



# Giant Steps Sydney Annual Report 2019



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## Principal's Report

The highlight for the year was winning the the Special School of the Year Award for the second year running.



The quality of our program is evidenced through many projects the school was involved in during 2019. These include: a Disability Innovation project with a partner school and the NSW Department of Education supporting the successful inclusion of students with Autism in the classroom; a research project investigating the literacy profiles of minimally verbal children with autism with Griffith, QUT and Massey Universities; through the online Autism Hub ([www.theautismhub.net.au](http://www.theautismhub.net.au)) where information and resources are freely shared; and the recently established Autism Training Hub, a training centre set-up to meet demand from schools in our local and regional communities.

The Autism Hub was established in response to frequent requests from external professionals and disability support services across Australia and internationally to share our expertise through training and intervention support. Teachers, psychologists, therapists, parents, schools, and organisations including Government departments, regularly seek help to support the complex needs of individuals with ASD in the classroom, home and community. Giant Steps has a long waiting list and although student numbers increase each year, places are still limited. The Training Hub provides an opportunity to expand our impact through workshops and presentations, case studies, strategies and supports, resources, side by side coaching and direct intervention.

Over the last few years, the school has taken a co-investigator role in a research project with Griffith University, Massey University and Queensland University of Technology investigating the impact of literacy assessment on understanding the learning profiles of primary aged children with autism, intellectual disability and minimal/no verbal skills. The outcomes of the pilot project collected in 2019 have resulted in the research team seeking a further 3 years

of funding through a linkage grant to extend the project. The results of the pilot project, "Emergent Literacy Assessment in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder who have Limited Verbal Communication Skills: A Tutorial", is currently in review for publication in Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools.

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 Finances & Administration*



**Mr Andrew Frakes**  
*Acting Principal 2020*





## Secondary – Clocktower and Quad

In 2019, the Secondary Clocktower program consisted of six classes, with 33 students aged 12-18 years of age, welcoming 13 students from K-6 into the Clocktower. Midway through the year, four classes moved into the new Quad building.

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 continued to implement the 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. Units of Work included Senior Cantina, Blue Planet, Forces, Ancient Rome, and Japanese.



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. An Action Research project was conducted to determine the link between Outdoor Education and emotional regulation. A cohort of five students was selected to participate, and their physical activity tracked (using pedometers) alongside Episodic Severity data for emotional regulation. When averaged across the five students, there was a clear, significant decrease in the both the severity and frequency of emotional dysregulation both on the day of and day immediately following Outdoor Education.

Secondary students also engaged in five camps, continuing the success of the previous year's snow with two ski camps at Perisher, along with camps to Point Wolstencroft Sport and Recreation, Burrill Pines, and a 'schoolies' camp for some of the year

12 graduates. 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

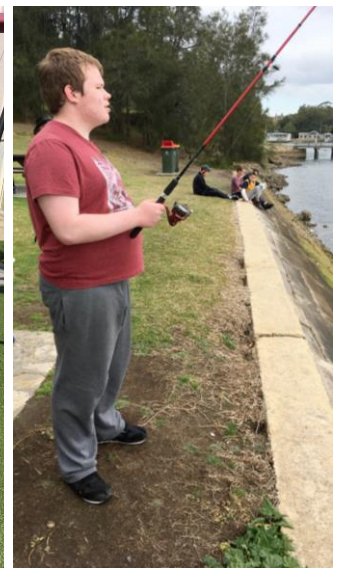




## Secondary - Laneway

In 2019, the 'Senior Laneway' program consisted of twelve students split across two senior school classes and one junior school class. This hybrid program, which was created in 2017, continued 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 (hiking and swimming), process driven tasks and student engagement support. It was fantastic to see students of a variety of ages (9-18 years) participate in a range of activities that were tailored to their individual needs, often working in mixed classroom groupings. The program highlights included 'Money' in which students visited the school tuck-shop and offsite shopping sessions (Junior and Senior School - Mathematics), Ancient Rome, 'Playgrounds' (Junior School - History, Geography & Science) and 'Fantasy' (Senior School - English).

