



Hills Montessori
Estd. 1979

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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Introduction

The Hills Montessori School is a community-based Preschool and Kindergarten situated in the leafy Hills District of Sydney. Since the establishment of the Hills Montessori Society in 1979, the school has grown to provide high-quality early childhood education and care for children from birth to six years of age.

Today, the school operates a diverse range of programs alongside our Kindergarten class, including half-day and full-day pre-primary classes, parent-child programs for babies, infants, and toddlers, and Before and After Session Care. The school is licensed for 90 children per day and offers an intimate, nurturing, and stimulating learning environment supported by qualified and dedicated staff.

The educational program at The Hills Montessori School is grounded in the philosophy and principles of Dr Maria Montessori and is delivered in conjunction with the curriculum requirements of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). The school meets all NESA registration requirements and aligns its practice with the Early Years Learning Framework, the National Quality Standards, and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. The strength of the school's program is reflected in the expertise, commitment, and longevity of its staff, as well as the ongoing support of families within the school community.

The 2025 Annual Report provides an overview of the programs, achievements, and performance of The Hills Montessori School throughout the year. It forms an important component of the school's commitment to accountability, continuous improvement, and strategic planning. This report supports our ongoing process of self-evaluation and ensures that the present and future needs of the school community remain central to our work.

Mission Statement

We believe a lifelong love of learning is instilled in children through an environment that caters to each child's unique strengths, interests, abilities and potential. To facilitate this, we follow and abide by the principles of Dr Maria Montessori's method to create authentic Montessori programs for children ranging from infants to 6 years old in our community.

Our child centred approach enables children to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, physically and creatively to become successful, competent, independent and capable individuals. We believe in establishing peaceful and aesthetically pleasing prepared environments using our philosophy expertise and genuine Montessori materials. This enables children to develop their critical thinking skills, problem solving abilities, build self-esteem and grow pro-social and emotional intelligence that will prepare them for future learning and life success. We recognise the rights of each child and actively deliver inclusive programs for all.

As teachers we observe and interpret children's experiences and use assessment practices to plan for and present Montessori lessons based upon individual learning styles, strengths and dispositions. Our experienced, dedicated and loyal teachers hold both Montessori and Early Childhood qualifications and continually update their professional knowledge, proficiency and skills.

We embrace the sociocultural values of our families and affirm the rich diversity of our community. Strong partnerships with families are made through open communication and information sharing which further enhances children's learning and achievement. Families endorse our efforts to actively transition children smoothly as they progress between age-appropriate programs.

We acknowledge the Dharug people as the traditional custodians of our local area and show respect for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities by embedding their cultural heritage and customs into our program and professional practice to teach children Indigenous perspectives and our shared history.

Our natural outdoor learning environments afford children the capacity to grow their understanding of sustainability, with our many interconnected living systems, and by engaging in the care for the environment through practical life work and scientific exploration. The welcoming open spaces encourage physical activities that promote psychological wellbeing and a healthy lifestyle. We view the outdoor environment as an extension to the indoor classroom and a classroom of its own right.

Faculty and staff understand high quality early childhood education promotes superior educational outcomes for children. Our national 'exceeding excellence' rating is underpinned by embracing best practice and adhering to the high standards set by three official governing bodies, making us unique leaders in our field.



President's Report

As we reflect on 2025, I am immensely proud of the direction, strength, and unity of the Hills Montessori School community. This year has demonstrated once again that when families, staff, leadership, and the Board work in partnership, we create an environment where children truly thrive.

Strengthening Our Strategic Vision

The Board's focus throughout 2025 has been to ensure that Hills Montessori continues to grow with purpose while remaining deeply grounded in authentic Montessori principles. Our annual Strategic Planning Day provided a valuable opportunity for the Board and staff to come together, reaffirming our shared commitment to high-quality early childhood education and long-term sustainability. These conversations guide our decision-making and ensure that every step forward aligns with our mission and values.

Celebrating Growth and Innovation

This year saw the successful expansion of our under-3s programs, with the introduction of Parent/Baby and Parent/Infant classes. The Board strongly supports these initiatives, recognising the importance of early engagement with families and the opportunity to introduce Montessori philosophy during the earliest stages of development.

We were also pleased to welcome two new staff members—an Outdoor Educator and a Learning Support and Inclusion Teacher. These roles reflect our commitment to nurturing the whole child and ensuring that every learner is supported, included, and empowered.

Commitment to Quality and Compliance

The Board acknowledges the significant regulatory changes introduced on 1 September and commends the leadership team and staff for implementing these safety reforms with diligence and professionalism. Maintaining compliance while preserving the integrity of our Montessori environment is no small task, and the team has navigated this balance with care. Our ongoing participation in the Genuine Montessori Pathways has further strengthened our reflective practices and ensured that our programs remain aligned with authentic Montessori standards.

