose students to aspects of road safety in a controlled environment. The rebuild of the bike track was managed by Peter Inkpen and Brad Strom of Buildline Constructions.

In collaboration with Linda Harrison from Macquarie University Kids and Traffic program, a range of resources were created to support students with autism and other learning disabilities. These may be viewed at:  
<http://www.kidsandtraffic.mq.edu.au/resources-2/>

A workshop for families was conducted at Giant Steps and a working bee was organised by Adrian Atherton to repair all the school's bikes and store them, along with new helmets, in the Bike Shed.

Along with the rebuild of the bike track, an additional Eco Schools Grant was also received, which included the planting of a fully edible garden. Australian native plants were selected which could be incorporated into students' cooking programs and also provided a variety of sensory taste and smell experiences for students moving through the area. Plants were provided by James Brigden of St Albans Wholesale Nursery and planting was completed by Scott Knipler of Classic Backyards.



## Contextual Information about the School

Giant Steps Sydney is a school for children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, located at Gladesville. Information regarding the history and context of the school can be found at:

Website:

[www.giantsteps.net.au](http://www.giantsteps.net.au)

MySchool:

<http://www.myschool.edu.au/SchoolProfile/Index/64404/GiantStepsSydney/43740/2014>

## Student Performance in National and State Wide Tests and Examinations

### Higher School Certificate

No students were eligible for the HSC in 2017.

### RoSA

In 2017 no RoSA credentials were issued to students in this reporting period.

### Literacy & Numeracy Assessments

In 2017 no students participated in the state-wide or national testing. All students had an Individual Plan with a particular focus on the communication outcomes (Support Document – Communication NES). The school uses a range of assessment procedures some administered directly by teaching staff others administered by Speech and Occupational Therapy staff at school in order to ascertain an assessment *for learning* and at regular intervals assessment *of learning*. The goals for the IP are developed using a collaborative team approach including teachers, therapist and parents. The goals are then interpreted and matched with outcomes within the English syllabus documents as well as the Communication Support document. Specific indicators are developed to match the skill level of the child and these are regularly reported against. In all curriculum areas this collaborative process applies.

## Senior Secondary Outcomes

No students undertook a VET course in 2017.

For Secondary students 59% of secondary students were involved in Vocational Education programs and these included opportunities at the following work place

- Meals on Wheels
- Fruit and vegetable Co-Op
- Nestle Administration Office
- Local newspaper delivery
- Giant Steps Administration area
- Local Chemist
- School Jobs Program
- Recycling & Community Projects





## Teacher Standards

In 2017 Giant Steps employed 22 teaching staff across the year with a FTE of 19.6 positions. These teaching positions were supported 18 FTE therapy staff and 28.62 FTE Educator (teacher aide) positions.

- Safe & Supportive Schools
- Human Resources
- Autism & Related Courses
- Curriculum - Communication
- IT
- Student Engagement
- Other including research projects

## Details of all Teaching Staff

CATEGORY	# of Teachers
Teachers who have teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines, or	<b>22</b>
Teachers who have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognised within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications, or	<b>Nil</b>
Teachers who do not have qualifications as described in (a) and (b) but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context (Manual P.39)	<b>Nil</b>

## Staff Retention Rates

Teachers	<b>75.86%</b>
Therapists	<b>88.24%</b>
Educators	<b>80.65%</b>
Administration	<b>88.89%</b>

**Average Retention Across Giant Steps – 81.4%**

## Professional Learning

In 2017 Giant Steps staff were involved in **4240 hours** of professional development across the year. The number of courses attended throughout 2017 totalled **90** across the following areas:-

### Average Professional Learning Hours Per Staff Member - 40 Hours Per Annum

The Professional Development program strengthens the skill level of the staff and subsequently the level of staff satisfaction. This program also contributes to the high retention rate of staff including teachers, therapists, educators and administrative support.

### Course List:

- Administration of Emergency Medication – Midazolam
- AIS Leadership Training (5 Days)
- AIS NSW ICT Management & Leadership Conference
- Anaphylaxis Training
- Anxiety & Depression Workshop
- ASD & Anxiety
- Barry Prizant – Understanding Autism
- Bronze Medallion
- Child Protection Training & Workshops
- Child Protection Investigation
- Child Protection Legislation: Reportable Conduct
- Comprehension Support
- CPR Training
- Dance in K-6: Exploring Valuable Techniques
- Disability Legislation
- Educator Accreditation
- Engaging Students in Music
- Experience Teacher Action Research Support Sessions
- Familiarisation: NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum Geography K-6
- Familiarisation: NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum History K-6
- Giant Steps Essentials: Epilepsy Awareness Training
- Giant Steps Essentials: Restrictive Practices
- Giant Steps Essentials: Supporting Student Engagement in Play
- Giant Steps Essentials: Maintaining Student Welfare in Transport
- Giant Steps Essentials: WHS Drills, Procedures, & Accident Reports
- Giant Steps Top Up: Prompting Hierarchy
- Giant Steps Top Up: Absconding Procedures

- Giant Steps Top Up: Shared Meal Times
- Giant Steps Top Up: WHS – Hooters, Whistles & Evacuation Areas
- IABA's Positive Practices in Behavioural Support (4 Days)
- Leadership Training
- Leading From the Middle (3 Days)
- Managing Employee Absences
- MAPA Foundation Units
- Masters Teaching Practicum
- Mentoring – Managing Complex Situations
- NDIS Awareness
- Next Step Microsoft for Educators
- NESAC Accreditation Workshop: RoSA and HSC
- NESAC Registration Workshop K-10
- Obligations in Identifying & Responding to Children & Young People at Risk
- OT – Supports, Sensory Systems, & Prompts
- Outdoor Recreation & Outdoor First Aid Training
- Registration Afternoons
- Senior First Aid
- SES Workshops
- Strategies for Managing Parental Complaints
- Supporting Individuals in Therapy Sessions
- Supporting School Improvement
- Supporting Teachers Through Accreditation
- Teacher Mentoring & Coaching
- Team Building and Coaching for Improvement
- The Business of Social Media in Schools
- Transport Legislation
- Workers Compensation Training
- Whole School Meeting: Becoming Me Framework
- Whole School Meeting: Engaging Student with Music
- Whole School Meeting: Mandatory Reporting Refresher

## Workforce Composition

In 2017 staffing was stable across all areas – teachers, educators, therapists, and administration staff including both full-time and part-time staff. The staffing ratio across the 3 programs reflected the differences in the model of program delivery. The transdisciplinary model of staff working and planning together continues to gain strength. Collaborative efforts are the key to success. Teachers, therapists and educators work alongside each other, learning to combine their skills to produce programs that target student's individual needs across a range of contexts and student groupings.