Two camps occurred in the year, one for the younger cohort of students, and a second camp for the Stage 6 students. Students made use of the excellent facilities at the Narrabeen Sport and Recreation Camp. The students enjoyed a range of activities of interest to them, including swimming (beach and local pool), bushwalking, barbeques and ball sports.



**Mr Toby Shi**  
Secondary – Laneway  
Director





## Junior Program

In 2019, the Junior Program consisted of eight classes, with a total of 44 students. We welcomed 10 new families to the Junior program in 2019.

The classes in the Junior Program followed the Key Learning Areas Curriculum, with a fast-paced mix of classroom, desktop and wider community based lessons delivered. The curriculum topics included Super Heros and Aussie Authors for English, Holidays and Backyard Blitz for Mathematics and My House and Shopping for History and Science.

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.

As a part of the literacy program, junior students engaged in the InitiaLit program - one of the MultiLit programs. Professional staff, including teachers and speech therapists, worked to differentiate the content to meet the learning needs of our students. This included the development of a range of interactive and engaging learning activities such as songs, sound bingo, searching for letters in rice, waterbeads and slide, water balloon toss, letter/sound twister, sound/letter hunts, drumming etc. Given the success of the InitiaLit program in 2019, primary students will be grouped across classes for literacy blocks in 2020, enabling even more targeted teaching as we are able to further cater for each individual students literacy needs.

As part of our PDHPE program students participated in swimming lessons at Carlilse pool in Lane Cove and Gymnastics sessions at The Gladesville Youth Centre. We very much appreciate the support of our local community in allowing us to provide such dynamic and engaging activities for students outside of the school environment.



The art therapists designed and implemented individualised claymation art programs with 4 students in 2019. Students were given creative freedom in choosing a motivating subject matter. From clay, they created and sculpted a range of movie characters from their favourite movies (such as Angry Birds, Cars). Students then used digital technologies to animate their characters, utilizing

audio, voice recordings and music to create a movie. At the end of the year, the students hosted a movie day and invited classes across the primary and secondary program to popcorn and a special movie viewing.

Students in the primary program also went on a 2 night camp to Canberra. This camp consisted of a visit to Questacon where students explored various science concepts and engaged in various experiments, The Canberra Zoo and Arboretum Playground.



Other highlights across the year included Joeys Day, Aquarium visits, Taronga Zoo excursions, visiting The Glades Bay Gardens Retirement home and Calmsley Farm tractor rides.



As always, 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.



We had a very busy end to the year with 3 children transitioning to other settings including their local primary school, private school and aspect support classes. In addition, 5 students transitioned up to our Senior Program at Giant Steps.



**Ms Jenny Loughnan and Ms Rachael Bowen**  
Directors  
Junior Program

## Occupational Therapy

The occupational therapy team at Giant Steps continues to develop our model of practice. At Giant Steps, the Occupational Therapist works in a transdisciplinary model alongside music therapists, speech therapists and teachers. The OT works with class teams to support each student in three different ways. Each way is focused on sharing knowledge with all team members. This allows for skill development of other staff members outside of their specialization, in turn strengthening all programs at Giant Steps.



**Demonstration** - This is where the Occupational Therapist will take a leading role in developing and implementing a group or individual program. Once established the therapist will focus on ensuring information related to the program is shared amongst the team to enable other team members to complement and/or take over the program.

**Collaboration** - This is where the therapist will develop a program with a teacher 'from the ground up'. This provides an opportunity for therapists and teachers to contribute their specialised skills to a program whilst learning from each other.

**Consultation** - This is where therapist makes recommendations for classes and individual programs based on assessment and observation. Where required, the therapist will demonstrate how to implement strategies. Consultation also occurs with families. Respecting parents as the experts of their child, therapist works alongside families to implement individualised strategies.



This year, we were delighted to have Dr Wenn Lawson run multiple training programs for the team on Interoception. We explored ways in which we can

best support our students with regards to noticing, recognising, identifying and responding to changes taking place in their internal physical and emotional states. Many of our students have difficulty recognising when they are too hot, need the toilet or when they are beginning to feel upset. Dr Lawson's training was invaluable and the OT team have begun implementing teaching programs targeting this area of need.