Community Recognition and Achievement

2025 has been a year of well-deserved recognition for our school. We were honoured to again be named finalists in the Hills Business Awards—a testament to the dedication of our staff and the trust of our families. A special congratulations goes to Jeannie for receiving the Youth Award, and to our school for being highly commended for the Disability Inclusion Award. These achievements reflect our commitment to excellence, equity, and community impact. We were also privileged to welcome the Wolkara Elders to our school. Their visit enriched our cultural understanding and strengthened our commitment to embedding First Nations perspectives in meaningful and respectful ways.

Looking Forward

As we look ahead to 2026, the Board remains focused on supporting the continued enhancement of our learning environments, strengthening inclusion practices, and deepening partnerships with local schools to ensure smooth transitions for our graduates. We are committed to ensuring that Hills Montessori remains a place where children feel safe, respected, and inspired to explore their potential.

In Appreciation

On behalf of the School Board, I extend my sincere thanks to our Head of School, our dedicated staff, our administrative team, and our families. Your passion, professionalism, and trust are the foundation of our success. Most importantly, we thank the children, whose curiosity and joy remind us why our work matters. Hills Montessori School continues to be a place where children are not only prepared for school but prepared for life—and it is a privilege for the Board to support this mission.

Jennifer Rufati *GA/CD*
B. Commerce
M. Mgt eCommerce



Head of School's Report

As we close the chapter on 2025, I am filled with pride and gratitude for all that we have accomplished together. This year has once again highlighted the strength of our community, the dedication of our staff, and the wonder and potential of the children in our care.

A Year of Growth and Connection

2025 has been a year of meaningful growth—both in spirit and in opportunity. Our enrolments remained strong, and we welcomed new families who have enriched our community with their trust and partnership. Most importantly, we witnessed our children flourish across all domains of development. From their earliest steps toward independence to confidently leading their own learning, our students and preschoolers continue to embody the true essence of Montessori education.

This year also marked the expansion of our under-3s programs, with the introduction of our Parent/Baby and Parent/Infant classes. These offerings have strengthened early connections with families and provided a gentle, supportive introduction to Montessori principles during the most formative years of life. Our annual Strategic Planning Day once again brought staff and the School Board together with a shared purpose: to strengthen our school and ensure Hills Montessori remains a prominent and respected presence in the early childhood education and care sector.

Educational Highlights

Our focus remained on maintaining a carefully prepared environment that fosters independence, concentration, and respect. The continuation of our wellbeing sessions—with an even stronger emphasis on grace and courtesy—supported children in understanding how we care for one another and our beautiful indoor and outdoor environments. We were honoured to welcome the Wolkara Elders, who shared their knowledge, stories, and cultural wisdom with our children and staff. This experience deepened our commitment to embedding First Nations perspectives and nurturing a sense of global citizenship and respect for diversity. Through Montessori materials and methods, children engaged in foundational experiences that will support their long-term academic and personal success.

Staff and Professional Development

I am incredibly proud of our team. This year we welcomed two new staff members: an Outdoor Educator and a Learning Support and Inclusion Teacher, both of whom have already made a significant impact on our programs and the children's daily experiences. Our staff continued to invest in their professional growth through child protection refresher training, inclusive education workshops, visits to Giant Steps, and the Combined Montessori professional development day. Their passion and professionalism remain central to the high-quality education and care we provide.

Community and Family Engagement

At Hills Montessori, families are our partners, and 2025 was no exception. We hosted a series of parent education evenings, strengthening understanding of Montessori practice and child development. Our community events continued to bring families together, reinforcing the belief that it truly takes a village to raise a child. We were also proud to again be named finalists in the Hills Business Awards. A special highlight was Jeannie receiving the Youth Award, and our school being highly commended for the Disability Inclusion award—recognition that reflects our commitment to equity, belonging, and authentic inclusion.

Challenges and Reflections

Like many early childhood services, we navigated staffing pressures and ongoing regulatory changes. The 1 September safety reforms were implemented smoothly, thanks to the diligence and adaptability of our team. We continued our work through the Genuine Montessori Pathways, using reflective practice and collaboration to ensure we remain aligned with authentic Montessori principles. These processes have strengthened our resilience and our commitment to providing a high-quality learning environment for all.

Looking Ahead

As we look toward 2026, we remain focused on ensuring our learning environments are equipped with high-quality, aesthetically pleasing materials that enhance children's engagement and discovery. We aim to deepen our inclusion practices, support every child's unique needs, and continue strengthening partnerships with local schools to ensure smooth and confident transitions to primary education.

In Closing

Thank you to each child who brought joy, curiosity, and wonder into our space; to every parent who entrusted us with their child's early learning journey; to the School Board for their ongoing support; and to our devoted team who live out the Montessori principles each day. Together, we are not just preparing children for school—we are preparing them for life.

Kylee Paddy

*B.Ed. (ECE) Macquarie University
AMI 3-6 Montessori Diploma AMTEF*

Philosophy & Program

The Hills Montessori School follows the Montessori Philosophy, providing an environment that is best suited to the development of the child through the basic principles of freedom of choice, independence, individual learning, and discipline from within the child which are an integral part of the child's experience.