## TOTAL STAFF NUMBERS

	No. of Staff	FTE
<b>Principal</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19.6</b>
<b>Therapists:</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Educators / Teachers Aides</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28.62</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8.6</b>
<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>75.82</b>

## Student Attendance and Retention Rates in Secondary School

### Student Population

Early Learning	15
K-6	32
Secondary - Laneway	10
Secondary - Clocktower	27

In 2017 the school enrolled 84 students aged 3-18 years of age. Retention of students in a special school setting is not an overarching goal and as a school we seek to transition students to other beneficial school placements in support of their learning. In 2017 the following transitions occurred:

- 8 students integrated to other schools
- 5 students to post school

The retention rate for secondary aged students has showed a 100% retention rate over the last ten years as students with high support needs are unlikely at this stage in their schooling to move to another educational setting and are very likely to remain at the same school throughout high school.

Retention rates for the K-6 do not adequately reflect the movement of students who integrate into other educational settings as part of their transition plan. A retention rate in this instance does not reflect the movement of students out of the school. In K-6 and Early Learning, Giant Steps actively supports students to move to other educational settings. This decision is always made within the context of an Individual Planning Process involving key personnel, parents and caregivers. Retention rates are not a useful measure in that they do not reflect the



integration/inclusion focus of the school program.

The school, due to the small number of students does not report attendance rates against grades as there may only be one student per grade. The average attendance rate is reported on a per year basis for the school.

**The attendance rate is very stable and high across the year with an average attendance rate of 96.68%**

The majority of students have 9 days absent in any one year, usually due to illness, challenging behaviour or issues with transport to and from school.

### Managing Non Attendance

The school implements policy and procedures for the management of student nonattendance with parents on an ongoing basis through the Daily Diary. The school follows up where written explanation of absence is not received from the parents. Absences are monitored and parent meetings are held to resolve the non-attendance. Mandatory reporting procedures apply where absences are extended or the student may be at risk.

### Post School Destinations

Post school opportunities for students with high support needs are limited creating tensions for both schools and parents. Five students transitioned to post school programs at the end of 2017 funded through the NDIS.

Provision of support services for young people with high support needs continues to be a challenge. Giant Steps continues to be a leader in the field with the establishment of the GS Community College in 2008, and as we progress, the staff are considering more flexible options and programs to meet the changing needs of young adults.

## Enrolment Policies and Characteristics of the Student Body

In 2017 the school enrolled 84 students aged 3-18 years of age. The student population come from a very wide and diverse background and includes students with a language background other than English. The school population is drawn from the greater Sydney metropolitan area.

The demand for enrolment at Giant Steps continues to increase with the majority of applications coming from families wanting an educational service that includes autism friendly teaching strategies combined with therapy services delivered within a curriculum framework.

The school population breakdown is as follows:

Student Population	
Early Learning	15
K-6	32
Secondary - Laneway	10
Secondary - Clocktower	27
Total Males	55
Total Females	29
Student Total	84

Ratio of 1 female: 4 males is the usual ratio for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder.



## School Enrolment Policy

Giant Steps Sydney is a comprehensive co-educational K-12 special school providing an education for students who have a primary diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. The School operates and is registered through the NSW Board of Studies. All applications will be processed in order of receipt and consideration will be given to the applicant's support for the ethos of the school, diagnosis, siblings already attending the school and other criteria determined by the school from time to time.

Once enrolled, students are expected to support the school's ethos and comply with the school rules to maintain the enrolment.

Enrolment Policy can be found at <http://www.giantsteps.net.au/enrolment>

## Enrolment Procedures

- All applications should be processed within the school's enrolment policy.
- Consider each applicant's supporting statement / interview responses regarding their ability and willingness to support the school's ethos.
- Consider each applicant's educational needs. To do this, the school will need to gather information and consult with the parents/family and other relevant persons.
- Identify any strategies which need to be put into place to accommodate the applicant before a decision regarding the enrolment is made.
- Inform the applicant of the outcome.



## School Policies

All Policies, Guidelines and Procedures are available in full text on My School (intranet), Operational Handbook and by request. All Policies, Procedures and Guidelines are reviewed on a three

cycle.

The Workplace Health and safety Committee also review policies and procedures in the WHS area and provide training for staff through the Top Up sessions- a weekly Professional Learning session for all staff.

