



Inner Sydney Montessori School

Published May 2024

2023 Annual Report



44 Smith Street, Balmain NSW 2041
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SCHOOL COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

On behalf of the School Council, it is with great pleasure that we present the 2023 Annual Report, offering insights and perspectives on the functioning of our School during the 2023 school year.

The role of the ISMS School Council is in oversight and governance of the School. Comprised of dedicated professionals from a variety of backgrounds, the Council Directors bring diverse skills and perspectives to ensure the School's governance is robust and forward-thinking. In this governance role, the School Council has the important responsibility of overseeing and guiding the School's frameworks for strategic planning, policy development, risk management and financial oversight, always with the best interests of our students and community at heart, with our Montessori philosophy at the core, and always working closely and collaboratively with the School's leadership team.

In a world of constant change, planning remains crucial. This year the School Council spent much time working with the School's leadership to ensure the School remains robust and sustainable into the future and continues to build on its strong foundations.

A key role of the School Council and a key to the School's success is continuing to have a strong team. During 2023, a key focus of the School Council was appointing our now Principal, Jenny Hall.

In Term 3 2023, then Principal Zoe Ezzard, made the difficult decision to resign whilst on parental leave due to pressing extended family commitments requiring her presence in the UK. Zoe was appointed as Principal of ISMS in 2017 and during her tenure the School built much stronger foundations including some important initiatives that have shaped the future of our School and, in fact, Montessori in this country. The School Council acknowledges with gratitude Zoe's sustained hard work, initiative and leadership and contribution to the School through this period.

Ensuring the School has the right Principal is always a key concern of the School Council as that role, more than any other, shapes the present and future of the School. We were pleased to be able to appoint then Acting Principal, Jenny Hall, to the Principal role in late Term 3. Jenny's steady and measured leadership had already endeared herself to the staff, students and our community and whilst the School Council considered other candidates, we were fortunate that the School was in a position to have a very capable leader ready and inspired to take on the role but more importantly, the right person to take on the responsibility of leading our School into the future. Jenny leads with vision, integrity, and a deep understanding of our School's Montessori values and the School's leadership is in very capable hands.

The School Council also works very closely with Christine Shaw, our ISMS Business Manager, and that work is always a pleasure. Christine does a truly wonderful job in managing the business and regulatory side of the School and we do not think we could find a more capable person for the role.

In 2023, our business team, led by Christine, continued to make important efficiency gains and were able to introduce new process improvements to better support the business operations of our School and communications with our families. This work is ongoing and critical in a changing world and remains an area which the School is continuing to improve and build on.

School Council President's Report

The School's policy and regulatory area, after consistent work over the last few years, has become very robust and embedded in the School's operations. This work continued in 2023 and has set the School up well for future regulatory reviews upcoming in 2024 and later years. This remains a priority for the School.

Both Jenny and Christine are supported by a very capable executive team and we are grateful to them for their inspired and dedicated leadership as well. Our staff's skill, knowledge, and commitment to nurturing our students is as evident as ever in 2023. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to every team member for their significant contributions to our children's lives and to our community and for the important work they do in creating a better world through and for our children.

The School Council is very grateful to the families, including the children, for their continuous support and engagement in our School community. One aspect that distinguishes a Montessori School community, is the shared vision for our children's future, a future we believe they can be prepared for by focussing on independence, student agency, collaboration, executive function, emotional intelligence and all of the many skills that our children absorb and build in a Montessori environment that prepares them for the future every day. The growth and development of our students, especially those nearing the end of Stage 3, and their curiosity and confidence in themselves and who they are, is testament to the value of our collective efforts.

Lastly, a very special thank you to Tara Taylor for her tireless effort and dedication to the School as the outgoing Council President. Tara has led the Council over many years with incredible vision, always wise counsel and an unwavering focus on the strengths of a Montessori philosophy. Much of the success of the School over the best part of the last decade is in large part to Tara's leadership.

Our ISMS commitment to the Montessori approach is more relevant and necessary than ever in our rapidly evolving world and we look forward to continuing this journey with you in the year ahead.