This philosophy is based on the knowledge that a child growing in an atmosphere of respect and understanding for each other and the natural world will develop those values into adulthood.

It is our understanding of the sensitive periods that occur during the development of the child which guides staff to introduce materials and activities that are best suited to the child at the time. The child is then able to best utilise the materials to provide the challenge to maintain their interest with sufficient opportunity for success to encourage their confidence and self-esteem.

Our peaceful environment and compassionate staff nurture respect for self and others, foster a strong sense of community, and stimulate independent thinking. Students carry with them a solid record of academic achievement, a belief in the dignity of work, and a sense of responsibility for their own development as happy and productive human beings.

This environment is designed to foster the natural development process for the child, providing stimulus and freedom to explore according to their changing developmental stages. We understand that children have a natural love and curiosity for knowledge and through their own exploration and discovery, utilise their imagination and creativity. The child will internalise that knowledge, understanding and skills required to ascertain their place and contribution to the world and humanity.

Specially designed equipment provides the child with the freedom to explore concepts and attributes at their own pace and according to their needs and particular skills. They offer the child beauty, exactness, and opportunity to further develop and understand concepts and acquire skills in a sequenced order.

Due to the complexity of the curriculum, key learning areas regularly overlap due to themes, projects or learning processes involved. While the child is introduced to skills and concepts on an individual basis, these are slowly built upon and developed to allow the child to be able to call on an increasing range of skills and information in dealing with the activities and learning experiences in a collaborative and co-operative community.

While each child has a specific program as an individual, it is based on a general program which is found in each teacher's curriculum album. These have been written up during training and added to during in-service courses taken later.

The materials are specifically designed to represent concepts and information in concrete form, enabling the child to interact directly, allowing him/her to develop skills, understand concepts and explore alternatives as an individual or with a small group.

Children are not limited to timed work schedules except by the schools operating hours. Children who require further time to understand concepts or develop skills have that available, within the constraints of the operating hours, along with any assistance they may require. Those children who grasp and understand the concept or information quickly are allowed and provided with materials to move on. It is understood that most children are not likely to have strengths in all areas of the curriculum and the flexibility of time allows the child to work on the weaker areas as needed. This means that each child has their own individual program and work schedule according to their needs.

The child has the opportunity to develop qualities of self-esteem, self-reliance, self-direction, self-discipline, and independence and to build the habit of concentration, research and orderly work pattern.

The Montessori Method also fosters a social awareness and responsibility in children. The three-year cycle for pre-primary and the integration of additional needs children offer a microcosm of society within which children have the opportunity to develop skills essential for interacting in the wider community. This environment promotes individuality, independence, interdependence, awareness of and consideration for the needs of other human beings, which leads to an appreciation of life.

The Hills Montessori School actively encourages the child to appreciate and contribute to the care and conservation of the environment creating an approach of sustainable and ecological practices.

Our School

Hills Montessori Society

The Hills Montessori School is managed by the Hills Montessori Society, a public company limited by guarantee and a non-profit organisation. The society is regulated by the Corporations Act and is endorsed to access the following tax concessions – GST concession, Fringe benefit Rebate, income tax exemption and payroll tax exemption.

Each family with a student at the school is required to be a member of the Society. A Board of directors administers the Society. The Board is elected by the members of the Society at the Annual General meeting held in April each year.

The Organisational Structure is the basis for the operation of our high-quality Montessori Early Childhood Education and Care program. Our programs operate under a clear structure of accountable persons, known as the School Board (Board of Directors).