- Code of Conduct
- Communication Bill of Rights
- Child Protection
- Code of Ethics
- Enrolment Process
- Mandatory Reporting
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Premises and Buildings
- Reportable Conduct
- Student Attendance
- Student Behaviour Support
- Student Welfare
- Use of Email and Electronic Facilities
- Safe and Supportive Environment
- Attendance
- Assessment

## School Guidelines

- Alcohol
- Anaphylaxis
- Anti-discrimination
- Anti-harassment
- Asthma
- Workplace Attire
- Communication Protocol
- Copyright
- Electrical Safety
- First Aid
- Hazardous Materials
- Injuries to Staff
- Injuries to Students
- Toileting
- Injury Management Plan
- Lead Safe
- Playground Supervision
- Privacy
- Return to Work Coordinator
- Return to Work Program
- Smoking
- Staff Mobile Phones
- Student Reports
- Student Sickness
- Sun Protection
- Sunscreen
- Unwanted Visitors
- Visitors



- Volunteers
- Extreme Heat Guidelines

## School Procedures

- Administering Medication
- Buildings and Grounds
- Complaints and Grievances
- Early Pick-up of Students
- Education & Financial Reporting
- Emergency Management Plan
- Employment Screening
- Excursions
- Individual Plans
- Late Arrival of Students
- Lead Safe
- Medical Treatment for Students
- WHS Maintenance Work
- Reporting Procedures
- Returns to BOS
- School Operation
- Student Files
- Taxi Drivers
- Taxi Waiting Area

## Policies

Policies for:

- Student welfare
- Discipline
- Reporting complaints and resolving grievances

### A. Policies for Student Welfare

The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment which:

- minimises risk of harm and ensures students feel secure
- supports the physical, social, academic and emotional development of students
- provides student welfare policies and programs that develop a sense of self-worth and foster personal development

To ensure that all aspects of the school's mission for providing for a student's welfare are implemented, policies and procedures were in place and revised during 2014 (see list above).

### B. Policies for Student Discipline

Students are required to abide by the school's rules and to follow the directions of teachers and other

people with authority delegated by the school. Students with ASD find it difficult to follow rules that may have little personal meaning; however they are part of keeping students safe. Students will be supported through environmental modifications, visual supports and teaching and learning programmes to follow those rules related to health, safety and welfare for both staff and students. The support level of students is constantly monitored. As behaviour is seen as having a communicative function for students with Autism, the onus is on staff to ensure that the appropriate environmental supports as well as communication interventions are in place to support the students as they learn new replacement behaviours.

Corporal punishment or any aversive practice is not permitted under any circumstances.

All disciplinary action that may result in any sanction against the student provides processes based on procedural fairness. Such processes would also include an advocate to act on behalf of the child or family.

The full text of the school's discipline policy and associated procedures is provided to all members of the school community through:

- The Operational Handbook
- The Parent Information booklet
- On My School

All discipline policies are viewed within the context of the student's disability with a strong focus on assisting student's to develop a range of behaviours that will increase their level of participation in all settings and enhance opportunities not only in school but in other community settings.

### C. Policies for Complaints and Grievances Resolution

The school's policy for dealing with complaints and grievances includes processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by parents and/or students. These processes incorporate, as appropriate, principles of procedural fairness. The full text of the school's policy and processes for complaints and grievances resolution is provided in the Operational Handbook. An appropriate outline of the policy and processes is also provided in the Parent Information Booklet.

## School Improvement Plan

### Priorities for 2017 School Improvement Plan

1. Continue the process of developing competency frameworks. In 2017 staff will be working on finalising the framework for Educators) Teachers' Aides) through ISSTA.

#### Outcome

**This project is now complete with a full set of Competency Frameworks across the school and implementation and training due for 2018.**

2. Further development of the outdoor spaces with the renovation of the main playground, the sandpit playground and "The Patch" the secondary outdoor space. The Occupational therapists are planning to include movement based activities and equipment to support children's sensory needs.

#### Outcome

**The main playground project was completed and "The Patch" is awaiting approval for the installation of new fences and gates in 2018.**

3. Mentoring project, under the direction of Ms Lynne Stone to continue with the development of a formalised system for Educator staff. This project was established in 2015 and continues in 2017.

#### Outcome

**The project continues with further training of mentors and mentees. This project included teachers in 2017. This will be continued in 2018.**

4. Student Engagement Team – this team will be developed in 2017 and work across school to improve the data collection techniques as well as develop a rating scale for student engagement in learning for our student cohort.

#### Outcome

**The team is in place and has developed the student engagement scale and its reliability across the staff group K-12. Staff are using the tool to evaluate program effectiveness. In 2018, this work will continue to be refined.**

5. Capital Works Projects include the completion of the Sky Lantern project and the refurbishment of the GS College space. Additional work will be carried out on drainage and the Veranda in Step House with heritage restoration.

#### Outcome

**This work has been completed.**

6. Staff, following on from the Sydney University play research program and work on Social Foundations Checklist will combine their learnings and develop a comprehensive tool that incorporates both Play and Leisure recreation skills with social foundations. The tool titled RAPA will be developed and trialled in 2017.

#### Outcome

**The RAPA assessment has been developed and trialling in 2017. In 2018, this assessment will be integrated within the assessment guidelines across all students.**

7. The Mental Health Clinic will publish a paper on the development and sustainability of the model in 2017. The paper will be authored by the team including Dr Peter Wurth, Dr Patrick Concanon, Ms Helen Appleton and Mr Andrew Frakes.

#### Outcome

**The paper has been completed and published in the Journal of Mental Health for Children and Adolescents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.**

<http://www.schoollink.chw.edu.au/journal-of-mhcaidd/>

8. The school will continue to support the research project around Anxiety and ASD lead by Ms Helen Appleton. School students will participate.

#### Outcome

**This research project is ongoing.**

9. The Melbourne School – GSM will open in 2017 with a cohort of 11 students – 2 classes. Cementing the model and developing across school programs under the National Curriculum Framework will be a priority.