Paul Marriott
School Council President - 2024



Tara Taylor
School Council President - 2023

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

It is with great pleasure and pride that I present the 2023 Annual Report as Principal of Inner Sydney Montessori School. I am proud to be part of such a wonderful community, not just our School community, but the wider Montessori community, where collegiality plays such an important part in ensuring quality Montessori education for all our children. I have had the privilege of working closely with other NSW Montessori Principals, where we have the common goal of ensuring our Montessori philosophy and pedagogy endures into the future.

Dr. Maria Montessori was without a doubt a woman ahead of her time. She was not afraid to challenge the norms or speak her mind. In the ever-changing world in which we live in today, with its many challenges, I am sure she would want us to be flexible and adaptive, taking responsibility for providing an authentic Montessori education for today's world.

At ISMS we are fortunate to have an amazing team of well qualified and experienced members of staff across all areas of the School, including our support and operational team. A school has to be like a well-oiled machine and every single individual, whatever their role, plays an important and vital part in ensuring the best for our children, allowing each to reach their full potential. The Montessori curriculum is designed to foster independence, self-confidence and a love of learning and our team of educators continue to develop and refine our curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of each child.

2023 has been an action-packed year and we have much to review and reflect on to remind us of everything which happened in our wonderful School! We implemented some changes to our Stage 1 Program, which included 'All Day Montessori'. It is sometimes easy to fall into the thinking of, "the way it has always been done". As Montessori educators and leaders, it is imperative to have the mindset of, "the way it can best be done", always keeping the needs of the child at the forefront of everything we do. Dr. Montessori had this very approach in the tenement housing of San Lorenzo in Italy. She responded to the needs of those children and families by providing an all-day program. Today, we see our families from all socio-economic backgrounds in search of high-quality education whilst they go off to work all day, particularly post pandemic, when the workforce is moving back to the office. We responded to that need, as others have around the world, and have seen the children flourish in the consistency and care of that program. This includes the addition of our Outdoor Program with a dedicated Outdoor Educator at our campuses. This provides the children with an authentic indoor/outdoor work flow and a chance to work on sustainability and gardening.

The Stage 1 enhancements further support the foundations for learning for the remainder of the primary years. Student development is positively reflected, as outlined later in this report, through the engagement and satisfaction of the children, their families, and our staff. Student outcomes are also consistently strong in the standardised national literacy and numeracy testing. In 2023 we also recorded a positive increase in student attendance.

Our Holiday Care programs continued to grow and develop with a higher than ever number of children attending. They took part in weekly programs of activities and incursions across a range of interests. After School Clubs continued in Italian, drama, bands, choirs, music tuition and Judo. These clubs provide a breadth of discovery for our children and we are fortunate that a number of our own dedicated staff run these activities, providing familiarity for our children.

Principal's Report

We continue to build up our community events and have been fortunate to see a number of amazing occasions happening across the School, such as; Stage 2 and 3 Music Night, the Art Exhibition, Stage 3 Drama Night, the Stage 1 Summer Fair, Parent and Carer's Day, Science Week, Book Week, the Stage 3 Year Long Project presentations, Green Grads, Kids Kafe, School Open Days and Parent Information Evenings.

Incursions, excursions and 'Going Outs', always play a huge part in our Montessori program. Some of the highlights from 2023 include; Musica Viva, KindiFarm, an insect incursion, Sea Life Aquarium and Wild Life Sydney Zoo, Sydney Writers' Festival, a theatre visit, School Camp and the Year 6 Canberra excursion. Thank you to all the staff and parents who played a part in their organisation.

We were delighted to once again hold our annual Graduation Ceremony and Graduation Dinner for the 2023 Graduates and their families. The event was held at Terrace on the Domain - a beautiful garden location overlooking rolling green lawns and the iconic city skyline. The Graduate speeches once again highlighted their joy at the years spent at ISMS and the maturity shown in the delivery of these speeches highlighted the confidence and independence they have to go forward into the world. It was a truly special event that we know the children will never forget.

In 2019 the School initiated the Sydney Montessori Training Centre (SMTC) to help the Montessori community alleviate a shortage of Montessori trained teachers. We are proud to continue to work closely with SMTC and congratulated three staff on the completion of their AMI Montessori diplomas. We continue to have a number of staff undertaking diplomas, certificates and workshops.

The developments of 2023 will be further consolidated in 2024 and beyond as we strive to further define and refine our curriculum, review our policy suite, continue to engage our community, and evolve our distinct approach to learning.