Alice Lockwood and Sarah Monch presented at the National OT Conference in July. We are always excited to get the work of the Giant Steps OT team out to the wider community.



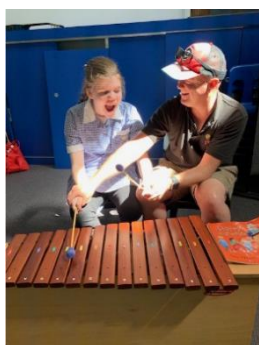
**Mr Daniel Snow**  
Occupational Therapy Director



## Music Therapy

### Programming

In 2019 music therapists delivered music, dance and drama programs, collaborated with teachers and therapists in the classroom, enriched play lessons with live music, and created a range of musical supports to meet self-care and social goals. In collaboration with class teams, they also trialled a number of program formats to more precisely target the individual needs of students. Additional programs included: 'Music RAPA' linked to the goals set in Recreation and Play Assessments; 'Music Engagement' where engagement data indicated that music was a key element in emotional regulation; 'Music Extension' for students developing higher music education skills; and IMCAP sessions using the assessment scales of IMCAP-ND. Following on from Bronte Arns' Masters research findings, music therapists also spent whole days working alongside each other in sessions. This gave the opportunity to learn directly from each other, share specialist music skills, and drill down to examine social and emotional partnerships with students in music making. Results of these changes were presented at the 2019 Australian Music Therapy Conference in Melbourne.



### Curriculum and Events

The creative arts program focused on Latin and Jazz in semester one and Musicals and Showstoppers in semester two. Highlights included in-class tap dance lessons complete with floor boards and tap shoes, against beautiful backdrops created in the visual arts program with Pamela Honeyfield.



At the 2019 Ball, staff performed a maraca dance to the Peter Allen song 'I Go to Rio', which also become a popular resource in student dance programs. Guest performances on the saxophone

from Elise Livingstone (music therapy student) added depth to the jazz theme. The end of year Primary event 'Giant Steps on Broadway' saw Quart:Ed return to perform student favourites from the musicals theme and the dance troupe Girls on Tap gave a dynamic demonstration of tap dancing for students, families and staff.



Senior students were treated to a full stage performance of 'Wicked' courtesy of Riverside Girls High School.

### Links with External Agencies

Lene Jeffrey and Bronte Arns continue to develop relationships with the University of Melbourne and Western Sydney University through casual lecturing. The team also supervised a number of final year music therapy students to complete their practicum placements at Giant Steps throughout the year. Vanessa Lucas continues in her role on the Disability Access and Inclusion Panel for Sydney Festival, liaising with venues to make sure an increasing range of arts experiences are accessible to autistic individuals and their families.

**Ms Bronte Arns**  
Music Therapy Director





## Speech Therapy

### Enhancing Literacy Outcomes: Research Partnerships

Giant Steps has continued the research partnership with colleagues at Griffith University, Massey University and Queensland University of Technology to investigate how educators can optimise literacy outcomes for students with ASD using an evidence-based assessment framework. Children with ASD are at increased risk of persistent literacy learning difficulties, affecting academic outcomes and quality



of life. Very little research has been previously conducted with students with ASD who are minimally verbal. The project's overall aims are to improve literacy outcomes for students with ASD through (a) understanding the diversity of literacy strengths and needs in this population, (b) helping teachers and

therapists to identify students at risk of literacy difficulties, (c) identifying factors that predict literacy outcomes, and (d) translating this knowledge into real-world settings. The pilot project, which commenced in 2018, concluded in 2019 with a small group of students literacy skills being re-assessed and information about the literacy environment gathered. This re-assessment looked to ensure the assessment tools were sensitive enough to measure individual student progress. All students who participated in the study made progress in their literacy skills. In 2020, the research team will be applying to the Australian Research Council for funding for a Linkage Project that will further investigate the literacy pathways for students with autism and are hoping to publish some of the initial results of the pilot project in both educational and speech pathology journals.