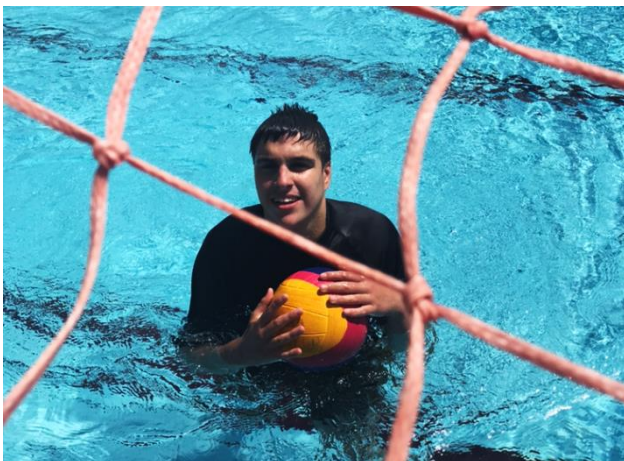
#### Outcome

**The school opened in January 2017.**



## Priorities for 2018

1. Registration and Accreditation of Giant Steps as an endorsed provider of professional Learning – NESA
2. Registration and Accreditation due in 2018 – review scope and sequence and implement all elements of the revised curriculum.
3. Further refine the “Becoming Me’ project with implementation K-12.
4. Support families through NDIS review process.
5. Therapy hub to go live and the development of a Therapy in Schools professional learning group.
6. Further develop the Autism Hub,



## Initiatives Prompting Respect and Responsibility

Giant Steps works in partnership with a number of schools through community participation, work experience and integration to support the development of skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes in relation to students with disabilities. The school has developed Buddy programs for schools as well as Kids helping Kids, a HSIE unit of work in K-6 that promotes and develops interaction skills with typically developing peers.

For Giant Steps students there is a program to teach and develop social foundation skills for all our students across a range of environments. These programs are developed and implemented at a class, individual and whole school level.

The school has been very active developing networks with other educational providers and runs a range of workshops to support the inclusion of students with autism as well as training courses for teachers and school personnel. Giant Steps staff works across agencies to develop partnerships in order to increase the opportunities for our student body.

For students at Giant Steps respect and responsibility is promoted and actively taught as students learn to function within the context of a group. Even the most simple of examples, such as waiting for your turn or not pushing into a line, understanding that you may need to be aware of oncoming pedestrian traffic and adjust your walking line. In each and every activity throughout the school there is a focus on students understanding the perspective of another and for children with autism this is a core deficit. In all teaching programs respect and responsibility is actively taught so that our students are able to successfully participate in the full range of community activities.

In 2017 Giant Steps hosted a number of students on Community Service or Work Experience programs from local schools such as St Ignatius College, St Joseph's College, and St Alysious. Throughout the year approximately 76 students worked alongside staff for a few hours up to a week supporting the work of the school. Giant Steps students also attend holiday camps set up by schools in particular St Ignatius and Moriah College. These holiday programs are wonderful opportunities for students with autism to experience a camp activity. The liaison with schools and other community organisations continues.

A special mention here to “Joey’s” who, for the last 2

years, have hosted our entire school cohort for a day that includes games, fun, BBQ's ,swimming and a whole host of activities. This is an extraordinary effort by the Year 10 boys and one that is appreciated by our staff, students and families. To be part of, and feel a sense of connection and belonging to a wider community of schools is for us deeply important. Thanks "Joeys" for your efforts.

## Parent, Student and Teacher Satisfaction

Giant Steps surveys all staff and parents annually. Data is available for previous years. The results of these surveys are compiled and distributed at Parent Information/Staff Information sessions in Term 4 of each year. Both staff and parent satisfaction remained solid in 2017 and showed an overall maintenance of satisfaction levels.

Student satisfaction is not surveyed formally due to the students' variable ability however parents act as strong advocates for their child within the survey and respond to questions on behalf of students.

Giant Steps used an on-line survey to collect data.

## Curriculum

Throughout 2017 the school staff worked as a team developing, refining and reflecting on how to create learning opportunities that were meaningful and sustainable, integrating both educational and therapy goals for all students across all contexts including school, home and other environments. The curriculum is inclusive of all students in NSW and challenges the school staff to continually find meaningful, authentic teaching and learning experiences that engage, enliven and challenge our students. Learning should be fun and full of delight and joy as children experience the world through school. At Giant Steps we seek to find those opportunities for our students, to open up options and incorporate individual outcomes in all teaching activities.

Staffs are constantly seeking to find new ways to teach and to support student learning, they are to be congratulated.

Throughout 2017 teachers and therapists worked on planning and programming to meet the individual needs of students within classes. Teachers and therapists plan units of work that engage students, are motivating, functional and lead to greater levels of independence and participation in community life.

## Family Supports

The school also developed a range of support programs for parents including outreach programs, diagnostic and assessment centre, Triple P parent training, fathers and mothers groups also run as well as siblings group.



## Summary

2017 was a year of change and growth across the school. The rate of change and the momentum gained throughout the year via Research projects, Mentoring, Leadership Programs, Student Engagement Teams as well as the continual development of the Australian Curriculum.