Finally, I would like to close by taking this opportunity to thank our wonderful ISMS team for their endless hard work and care of our children. I also take this opportunity to thank Zoe Ezzard, who led the School as Principal from 2017. Zoe sadly left us to return to the UK after seven years of wonderful leadership. I would personally like to acknowledge the dedication, support and guidance Zoe gave the School over that time. Zoe was instrumental in implementing many positive changes in the School and she will be missed by all our community. We wish her well. Thank you to our parent community, whose commitment, not only to our School but to Montessori education has been unwavering. Thank you to our School Council, who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the continued growth of our School. It has been a pleasure to work with them over the past year. Lastly, and I am sure we would all agree, most importantly, a huge thank you to our ISMS children. They never fail to amaze me with their boundless energy and love of learning. They really are the reason we come to work each day!



Jenny Hall
Principal

Contextual Information about the School

CORE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Montessori pedagogy delivered at ISMS adds great value to the education of each child by adhering to the educational philosophy and teaching method conceived over 100 years ago by Dr Maria Montessori in Italy.

Based on following the natural sequence of development of the child, this educational philosophy emphasises one-to-one teaching, concrete learning leading to the abstract, self-motivation and free choice within an agreed plan of daily work relating to the curriculum. The School also reflects the goals and outcomes set by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and Early Years Learning Framework.

ISMS is an authentic Montessori community where our children are inspired as learners to grow into peaceful, influential and self-reliant young people who create a better world. Within the context of the Strategic Plan, the School's formal Vision and Values are as outlined below.

OUR VALUES

The ISMS community cherishes our core values of acceptance, accountability, courtesy, excellence, fairness, grace, integrity and service.

- Acceptance - acknowledging and understanding others' differences;
- Accountability - taking personal responsibility for actions;
- Courtesy - valuing ourselves and treating others and the environment with consideration and respect;
- Excellence - seeking to accomplish one's best;
- Fairness - acting in a manner which is socially just and protects the rights and privileges of all;
- Grace - conducting ourselves with dignity and sincerity;
- Integrity - living in accordance with the principles of moral and ethical conduct;
- Service - recognising and responding to the needs of others as an individual in a local and global community.

OUR VISION

Our vision for the future is to be known as a centre for excellence in teaching and learning; widely regarded as a leading Australian Montessori school; financially stable and secure for the long term; and a significant contributor to education in Australia and throughout the Montessori world.

OUR MOTTO

The School motto, 'Help me do it myself', reflects the Montessori ethos of providing guidance and an environment for children to form their own character and to reach their potential without impediment.



OUR LOGO

The ISMS logo represents a tree, which is a symbol for natural growth and the learning process. The colours of the leaves transform from green to red, with each leaf representing a new Stage in the child's development.



INITIATIVES PROMOTING RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Respect and responsibility are at the heart of what we teach and live by in Montessori education and within our School. There is a great emphasis on recognising and valuing the worth of each individual – student, staff member and parent/carer. The community's role is to care for each of its members and each of its members contributes meaningfully to the community. This reflects the interdependency of all living things.

Within our school, respect and responsibility flow through the fundamental practices of Grace and Courtesy. Grace and Courtesy is embedded into the Montessori classrooms through care for the environment, care for self, group discussion and problem-solving, collaboration and positive leadership. Our School's Respectful Guidelines continue to provide staff and students with a shared understanding of how to treat each person and our environment.

Respectful Guidelines

- We use our hands to help, not harm
- We use kind and thoughtful words and actions
- We walk indoors and use calm voices
- We give each other time and space
- We care for everything in our environment
- We make a genuine effort to participate and learn.

Our Montessori environments gather children in four different stages: from birth to 3 years old, 3 to 6 years old, 6 to 9 years old and 9 to 12 years old. These 'mixed age classrooms' favour spontaneous cooperation, desire to learn, mutual respect and the acquisition of deep knowledge in the process of teaching others. At ISMS we encourage students to collaborate rather than compete against each other. The unique integrated curriculum provides all students with experiences that allow them to discover their own innate abilities and, therefore, establish recognition of their independence. The children's learning experiences rely on personal discipline, decision-making, true collaboration, goal setting and self-assessment.