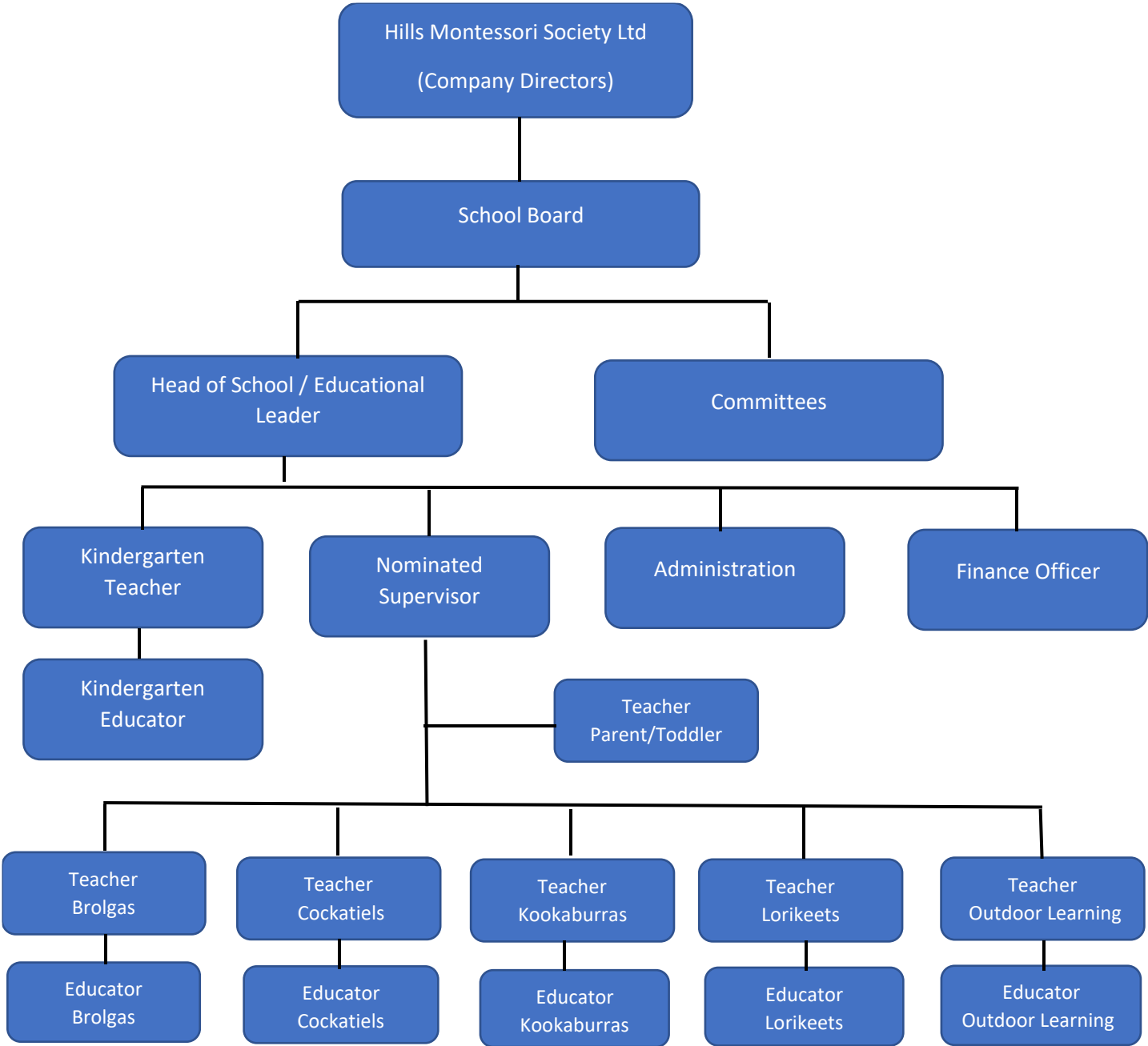
The School Board consists of a minimum of 6 Board Members, four are Society Members and are usually parents of current students and two of which are employees: Head of School & Treasurer / Finance Officer.

School Board

Position	Board Member	Qualifications	Years of Service
President	Jennifer Rufati	Bachelor of Commerce Masters in Management GAICD – Company Director	11
Secretary	Lauren Peacock	Bachelor of Business Diploma of Counselling Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management	1
Treasurer	Joanne Blissenden	Bachelor of Economics (Major in Accounting) Certified Practising Accountant	15
Marketing	Vacant		
Social Officer	Smruthi Shivathaya	Bachelor of Law	1
Head of School	Kylee Paddy	Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education) Montessori Diploma (Association Montessori Internationale)	13



Organisational Structure



School Performance

Our annual Strategic Planning Day is very beneficial as it brings the School Board and staff together to discuss the school's current Strengths, Weaknesses, Outcomes and Threats. As a team we put in place processes to improve and strengthen the viability of our school.

Our school performance and future goals are included in our Quality Improvement Plan and is available for viewing in the school office.

Parent Involvement

The school is a community-managed school. Each family is a member of the Association managing the school and therefore has the ability and opportunity to participate in its running with one vote per family for General meetings and the opportunity to stand on the Board. Other opportunities for parents to be involved in the school including Class Parents, Working Bees, classroom craft or cooking, Open Days, social events and admin support.

Community Events

School events help to develop the community and allow parents and staff to get to know each other a little more. It is wonderful to see everyone participating and enjoying the opportunity to be together to celebrate each event.

Throughout the year the school hosts a range of courses, workshops and information sessions.

Information sessions that we offered to current families were:

- Introduction to our classrooms for new parents
- Kindergarten Information Evening
- Open Classrooms

Events offered to prospective parents:

- Classroom tours
- Annual Open Day
- Under 3's Discovery Sessions

Social Events held in 2025 were:

- Disco for the students
- Magic and Movie Night

Included in our school community projects is our annual fundraiser to raise funds for a nominated charity. This year the charities we supported were for the K-Mart Wishing Tree and the Coast Shelter. The Coast Shelter collects goods for Christmas hampers for the homeless. Our strong community spirit showed in the generous financial support and donations of goods collected to help others less fortunate.

Our Staff

Qualifications & Composition

The school's workforce - 22 staff.