**Ms Kerrie Nelson**  
*Principal*





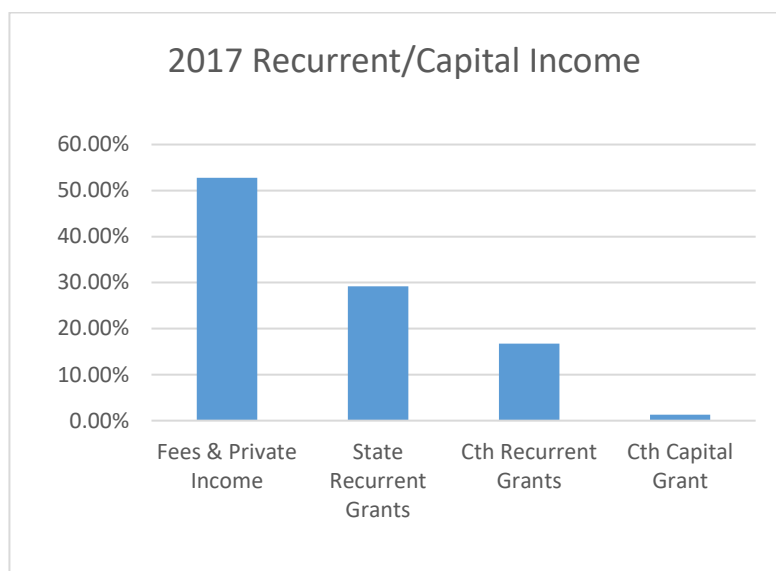
## Summary Financial Information

### Financial Information

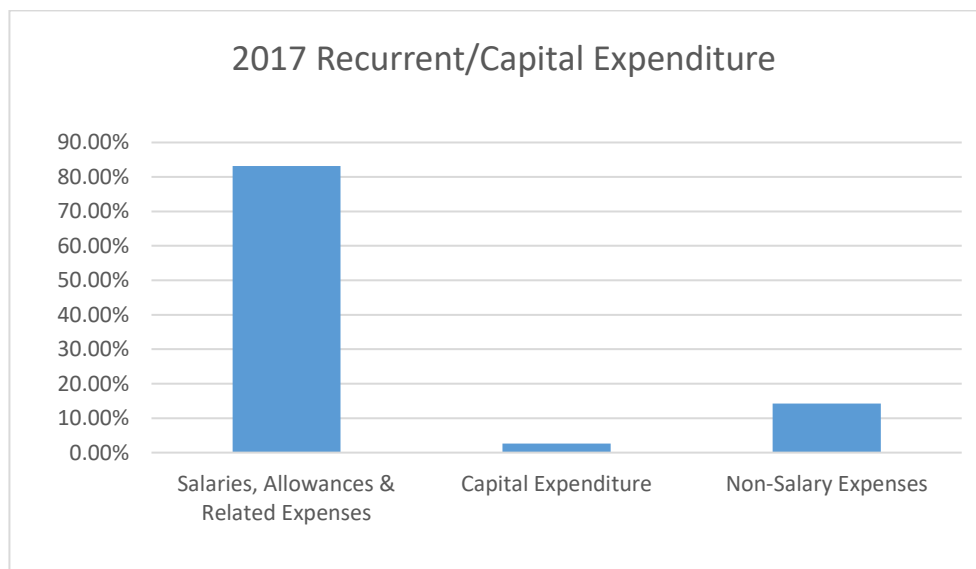
Giant Steps Sydney is a registered Charity and a Public Benevolent Institution. Each year Giant Steps has a full financial audit conducted by

PricewaterhouseCoopers. Giant Steps does not charge fees and in 2017 received over 45% of revenue from donations, fundraising appeals and support from community organisations and companies.

**(a) Graphic one: recurrent/capital income represented by column chart**  
**Please note: Giant Steps does not charge School fees**



**(b) Graphic two: recurrent/capital expenditure represented by column chart**



## Appendix 1: Student Enrolment Policy

### About Giant Steps Sydney Early Learning Program and School Program

#### History

Giant Steps Sydney opened on 16 July 1995. It was started by a group of parents who had children with autism. These parents discovered the program, which originally began operating in Montreal, Canada in 1981. Wanting something better for their children's future, they managed to locate suitable premises at Gladesville, find staff and have them trained by Giant Steps Montreal as well as obtain government funding to cover part of the costs and raise the balance required by approaching corporate donors and organizing fundraising events.

Giant Steps Sydney runs a school with a transdisciplinary model integrating teaching and learning and therapy for students with autism. Giant Steps Sydney has an Early Learning Program and a K - 12 School Program.

#### What are the Special Features of the Giant Steps Program?

- A transdisciplinary approach where speech, occupational and music therapists are on site working with special education staff in a collaborative team developing individual plans specific to each child's needs and abilities within the NSW Board of Studies curriculum framework.
- Integration of students into local schools and communities as an integral part of the Early Learning and School Programs.
- Giant Steps Sydney uses a child and family centred approach that aims to encourage the children to achieve their maximum potential.
- Programs at Giant Steps Sydney may vary from time to time.

#### How is Giant Steps Sydney Funded?

As an independent school Giant Steps Sydney receives both State and Commonwealth funding which contributes approximately 45% to the total running costs. Giant Steps Sydney is also a registered charity (Reg No DGR 32778) and all parents are actively involved in supporting the school.

Donations to Giant Steps Sydney are tax deductible.

Giant Steps Sydney does not charge fees in the Early

Learning Program or the School Program.

#### What Other Services does Giant Steps Sydney Offer?

Giant Steps Sydney runs a playgroup, Play Steps, for young children with a diagnosis of autism which operates at Gladesville. Giant Steps Sydney also offers a range of outreach services (Speech, Music and Occupational Therapies). It gives extensive training to the staff in integration schools and also runs frequent workshop training sessions. A vacation care program runs over the Christmas break for the children of Giant Steps Sydney.

There are a number of fees for service provisions such as Outreach services and Play Steps.

#### Giant Steps Sydney's Vision Statement

"Giant Steps Sydney will continue to be recognized as a centre of excellence for the creation, implementation and dissemination of innovative and effective programs and services for individuals with Autism and their families."

#### Giant Steps Sydney's Mission Statement

"Giant Steps Sydney seeks to develop intensive therapeutic and educational programs to ensure that each individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Giant Steps Sydney also seeks to provide support to families, improve understanding of autism in the wider community and to develop best practice amongst carers and professionals".

#### Giant Steps Sydney's Core Values

- Maintain a culture of best practice service to individuals with autism.
- Remain open to the acceptance of new ideas and approaches, seeking continuous improvement in all that we do
- Recognise the skills of our staff, encouraging commitment and dedication from a team of quality people.
- Strengthen professional relationships within and outside of Giant Steps Sydney.
- Adopt collaborative approaches to challenges.
- Promote constructive reciprocal involvement within the community.
- Pursue growth opportunities consistent with our core undertakings whilst maintaining prudent financial and risk management.
- Celebrate our achievements.



## Giant Steps Sydney Enrolment Process

### Eligibility Process

Our school is funded in part by the NSW Department of Education and Training which has very specific criteria for placement. A completed Application Form, with supporting documentation, must be lodged by parents or legal guardians. Students are placed on the Eligibility List based on the following:

- A medical diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder
- A psychological diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder
- May have an associated development delay
- Is aged between 3 and 18 years
- All applicants will receive acknowledgement upon receipt of an Application Form.