We encourage students to explore learning opportunities that encompass diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Formal activities such as Parents and Carers Day, Harmony Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week are but a few of the occasions intended to acknowledge and celebrate family, culture and develop understanding, acceptance and peace.

Student Leaders and Community

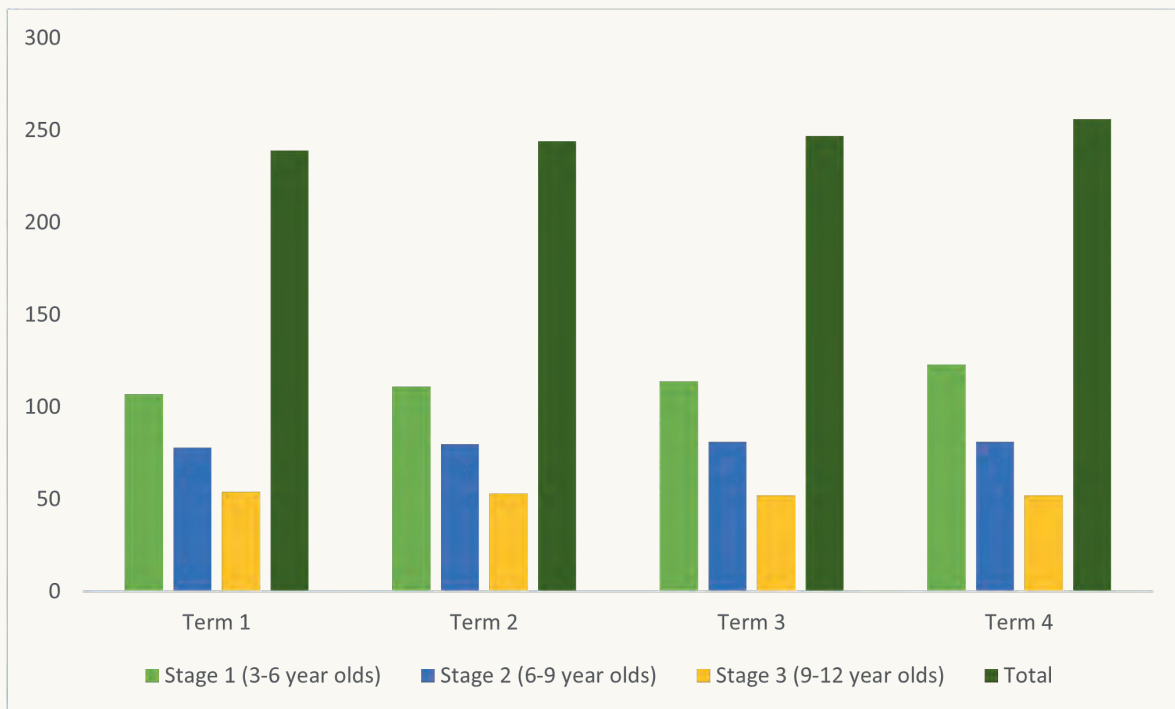
The School continues to promote student awareness of global community issues. In Montessori education, understanding the interdependent nature of human life is very important and becomes a focus of many lessons both inside the classroom and in the wider community. Students are encouraged to participate in a selection of activities across the School including 'Kids Kafe' which focuses on healthy eating and sustainable practices within our School and in the community. To further promote a sense of responsibility, our Stage 3 children collaborate with staff on planning the Kid's Kafe food menu and placing orders for each week's meal. Our graduating children also participated in our 'Green Grads' program which involves the children preparing and selling boxes of seasonal fruit and vegetables.

Each Term, the children in Stage 2 and Stage 3 engage in 'Team Building' activities led by our PDHPE Director. These sessions involve games and activities which require the children to work together to achieve a common goal or outcome. Team building activities promote a sense of inclusion, acknowledgement of others, patience and cooperation.