Number of staff with the following qualifications:	
Bachelor of Education / Teaching	7
Proficient Teachers as per the Teacher Accreditation	6
Diploma in Early childhood	5
Certificate III in Children's Services	6
Diploma of Montessori (3-6)	8
Montessori Assistants Certificate	4
Bachelor of Economics	1
Bachelor of Commerce	1

Composition of teacher's qualifications:

- ❖ 7 trained teachers
- ❖ one combining the Head of School and Educational Leader
- ❖ one combining the role of Nominated supervisor and classroom teacher
- ❖ four teaching in the pre-school classrooms
- ❖ one being Learning Support and Inclusion teacher
- ❖ 11 Childcare trained educators
- ❖ 4 administrative staff composed of the Head of School, Administrative Officer, Finance Officer and Enrolment /Marketing Officer.

Composition of languages spoken by staff:

- ❖ 100% of staff speak English
- ❖ 67% are from an English-speaking background
- ❖ 33% have Korean, Arabic, Palestine, Cantonese, Urdu/Sinhalese, Filipino backgrounds.
- ❖ 100% of staff are female

The average age of our staff is 48 years with the average employment at Hills of 9 years.

All of our staff have completed the Working with Children Check upon appointment and hold a current first aid and CPR certificate. All teaching staff undertake annual Child Protection training. Staff attendance has been excellent due to a healthy environment created by adhering to our Work Health and Safety policies and the love of working in a Montessori environment. Long term staff employees ensure a great stability with the children and the overall program.

Professional Development

Hills Montessori encourages and supports Professional learning amongst its staff.

This is supported through staff meetings held every 3 weeks, where discussions cover Mental Health and Wellbeing, Work Health and Safety, administration necessities, and curriculum and policy development. In addition, staff are required to attend workshops, conferences, seminars and other school observations.

The school has a Staff Training Policy that ensures our annual budget includes funding to cover ongoing staff development to allow staff to retain up to date training in all areas. Five pupil free days are allocated each year to each staff member to enable them to attend workshops and allowing additional professional development training during the year as required.

Total number of hours of professional development during 2025 was 433 hours – an average of 20 hours per staff member.

Our students

Attendance

The Hills Montessori School is committed to working with parents to ensure that all children enrolled attend regularly. While children will occasionally be absent, regular non-attendance is disruptive both to the individual and the workings of the class and may result in difficulties for the child in their ongoing development. Where there are genuine reasons for non-attendance on a long-term basis, the school will work with parents to ensure that the child's education is continued during that time. The school's staff overarching concern is for the welfare of children. Parents are encouraged to show their commitment to the value of education by ensuring their child's regular and ongoing attendance at school.

The school actively discourages taking children out of school during term time for family holidays during their third year of attendance because of the disruption that it causes to the education of individuals and class groups. However, it is helpful for staff to know of such absences in advance and upon parental request offer advice on projects that the child can undertake while on holiday to complement the classroom program.

Process for Noting Absent Days

1. Parents are asked to ring the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent for the day or for a period of time. Phone messages and emails are passed onto the relevant teacher. Phone messages taken by staff from a parent must fill out an Admin. Absent Form for the day but still requires a signed note from the parent.
 2. Otherwise, parents must produce a written note explaining their absence on the child's return. Forms are available to fill in at the school if necessary.
 3. Contact is made with the parent if a child returns without a written explanation. Notification of absences is placed in the child's file and kept for a minimum of 7 years after the child leaves the school.
 4. Parents of children who are absent for more than 3 days without explanation will receive a phone call from the Head of School. In the event a child is regularly absent, an interview will be organised with the parents to determine how to assist the child to attend on a more regular basis or the child's development while away from school.
- # Parents of school aged children are reminded of their legal obligation to ensure their child's attendance at school.

Attendance Records

1. A record of attendance is maintained each day.
2. An enrolment register is kept with the following information:
 - Name of child, age, address
 - The name and contact telephone number of parent(s)/guardian(s)
 - Date of enrolment and, where appropriate, the date of leaving the school and the student's destination
 - For students who have transferred from another school: the previous school or pre-enrolment situation
 - For students leaving The Hills Montessori School: the next school they will be attending
3. Where the destination of a student above 6 years is unknown, evidence that a Department of Education and Training Officer with home school liaison responsibilities has been notified of the student's name, age and last known address.

Rolls are marked daily. All absentee notes must be signed and dated by the parent. At the end of each year, the rolls and notes are collected by the school secretary and stored in the archives. These are kept for a minimum of seven (7) years as prescribed by the Education Act and Department of Education and Communities Regulations.

Enrolment Composition 2025

Students	Kindergarten - 16		Pre-school - 120		Parent/Toddler - 48
Females	30%		56%		50%
Males	70%		44%		50%
Indigenous	0%		1%		1%
CALD	85%		70%		75%
Additional Needs	20%		41%		0%

Student testing

Our students are not required to be state or nationally tested.