### Admissions

- A vacancy may arise when:
- a student moves from one program to the next program because of his or her age
- a student leaves Giant Steps
- a student graduates (is integrating independently at his or her local school)
- additional places become available due to the availability of additional resources

### Offer of Placement

When a vacancy arises the following will be considered:

- where the class vacancy exists
- age of student
- time on the Eligibility List

Offer of a place is subject to an interview of parents/guardians and child. The Admissions Committee will meet to determine Offer of Enrolment. Students are selected for intake based on the following criteria:

- The assessment process will account for compatibility in relation to the intake group and will consider characteristics related to the developmental age as well as social and behavioural repertoire.
- Parent support and commitment in the program, both school-based and home-based. That is, parents demonstrate past and present commitment to their child's overall developmental needs including education, socialisation, communication, behavioural / emotional and general well-being.
- Parents demonstrate a willingness to become

actively involved in and initiate fundraising activities and parent committee work or be willing to support the program in other ways.

## Conditions of Entry

### Parent Commitment

Parents are required to have an interview with a Board member prior to admission to gain an understanding of Giant Steps' expectations regarding the participation and commitment required by parents.

### Parent Contributions

Giant Steps Sydney is a registered charity (DGR No. 32778) and all donations are tax deductible. Government funding does not fully meet the costs of running the school. The remaining funds are raised through donations and fundraising events. All parents are expected to contribute towards the substantial fundraising effort required to secure the successful on-going operation of the school.

### Medical Treatment

If a student needs urgent hospital or medical treatment of any nature and the school is unable to contact the parent or guardian after making reasonable efforts you authorize the school to give authority for such treatment. You indemnify the school, its employees and agents in respect of all costs and expenses arising directly or indirectly out of such treatment.

### Change of Details

It is the responsibility of the parents to advise the school of any change of address and contact numbers.

### Student Absences

The school needs to be contacted if your child is going to be absent from school for any reason. Parents must send in a Sickness/Absenteeism note each time the child is absent, or partially absent, from school.

### Exclusion from Giant Steps Sydney

- If the Principal, or any person deputing for the Principal, considers that a student's behaviour is of such a serious nature that there is substantial risk to other students or staff, the Principal or Deputy may exclude the student permanently or

temporarily at their absolute discretion.

- If the Giant Steps Sydney Board or the Principal believes that a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation between a parent and school has broken down to the extent that it adversely impacts on that relationship, then the Giant Steps Sydney Board or the Principal may require the parent to remove the child from the school.

## Withdrawal from Giant Steps Sydney

The school requires one term's notice if a student's enrolment is to be withdrawn.

## Enrolment

Students are offered a place in the Early Learning, K-6 or Secondary programs. Current students need to apply in writing to the Principal if they would like to move to the next program.

See criteria for offer of placement.

## Uniforms

We encourage students to wear the school uniform.

## Amendment of Terms and Conditions

The Board may alter these conditions of entry at any time by notifying parents in writing. Alterations will apply from the date of the notice.

## Appendix 2: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN.

Responding to Allegations: Protocols for Investigations

(To be reviewed following implementation of amendments to the legislation)

<http://portals.studentnet.edu.au/industrial>

The Working with Children Check Guidelines:

[www.kids.nsw.gov.au/check/employer.html](http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/check/employer.html)

NSW Ombudsman – Child Protection Guidelines (revised 2004)

[www.nswombudsman.nsw.gov.au/publications](http://www.nswombudsman.nsw.gov.au/publications)

## 1. Introduction

- a) The aim of this Code is to outline the standards of behaviour expected of all employees of Giant Steps.

- b) This Code does not attempt to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what to do in every aspect of your work. Instead, it sets out general expectations of the standards of behaviour required.
- c) The Code places an obligation on all employees to take responsibility for their own conduct and to work with colleagues cooperatively to achieve a consultative and collaborative workplace where people are happy and proud to work

## Contractors and Volunteers

Contractors, consultants and volunteers working with Giant Steps must be aware of this Code and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the conduct described in it. Conduct that is not consistent with the conduct set out in this Code may result in the engagement of a contractor, consultant or volunteer being terminated.

If you are engaging or managing external consultants, contractors or volunteers, it is your responsibility to make them aware of Giant Steps' expectations of conduct during the period of their engagement.

## 2. The Legislative Context

2.1 The consequences of inappropriate behaviour and breaches of this Code will depend on the nature of the breach.

2.2 Employees should report possible breaches by colleagues to their supervisor or the Principal. If the possible breach is by their supervisor then it should be reported to the Principal.

2.3 Factors Giant Steps may consider when deciding what action to take may include:

- (a) the seriousness of the breach;
- (b) the likelihood of the breach occurring again;
- (c) whether the employee has committed the breach more than once;
- (d) the risk the breach poses to employees, students or any others; and
- (e) whether the breach would be serious enough to warrant formal disciplinary action.

2.4 Actions that may be taken by Giant Steps in respect of a breach of the Code include management or remedial action, training or disciplinary action ranging from a warning to termination of employment. Giant Steps will reserve the right to determine in its entirety the response to any breach of this Code.

## 3. Required Reporting

3.1 All employees are required to inform the Principal if they are charged with or convicted of a serious offence (those punishable by 12 months or more in



jail). You must also inform the Principal if you become the subject of an Apprehended Violence Order.

3.2 If, through your employment with Giant Steps, you become aware of a serious crime committed by another person, you are required to report it to the Principal, who may be required to inform the police.