### The Literacy Project

Literacy continued to be a focus in 2019 across the school, utilising the NSW Curriculum and tenets of The Four Blocks framework to guide our curriculum design and teaching and learning activities. As an extension upon the work completed in 2018, the implementation of the InitialLit program, which has been



significantly differentiated to meet the learning needs of our student cohort, being piloted in primary classes in 2019. The program systematically works through fundamental skills for emergent readers.



### Individualised Expressive Communication

Implementation of individualised expressive communication systems continues to be an ongoing priority for each student at Giant Steps. This process is a collaborative one as we seek information and input from the child's family and each child's class team based on both the ICF and Participation Model frameworks. Each student's communication preferences, needs, current abilities, opportunities and current barriers are carefully considered through the process of selecting, trialling and evaluating a system of Augmented and Alternative Communication (AAC). 2019 was the final year of a three year project funded



by FGX investigating the impact of expressive communication supports for students. All students across the school have an individualised expressive communication system in place that meets their individual communication needs and continue to make progress in using their system to communicate clearly and effectively with others. We are looking forward to a continued partnership with FGX in 2020 as we extend the current project in response to an increasing demand for professional development services offered by Giant Steps.

**Ms Rachael Bowen**  
Speech Therapy Director



## Student Welfare and Family Support

### The Rob Llewellyn-Jones Clinical Centre

In 2019 we held 18 clinic days, seeing 48 students from Early Learning, K-6, Secondary and College over 151 appointments. The clinic continues to operate onsite at Giant Steps, with our visiting psychiatrist and developmental paediatrician working collaboratively to see students within the school environment which could be the classroom, playground, out on walks around the site or wherever their timetable has taken them. This ability to keep students in their daily program has given the doctors a clearer understanding of how students are day to day as well as allowing them to see a range of activities and transitions. Some students required regular appointments (our maximum this year was 2 per term), while others can now have 6 monthly or yearly check-ups.

The clinic team is made of the visiting doctors, myself and Andrew Frakes, head of Occupational Therapy. In 2019 we continued to collaborate with Dr Richard Webster, paediatric neurologist at Westmead Children's Hospital. With 25% of our students also having epilepsy, finding appropriate treatment opportunities has been extremely difficult. Several of our students already see Dr Webster, and so bringing his clinic onsite and combining it with our existing doctors has allowed treatment decisions to be a collaborative process between all the treating doctors. This relationship and the ability to collaborate on hospital entry pathways and ongoing care structures has been invaluable to our students.

The key benefits to the onsite clinic continue to be:

- Students not needing to leave school to access hospitals, doctors' surgeries or clinics
- Shorter wait times for an initial appointment
- Longer appointment times available, regular follow ups available
- Collaborative care from a highly experienced medical and psychiatric team
- Decreased student and family stress
- Increased information and data for the doctors to best understand students with input from both home and school

The ongoing presence of the clinic at Giant Steps continues to facilitate 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 the integral role it plays in how we support our student's complex needs was presented alongside our behaviour data collection methods and crisis programming at two international

conferences I attended this year with Erin Cowie; The Institute of Applied Behavioural Analysis Invitational in LA and the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Glasgow.

As part of the clinic, my PhD research continues into how anxiety manifests in children and young adults with ASD and an Intellectual Disability. In 2019 a scoping review on this topic was also published in the Journal of Mental Health Research in Intellectual Disabilities.

### Stepping Stones Triple P

Stepping Stones ran for its seventh year, being offered to families with children aged 4-7 years old. This year five 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.

### National Disability Insurance Scheme

All families at Giant Steps are now accessing the NDIS, and with the funding allocated to them can 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.

Additional support is often needed for families when students or families go through circumstantial changes and require considerable documentation in order to account for the increased supports that are now needed. The changes in circumstances may be around changes in behavioural presentation, family circumstance or community supports.