In house testing occurs on an individual and ongoing basis to indicate what knowledge has been acquired and determining the program for future learning. Children are encouraged to look at their progress and compare their work with a view towards improving their skills and knowledge as an open-ended development.

Excursions

Our Kindergarten class partake in a variety of excursions and on-site visits during the year which included:

- Walk to the local park for Road Safety and gross motor activities
- Riverside Theatre to enjoy "Josephine Wants To Dance"
- Taronga Zoo
- Sydney Botanical Gardens on public transport
- Bus to local K-Mart to donate gifts to the Wishing Tree

On-Site Visits

- High Tea for parents
- Life Education
- Dental Nurse
- NSW Health to undertake eye testing for 4-year-olds
- Art classes
- Drumming classes
- Wolkara Elders

Communication

Parent communication of the child's development as well as school events is offered in the following ways:

- Child Portfolios available at any time for parents to look at digitally
- Parent/teacher conferences formally once a year. Additional conferences can be arranged on request.
- A newsletter is emailed out each term with updates and class news
- Posters on activities or events are placed up regularly in the sign in area and shared in our Storypark app.
- Sharing of information on the Storypark app, Facebook, Instagram and the school website
- Opportunity for daily conversation with teachers
- Photos from each class are posted on the Storypark app and the end of each term

- Information nights held once each term to provide extensive information and understanding on child development, family relationships and the materials and activities of the program
- Opportunities to join the child in the class environment twice a year

Our Premises

Maintenance of the Hills Montessori School premises is critical as it provides both a safe environment for the children to grow and learn as well as being a warm and fun place for them to socialise.

This is supported by the strong support of the working bees that are held four times a year with parents, children and staff. The working bees focus on minor maintenance jobs and where possible, major projects for the school.

The Family Participation Program requires families to contribute a minimum number of hours to assist with maintenance of the school, the development of program activities and administration. This assists in keeping fees to a minimum as well as developing the community of the school.

School Policies

We have all relevant school policies as required by NESA and Department of Education. These policies assist in maintaining a safe and inclusive environment, an ever developing and high-quality program and ensures financial viability for the future.

Our policies ensure that all aspects of the schools' mission, in providing for student's welfare, are implemented. Our school policies are available to view on our school website.

Health and Safety Policies reviewed or developed this year were:

Additional Needs	Administration of First Aid	Administration of Medicine
Anaphylaxis	Anti-Bullying	Arrival & Departure
Asthma	Attendance and Absence	Behaviour Guidance
Child Access	Child Protection	Child Safe Environment
Death of a Student, Staff or Visitor	Diabetes Management	Emergency Management
Epilepsy Management	Handwashing	Immunisation
Incident, Injury & Illness	Infectious Diseases	Interactions With Children
Maintenance of Premises	Medical Conditions	Mental Health and Wellbeing
Missing Child	Nutrition and Meals	Pastoral Care
Risk Management	Safe Food Handling	Sickness
Sleep and Rest	Sun Protection	Water Safety

Enrolment Policy

Most of our students commence in our pre-school when they are 3 years of age. Prior to commencement parents are invited to observe a classroom and attend our annual Open Day in March. Parents of the students are invited to a New Parent Information evening in November. At this evening staff explain the school procedures and how to prepare their child for pre-school. Parents are also provided with a handbook, which includes all school policies and procedures. A probation period exists for the first term of the child's commencement to enable a child to withdraw without financial loss. A withdrawal is agreed upon by both staff and parents and is a very rare occurrence.

Students are invited to continue into our Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten) class the year they turn 5 before the 1st August. From here children transfer to a Montessori Primary school or move into local public or private schools. There are no entrance exams into either the pre-school or the ES1 (Kindergarten) class. Enrolment requirements are as per our Enrolment Policies.

Parents can enrol their child for 3 years at Montessori. If the age of the child allows, children attend the kindergarten group then move into Year 1 at the next school.

The school's policy on enrolment acknowledges the rationale and requirements of current legislation. It combines this with the processes of enrolment and responsibility for student welfare established in the school already. It is the policy of the school that Hills Montessori School adheres to the legislated acts of the Anti-Discrimination Act (NSW); the Disabilities Act (1992); Occupational Health and Safety Act (NSW) 2000 and the NSW Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000.

The school admits students of any race, gender, religion, national and ethnic origin in line with Montessori learning and philosophy. We are proud to have such a diverse mix of people in our school community. All enrolments are considered individually, based upon the Montessori classroom environment, the existing number of children, and staffing.

Offers of enrolment begin in June each year with general conclusion in November followed by an orientation evening for parents on school policy and procedures as well as administration of starting dates.

New children to the school start in small groups allowing opportunity for staff to assist with the transition into the school. Admission of children usually occurs over a number of weeks in Term 1 of each year and intermittently through the year as vacancies arise.

Updated Child Protection Statement (Reflecting Latest NSW Requirements – 2024–2026)

Hills Montessori School is committed to providing a safe, supportive and child-centred environment. The safety, wellbeing and rights of every student are paramount, and our policies and practices reflect the most recent NSW legislative and regulatory requirements for child protection.