3.3 As a Giant Steps employee, you must report to the Principal:

- (a) any concerns that you may have about the safety, welfare and well being of a child or young person;
- (b) any concerns you may have about the inappropriate actions of any other employee, contractor or volunteer that involves children or young people;
- (c) any concerns you may have about any other employee, contractor or volunteer engaging in 'reportable conduct' or any allegation of 'reportable conduct' that has been made to you; and
- (d) if you become aware that an employee, contractor or volunteer has been charged with or convicted of an offence (including a finding of guilt without the court proceeding to a conviction) involving 'reportable conduct'; and
- (e) if you become the subject of allegations of 'reportable conduct' whether or not they relate to your employment in Giant Steps.
- (f) if your Working With Children Check clearance is cancelled or if you are or become a disqualified<sup>1</sup> person from working or volunteering with children. You should refer to Giant Steps' Child Protection Policy for further information about these obligations.

3.4 Please note that teachers and some other employees have mandatory reporting obligations under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) where they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child under the age of 16 years is at risk of significant harm and have current concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child. You should refer to Giant Steps' Child Protection Policy for further information about these obligations.

## 4. Respect for People

4.1 Employees who work with students have a special responsibility in presenting themselves as appropriate role models for those students. Modelling effective leadership and respect in your interactions with students can have a profoundly positive influence on a student's personal and social development. This is particularly important as the student population is very vulnerable due to their disability.

4.2 Similarly, it is important for you to treat your colleagues, other employees, contractors, students and parents with respect. Rude or insulting behaviour, including verbal and non-verbal aggression, abusive, dismissive, threatening, intimidating or derogatory language and physical abuse or intimidation towards other employees, contractors, students and parents is unacceptable. You must not use information and communication technologies, such as email, mobile phones, text or instant messaging, blogs, social media sites and other websites to engage in this type of behaviour.

4.3 You must not discriminate against, or harass for any unlawful reason, or bully for any reason any employee, contractor, student or parent. Your obligations in this regard, including the list of unlawful reasons, are set out in Giant Steps' Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy. Unlawful harassment or discrimination may constitute an offence under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 or federal discrimination legislation. Bullying may be a breach of your obligations under work health and safety legislation or your duty of care at common law.

4.4 You should ensure that you are aware of Giant Steps' Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy. If you believe you are being unlawfully harassed or discriminated against or bullied:

- (a) where you feel comfortable ask the person to stop, or make it clear that you find the behaviour offensive or unwelcome. It may be useful to speak with your supervisor or the Principal in the first instance to seek guidance on how to do this; and/or
- (b) raise the issue as a grievance in accordance with Giant Steps' Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy as soon as possible after the incident(s) have occurred.

4.5 Giant Steps takes reports of unlawful discrimination and harassment or bullying seriously and will consider action it considers appropriate if such conduct is found to have occurred including disciplining or dismissing offenders. Many incidents can be addressed effectively if reported early.

4.6 If you lie about or exaggerate a complaint, Giant Steps will view this as a very serious matter, and you may be disciplined or dismissed.

## 5. Duty of Care and Work Health & Safety

5.1 As a Giant Steps employee, you have a duty of care to students in your charge. That duty is to take all reasonable steps to protect students from risks of harm that can be reasonably predicted. For example, risks from known hazards and from foreseeable risk

situations against which preventative measures can be taken. The standard of care that is required, for example the degree of supervision, needs to be commensurate with the students' maturity and ability.

5.2 Duty of care to students applies during all activities and functions conducted or arranged by Giant Steps. The risks associated with any activity need to be assessed and managed before the activity is undertaken.

5.3 You should ensure that you are aware of Giant Steps' Information Sheets relating to Duty of Care and Excursions.

### **Work Health And Safety**

5.4 You also have a responsibility under work health and safety legislation to take care of your own health and safety at work. It is also your responsibility to ensure that your activities do not place at risk the health and safety of your co-workers, students or other persons that you may come into contact with at work.

5.5 Considerations of safety relate to both physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals.

5.6 You should ensure that you are aware of and Giant Steps' Work Health & Safety Statement.

### **Supervision Of Students**

5.7 You should take all reasonable steps to ensure that no student is exposed to any unnecessary risk of injury.

5.8 You should be familiar with and comply with Giant Steps' evacuation procedures.

5.9 Students should not be left unsupervised either within or outside of class. You should be punctual to class and allocated supervision.

5.10 You should remain with students at after school activities until all students have been collected. In the event that a student is not collected you should remain with the student until collected, or seek advice from your supervisor.

5.11 Playground supervision is an integral part of the responsibility of staff. It must take precedence over other activities. It is

unacceptable to be late. You should actively supervise your designated area.

5.12 You should be alert to bullying or any other form of discriminatory behaviour, and report incidents to the appropriate staff member. Additional detail about student bullying is set out in the Policy for Supporting Student Engagement.

5.13 Ill or injured students should be attended to by the supervising staff member. Should additional assistance be required you should contact Claire Allen or Kerrie Nelson.

5.14 You should ensure that you understand and comply with Giant Steps' policy in regard to the storage and administration of prescribed medication to students (see the Procedure Administering Medication to Students).

## **6. Professional Relationships Between Employees and Students**

### **Supervision Of Students**

6.1 You should avoid situations where you are alone in an enclosed space with a student. Where you are left with the responsibility of a single student you should ensure that this is in an open space in view of others. Where this is not possible or practical it should be discussed with your supervisor and/or the Principal, and noted in the student's engagement plan.

6.2 You should never drive a student in your car unless you have specific permission from your supervisor and/or the Principal to do so. In the event of an emergency you should exercise discretion but then report the matter to your supervisor.

6.3 Due to students vulnerability, staff must be actively supervising students at all times.  
**Physical Contact With Students**

6.5 You must not impose physical punishment on a student in the course of your professional duties.

6.6 When physical contact with a student is a necessary part of the teaching/learning experience you must exercise caution to ensure that the contact is appropriate and acceptable, in consultation with the Program Directors and Therapists.



6.7 Attention to the toileting needs of young children should be done with caution. It may be appropriate to have the door open. For students with a disability the management of toileting needs should be included in the student's individual management plan.

6.8 When congratulating a student, a handshake, pat on the shoulder or brief hug are acceptable as long as the student is comfortable with this action. Kissing of students is not acceptable.