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





## Art

The Visual Arts program at Giant Steps Sydney sits within CAPA (Creative and Performing Arts), a component that marries nicely with Drama, Dance and Music Therapy. The Visual Arts program, also based upon the units of work that the teachers develop for our students in each school year, attempts to consolidate the learning process in visual form.



2019 was another exciting and creative year as our students engaged in art activities that related to themselves and the world around them. All students participated in both structured and sensory-based art activities that are themed and modified to suit each individual student across each program. The students also participated in creating art works for the main Auction at the Giant Steps Annual Ball.

In semester one of 2019 our students explored 'Latin and Jazz', making 2D and 3D works based on the artist, Frida Kahlo. For second semester, the students developed art works based around the theme of 'Musicals and Showstoppers'. Here they investigated and created stage set, props and design for performances held in the music rooms using art, dance, music and drama. Works were based on the musicals, 'Singing in the Rain' and



'The Lion King'. The decorations and props served as a full theatrical experience where all sensory and CAPA components were incorporated.

As well as providing a structured and themed art program, the students also enjoyed exploring a variety of sensory-based art materials that allowed 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 almost anything.



**Ms Pamela Honeyfield**  
Art



## Outdoor Education

2019 has seen the consolidation in the outdoor education programs to ensure students throughout the school have opportunities to explore new skills and places and gain valuable learning opportunities. The Giant Steps team have worked hard to ensure the Outdoor Education programs have continued operation with limited disruption throughout the 2019/20 Summer bushfires in NSW and COVID-19 restrictions to ensure the safety of students and staff.



The current Outdoor Education menu of opportunity for Giant Step's students is hiking, wild swimming, camping, surfing, stand up paddle boarding (SUP), kayaking, snow sports, bike and scooter riding and snorkelling programs. The variety of activities has allowed the school to build a seasonal calendar of programs for students to enjoy variety as well as challenge them on the learning and skill development through a range of environments.

A growing focus of the programs is the alignment of learning goals within class-based programs to the Outdoor Education program streams. Students are being challenged to become more independent in their participation of programs through the introduction of mapping/orientation lessons, selection of location and programs, activity choice at snow and hiking camps through visual forewarning and supports. This has been achievable through last years efforts to 'link learning and experiences' offsite to onsite activities through the native garden, cooking programs and bike riding track.

In 2019/20 the team are taking one more step with the Outdoor Education program by the renaming of classroom spaces using the Aboriginal languages of the Sydney region. Many of the locations frequented by our students, the



animals, plants and sites they witness by the students are reflected in the selected names of their classroom. Giant Steps will also be celebrating its first NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) which will be taking students off to access culturally significant areas and better understand the land they live and travel on.



2019 has also seen a large focus on the professional skills and knowledge of Giant Steps staff to safely plan and implement Outdoor Education program streams. Internally the Outdoor Education team have developed and App to support the safe planning, capture of student participant data and supporting live access to information which played a critical role supporting program planning and logistics during the summer bushfires and corona virus operations.



The Outdoor Education team are excited to continue innovating the programs on offer into 2020 providing safe, fun and rewarding experiences for the students. We are looking forward to challenging our students, families and staff into new adventures and expectations of what is possible.

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





## Library

2019 has seen an increase in the use of the school library and most classes are now accessing the space. For those students that find it difficult to transition around the school the library comes to them with books and magazines. A couple of senior school classes are accessing the local libraries and this has been a huge success.

The students are growing in independence in the library with self-selection and reading of books. The library teaches the necessary skills that support the student to achieve English Curriculum goals and IP goals - specifically self-occupation skills.

I am always sourcing books from free sites and last year we had a number of books donated from Hunters Hill Primary School. Although we have a large number of books there are favourites that get a lot of love and often need replacing so funding is continued to be required for the up keep and purchase of new books.



Jo McPherson  
Library



## 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>

The Autism Hub:

<https://www.theautismhub.net.au/>

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

### Higher School Certificate

No students were eligible for the HSC in 2019.

### RoSA

In 2019 no RoSA credentials were issued to students in this reporting period.

### Literacy & Numeracy Assessments

In 2019 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 2019.