Our Legal and Ethical Obligations

Hills Montessori School and all staff — including employees, contractors and volunteers — have obligations under:

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012
- Children’s Guardian Act 2019, including the Child Safe Scheme
- Crimes Act 1900 (NSW), including “failure to protect” and “failure to report” offences
- Work Health and Safety legislation

We take all reasonable steps to prevent harm to students and to respond promptly and appropriately to concerns about safety or wellbeing.

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards

In line with the strengthened NSW Child Safe Standards, the school is committed to:

- Embedding child safety in leadership, governance and culture
- Ensuring children participate in decisions affecting them
- Creating culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Actively identifying and managing risks to children, including online risks
- Ensuring staff are equipped through induction and ongoing training
- Regularly reviewing and improving our child-safety practices

These standards guide all aspects of our operations and are monitored under the NSW Child Safe Scheme.

Mandatory Reporting

All staff are mandatory reporters and must report concerns about risk of significant harm to the Department of Communities and Justice. The school provides clear procedures and training to ensure staff understand their responsibilities and act without delay.

Reportable Conduct

The school complies with the NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme under the Children’s Guardian Act. This includes:

- Identifying, reporting and investigating allegations of reportable conduct
- Notifying the Office of the Children’s Guardian
- Managing risks to children during investigations
- Ensuring procedural fairness for all parties

Working With Children Checks

All employees, contractors and volunteers engaged in child-related work must hold a valid Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance. The school maintains ongoing verification and monitoring processes.

Online Safety and Digital Wellbeing

Reflecting updated NSW and national expectations, the school actively manages online-safety risks by:

- Educating students about safe online behaviour
- Implementing protective digital-environment practices
- Responding to online grooming, cyberbullying and digital-harm concerns

Commitment to Prevention, Early Intervention and Response

Child protection is a shared community responsibility. Our approach includes:

- Prevention: creating environments that minimise the likelihood of harm
- Early intervention: identifying and supporting children and families at risk
- Response: acting promptly and appropriately when concerns arise

Access to Policies

The full Child Protection Policy, including detailed procedures and legislative references, is available from the School Office and on the school’s website.

Anti-Bullying Statement

Bullying is an anti-social behaviour that can affect anyone. It is unacceptable at Hills Montessori School because every student has the right to a safe, caring and supportive school environment.

The aim of the Policy is to ensure that Hills Montessori School is a supportive and safe environment. Every member of the Hills Montessori Community has the right to feel safe and protected. They also have the right to experience positive and respectful relationships between all members of the school community. The promotion of this environment is the responsibility of all members of the Hills community. Adults in this community need to be especially aware of their behaviour, as they are the role models for our children. By empowering members of our community, we hope to achieve a safe learning environment that respects and values individual differences.

This policy applies to interactions between:

- Child to child
- Parent to parent
- Parents to child
- Staff member to parent
- Parent to staff member
- Board to parent etc.

Details of the full Policy are available from the School Office and on the school's website.

Grievance Policy

In the event of a grievance the following procedures should be followed:

Throughout the procedures all parties must be made aware of their opportunity to access the Department office ~ Children's Services Advisor – 9202 5330 at any time.

1. A parent should first lodge the complaint either verbally or in writing to the appropriate person related to that concern. e.g. problems regarding fees should be directed to the Finance officer and classroom issues should be directed to the teacher. If it is within that person's capacity to address the matter to the satisfaction of the parent, that person can direct action to avoid recurrence of the problem and report the matter to the Head of School and/or the President. If the complaint is about a person, that person should be informed and solutions discussed.
3. If there is a difficulty in doing this or if the discussions are unsatisfactory or unresolved, the matter should be referred to the Head of School or President by the staff member or parent.
4. If the matter is still unresolved, a meeting will be called between the person/s involved in the concern, the Head of School and the President. Time may be set aside for a meeting to occur without the person around whom the complaint revolves. That person would be given an opportunity later in the above-mentioned meeting or at a later date to present his/her account of the incident.
5. A committee involving the Head of School, President and two other committee members may be contacted if the situation is still considered unsatisfactory.
6. If issues regarding the management of the school that have not been resolved at this level, the parent may wish to call an EGM in accordance with the Hills Montessori Society By-Laws
7. If still unsatisfied with the decision, the complainant may contact the Supervisor at Department of Education and Community Services 9836 9831 or Board of Studies for concerns regarding ES1 students on 9367 8341.
8. The Ombudsman; www.omb.nsw.gov.au / 02 9286 1000, may be contacted if the complaint is not resolved by communicating through the above channels.

Wellbeing

The quality of wellbeing influences the culture and feeling of the whole school. It creates an atmosphere in which children feel secure, valued and encouraged in their learning, growth and social development. It will inform and reassure parents that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and healthy environment.