6.9 Assessing a student who is injured or ill may necessitate touching the student. Always advise the student of what you intend doing and seek their consent.

6.10 Sometimes in ensuring duty of care you may be required to restrain a student from harming him or herself or others using reasonable force. Any such strategy must be in keeping with Giant Steps' behaviour management practices or individual student management plans. You should report and document any such incidents. MAPA training is available to assist staff in dealing with crisis situations.

### **Relationships With Families**

6.11 You must not have a romantic or sexual relationship with a student. It is irrelevant whether the relationship is homosexual or heterosexual, consensual or non-consensual or condoned by parents or caregivers. You are reminded of:

- (a) the law prohibiting sexual relations with a person under the age of consent (16 years); and
- (b) the law prohibiting sexual relations between a teacher and their student under the age of 18 years.

6.12 You must not develop a relationship with any student that is, or that can be interpreted as having a personal rather than a professional interest in a student. An overly familiar relationship with any student (including any adult student) that you are responsible for teaching, tutoring, advising, assessing, or for whom you provide pastoral or welfare support raises serious questions of conflict of interest, trust, confidence, dependency, and of equality of treatment. Such relationships may also have a negative impact on the teaching and learning environment for other students and colleagues, and may carry a serious reputational risk for Giant Steps. You must not favour one child over another child.

6.13 At all times when speaking with students care must be taken to use appropriate language. You must always treat students with respect and without favouritism. There is no place for sarcasm, derogatory remarks, inappropriate familiarity or offensive comments. Staff must be aware that adult

conversations must not occur where students are present.

6.14 You must not:

- (a) invite students to your home;
- (b) visit students at their home; or
- (c) attend parties or socialise with students, unless you have the express formal written permission of the Principal and their parents or care giver. This includes working with families in Outreach respite arrangements.

6.15 You must not engage in tutoring, coaching, or respite work with students from Giant Steps without the express permission of the Principal.

6.16 You must not invite students to join your personal electronic social networking site or accept students' invitations to join their social networking site (Appropriate Use of Electronic Communication and Social Networking Sites).

6.17 You must not give gifts to students. You should also carefully consider your position before accepting any gift from a student (see Section 10 - Declaring gifts, benefits and bribes)

6.18 Wherever practical, you should avoid teaching or being involved in educational decisions involving family members or close friends. Where it is not practical to avoid such situations completely, another member of staff should make any significant decisions relating to the student's assessments and have those endorsed by a supervisor.

6.19 You should be aware of, and sensitive to, children with culturally diverse or indigenous backgrounds and cultural practices that may influence the interpretation of your behaviour.

### **Child Protection**

6.20 You must be aware of and comply with Giant Steps' Child Protection Policy.

6.21 As set out in Section 3 you must report any concerns you may have about any other employee, contractor or volunteer engaging in 'reportable conduct' or any allegation of 'reportable conduct' that has been made to you to the Principal. This includes self disclosure if the allegation involves you.

6.22 Broadly, 'reportable conduct' includes:

- (a) any sexual offence, or sexual misconduct, committed against, with, or in the presence of, a child (including a child pornography offence); or
- (b) any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child; or

(c) any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child, whether or not the child consents.

6.23 Reportable conduct does not extend to:

- (a) conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of children, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the children and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards, or
- (b) the use of physical force that, in all the circumstances, is trivial or negligible, but only if the matter is to be investigated and the result of the investigation recorded under workplace employment procedures; or
- (c) conduct that is exempted from notification by a Class or Kind Agreement<sup>2</sup>.

6.24 For further information about 'reportable conduct' see Giant Steps' Child Protection Policy.

6.25 The requirements outlined in Section 6 in relation Supervision, Physical Contact and Relationships with Students set professional boundaries in relation to your behaviour. They make clear what behaviour is unacceptable and could amount to reportable conduct.

### **The Working With Children Check**

6.26 The Working With Children Check is a prerequisite for paid and unpaid child-related work. Under Part 2, section 6 of the Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012, child-related work is defined as work in a specific child-related role or face-to-face contact with children in a child-related sector<sup>3</sup>.

6.27 You must have a Working With Children Check clearance which will be valid for a period of five years. You are responsible for renewing your Working With Children Check every five years.

6.28 All employees must have a Working With Children Check

## **Appendix 3: Procedure Complaints and Grievances Resolution**

The school's procedure for dealing with complaints and grievances includes processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by parents, staff and/or students. These processes incorporate principles of procedural fairness.

## **Grievance Procedure**

Giant Steps seeks to ensure problems are identified, reviewed and corrected in a timely manner.

Employees are to seek resolution to work-related concerns following the steps indicated in this document. This procedure has been developed to ensure that staff grievances are recorded and resolved in a transparent, accountable and professional manner.

The objectives of the grievance procedure are to:

- Promote the resolution of disputes by measures based on consultation, co-operation and discussion,
- Reduce the level of work-place confrontation, and
- Avoid interruption to the performance of work.

An employee may raise a grievance regarding any aspect of their employment in accordance with the grievance procedure set out below so that all grievances are resolved as quickly as possible and co-operatively to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned.

A question, dispute or difficulty must initially be dealt with as close to its source as possible, with graduated steps for further discussion and resolution with the Program Director and the Principal / Administrative Director. The procedure for dealing with grievances or disputes is as follows:

The procedure:

- Where appropriate start by addressing the issue with the person/persons concerned.
- In the event that the matter is not resolved, or if it is not appropriate to address the issue directly with the person/ persons concerned the employee or employees shall document the issue in writing on the "Giant Steps Grievance Form" and meet with their Program Director to discuss the issue. The Program Director will then investigate the issue and respond accordingly, seeking support from the Principal as required. The Principal may seek outside assistance in order to resolve the matter.
- In the event the matter remains unresolved, the employee or employees shall then refer the matter directly to the Principal.
- In the event of failure to resolve the matter at the school level the employee shall notify a member of the Giant Steps Sydney Board in writing as to the substance of the issue.