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 2019 Giant Steps employed 21 teaching staff across the year with a FTE of 19.2 positions. These teaching positions were supported by 15.53 FTE therapy staff and 31.6 FTE Educator (teacher aide) positions.

## 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>19.2</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)	Nil
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## Staff Retention Rates

Teachers	<b>96%</b>
Therapists	<b>88%</b>
Educators	<b>80%</b>
Administration	<b>92%</b>

## Average Retention Across Giant Steps – 89%

There was some staff movement due to Long Service Leave, Maternity /Paternity Leave and these were supported by casual staff.

## Professional Learning

In 2019 Giant Steps staff were involved in **2,829 hours** of professional development across the year. The number of courses attended throughout 2019 totalled **48** across the following areas:

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

## Average Professional Learning Hours Per Staff Member – 31.7 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:

- Accounting
- Administration of Emergency Medication (Midazolam)
- Anaphylaxis
- Arrivals and Departures of Students
- Bronze Medallion
- Career Trajectories and Longevity
- Child Protection Training
- Defibrillation Awareness
- Enhancing the links

- Epilepsy Essentials
- First Aid Training
- Grief and Disability
- How to Administer Medication
- IABA Conference
- IASSIDD (International Association for the Scientific Study of Developmental Disabilities) Conference
- Incident Forms
- Individual Music Programs
- Jacqui Roberts – PHD Supervision
- Literacy Profiles of Students on the Autism Spectrum
- Lower Primary Curriculum
- MAPA Foundation Units
- Mandatory Reporting
- MAPA Instructor Renewal Training
- Medication Protocol
- Microsoft Excel Beginner Course
- Microsoft PowerPoint Beginner Course
- NDIS Information
- OT Sensory Workshop - Smell
- Play Lessons and RAPA
- Planning & Programming
- Perceive, Recall, Plan, Perform Training – Cognitive Assessment
- Report Uploading to Edumate
- Restrictive Practices - Chemical Restraints
- Restrictive Practices - Mechanical Restraints
- Restrictive Practices - Power Control
- Restrictive Practices – Seclusion
- Restrictive Practices - Physical Restraints
- Self-Care - Outdoor Recreation
- Sensory Art Lab: Teacher Professional Learning
- Sensory Environment
- Sensory Processing – Auditory
- Sensory Processing - Visual & Tactile
- Sexuality
- Siblings Groups
- Sound Healing
- Speech Therapy Communication and Basics
- Team Practise
- War on waste

## Workforce Composition

In 2019 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
Principal	1	1
Teachers	21	19.2
Therapists:	18	15.53
Educators / Teachers Aides	35	31.6
Administration	12	9.34
<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>76.67</b>

## Student Attendance and Retention Rates in Secondary School

Student Population	
K-6	46
Secondary	42

In 2019 the school enrolled 88 students aged 4-18 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 2019 the following transitions occurred:

- 4 students integrated to other schools
- 4 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 94.9%**

## 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 2019 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 2019 the school enrolled 79 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	
<b>K-6</b>	46
<b>Secondary</b>	42
<b>Total Males</b>	60
<b>Total Females</b>	28
<b>Student Total</b>	88

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.

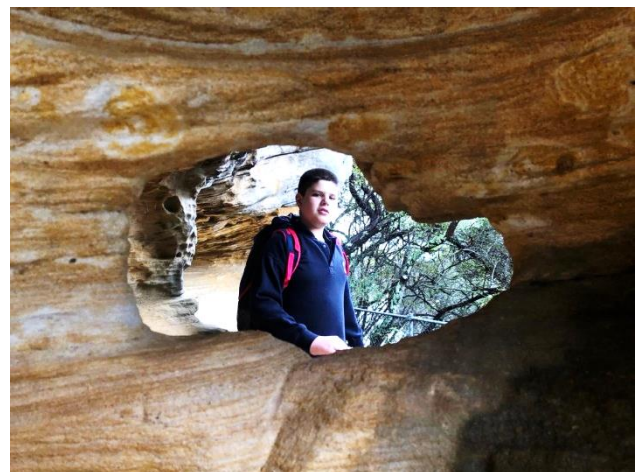
Once enrolled, students are expected to support the school's ethos and comply with the school rules to maintain the enrolment.