Each person is respected and acknowledged as a valuable member of the school community. We seek to establish a relationship and partnership with staff, parents and students which promotes mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and acceptance. Wellbeing is an approach to education which attempts to value and develop each member of the school community. It addresses the social, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and physical needs of the students so that each child has the opportunity to reach his/her potential and acquire skills to cope with life.

The Montessori principles encourage the child to develop the ability to take responsibility for their own well-being and to care for others. The program allows quality teaching directed to the individual learning needs of the child and providing opportunity for the student to nurture individual growth.

The interest of the child is always our primary concern showing no bias to students with culturally and linguistically diverse or socio-economic backgrounds or special needs.

Staff have the responsibility of fostering quality interpersonal relationships amongst themselves, students, parents and support staff. Staff have a significant role of modelling the importance of building and maintaining relationships which are grounded in mutual respect, dignity, fairness, reconciliation, compassion and justice. Staff are aware of appropriate boundaries within teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships.

Wellbeing is fully integrated into the school's daily routines and its curriculum. The safety, health and wellbeing of each member of the school community is of paramount importance.

Behaviour Management Statement

“Let us remember that inner discipline is something to come to and not something already present. Our Task is to show the way to discipline. Discipline is born when the child concentrates his attention on some object that attracts him/her not only with the useful exercise but with the control of error.” MARIA MONTESSORI: THE ABSORBENT MIND

The aim of a Montessori environment is to help each child develop inner self-discipline. This development is fostered by the ordered organisation of the classroom and by the child's freedom to choose and work at an activity without interference. Guidance is given when appropriate.

This approach alleviates many disciplinary problems by helping the child gain skills in self-discipline and mediation within a controlled environment. The mixed age group of each classroom allows the younger children to emulate the more mature behaviour in the environment.

Limits are set for the benefit of the group and each child's individual development. Setting limits helps children to start what is hopefully a lifelong process of feeling secure, orienting themselves in the world, and finding appropriate expression for feelings that are hard to control. Positive reinforcement is used to foster acceptable behaviour, and children are given words to assist them to express their feelings so that they need not resort to physical responses, for example, hitting. Children are encouraged to become independent in their dealing with one another as appropriate to their age. Adult intervention occurs when the situation demands. Children displaying unacceptable behaviour may be required to isolate themselves from their peers in order to reflect on their behaviour. They are free to resume their activity when they feel ready. Behavioural problems may be discussed in the group without referring to the offending child(ren) by name.

If deemed necessary, the parents of a child, who is behaving inappropriately, will be notified and advised of appropriate action. Written records will be kept of incidents of unacceptable behaviour or inactive or withdrawn behaviour, and of conversations and correspondence with the parents. Where a formal meeting is required with the child's parents, they are to be given a set of minutes taken at the meeting. The parents are required to sign the minutes as acknowledgement that the discussion took place along the lines contained therein. In severe or repeated instances, the offender's parents may be advised to seek professional help.

In accordance with the Education Reform Amendment (Corporal Punishment Act 1995), and in keeping with the Montessori philosophy, this School does not permit corporal punishment of students and does not support corporal punishment in any form.

School Projects

Projects Achieved in 2025

Children's Environments

- Employing a teacher qualified in Learning Support and Inclusion to support students with additional needs and their families
- Employing an educator to assist with our Outdoor Learning class and Wellbeing program for students
- Upgrade of our playground replacing soil and re-turfing our grassed area
- Purchased a moveable smartboard for use in classrooms

Administration

- We created a Theory of Change to support our Marketing needs
- Professional Development on the safe use of AI
- Offering staff massages each term as part of our Wellbeing program

Outdoor Environment

- Widened and extended the awning at the main entrance to offer parents more protection from the weather.
- Replaced sections of the playground fencing for a secure space for students.

Future Projects

The Hills Montessori School continues to look to developing the school environment for the children and families at the school as well as supporting the local community.

In 2026 we will be focusing on the following projects:

- The renovation of children's toilets
- Continue to offer after school social events for families
- Create a position in our administration to manage and improve on our social media and marketing needs
- Water tank for the outdoor environment

Financials

FINANCIAL REPORT 2025

The school reported a net profit of \$144,001 for the 2025 financial year. Revenue from school tuition fees decreased marginally by \$8,660 but is being offset by higher Government Funding. Government Funding was higher than 2024 by 6.1%, and this reflects the Government initiative to promote Early Childhood Education and Learning. DET Fee Relief Funding is deducted directly from School Tuition Fees. Salaries increased as per mandated enterprise agreements and remain approximately 81% of Schools expenses. We were able to retain all our employees throughout 2025. Rent increased by the CPI in 2025 as per our lease agreement. Non-Salary expenses were higher in 2025 reflecting the higher cost of living and inflation.

During the year we upgraded our playground replacing soil and re-turfing our grassed area, as well as replacing some fencing and extending an awning for improved outdoor learning and shelter. We purchased a second-hand smartboard and continued to replace missing or older equipment. An air conditioning unit also had to be replaced.