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

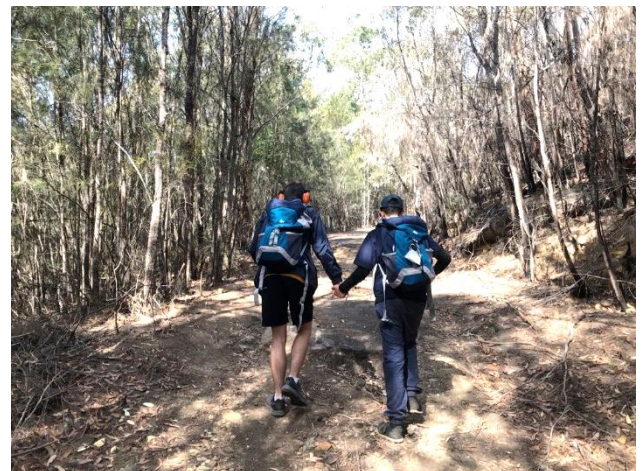
associated procedures is provided to all members of the school community through:

- 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

### School Improvement Plan

1. To establish an autism training unit in order to deliver exceptional professional development externally and internally.

#### Outcome

**The Autism Hub was established with the first courses delivered externally and internally late in 2019. The initial take up has been strong and feedback positive.**

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

#### Outcome

**New ground covering in 'the patch' allowed for greater range of activities to be performed in all weather condttions.**

3. Improve literacy teaching and assesement practices across programs

#### Outcome

Giant Steps has continued the research partnership with colleagues at Griffith University, Massey University and Queensland University of Technology to investigate how educators can optimise literacy outcomes for students with ASD using an evidence-based assessment framework.

4. 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 in ongoing and training has occurred for all staff and parents based on initial findings.**

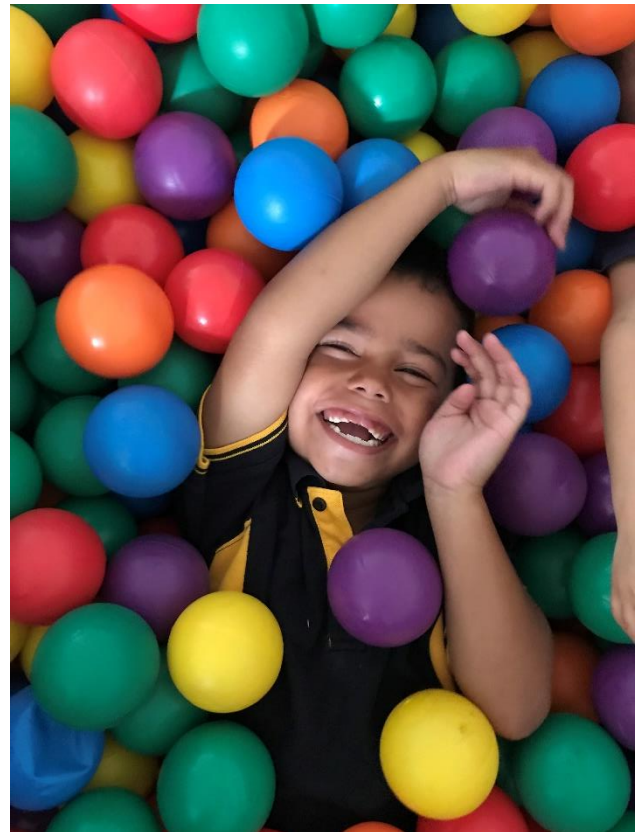
5. The school will seek to expand student enrolment and procure an additional building on the Gladesville site.

#### Outcome

**The new secondary building has been leased and renovated to include five new classrooms. This will allow for increased enrolment in 2020.**

## Priorities for 2019

1. Develop the outdoor spaces of the newly acquired building.
2. Continue the development of the ASD training unit.(Autism Hub).
3. Undergo strategic review of IT. ,
4. Continue research partnerships with universities.





## 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 2019 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 3

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 2019 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 2019 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.

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

Throughout 2019 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

2019 was a year of change and growth across the school. The rate of change and the momentum was gained throughout the year via research projects, the establishment of the training centre, school wide literacy project, as well as the continual development of our programs within the Australian Curriculum.

**Ms Kerrie Nelson**  
*Principal*





## Summary Financial Information

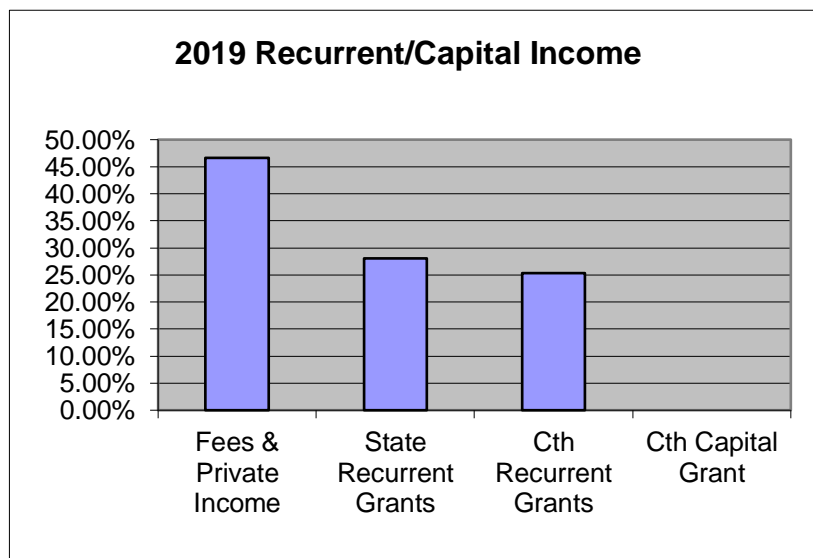
### Financial Information

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

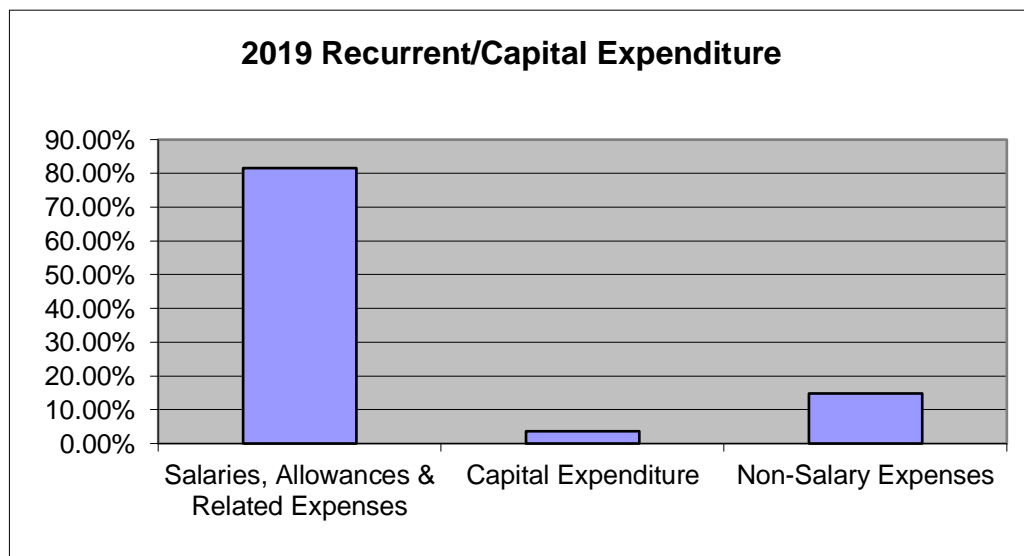
Pricewaterhouse Coopers. Giant Steps does not charge fees and in 2019 received over 45% of revenue from donations, fundraising appeals and support from community organisations and companies.

#### (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.