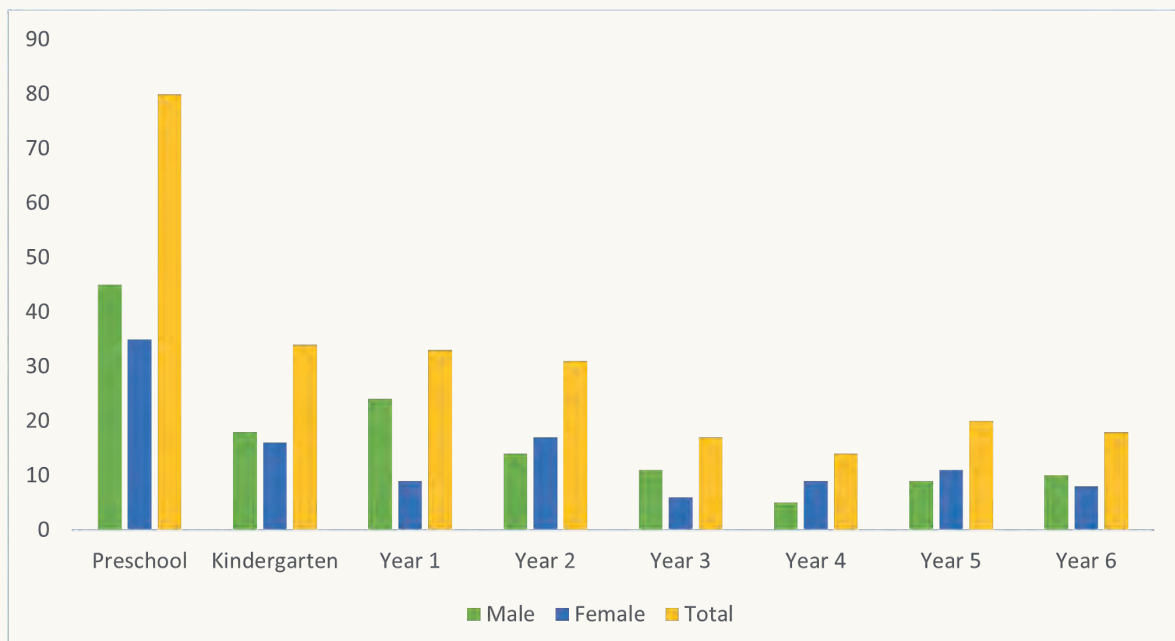
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT BODY 2023

ISMS is a community-based, non-denominational, co-educational, independent school established in 1981 for children aged from birth to 12 years of age (Year 6). We facilitate a Parent and Child, and Transition to Preschool program (Infant Community 0-3 years), a 3-6 years Preschool and Kindergarten program and a Primary School Program. In 2023, at the time of census, the student body consisted of 136 males and 111 females, 247 students in total.

ISMS ENROLMENT PROFILE SUMMARY



ISMS ENROLMENT PROFILE BY YEAR LEVEL



Student Outcomes in Standardised National Literacy and Numeracy

NAPLAN

In 2023, ISMS students in Years 3 and 5 sat the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests.

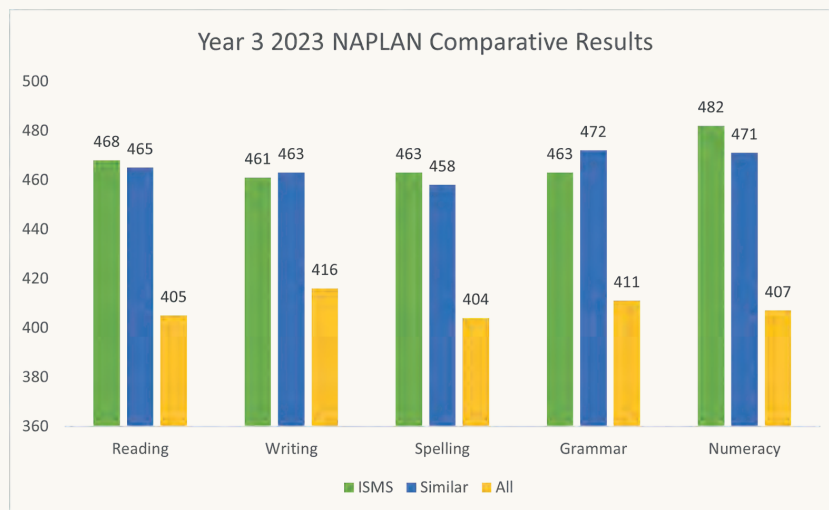
The Montessori pedagogy emphasises developing a love of learning and teaches independence and skills in seeking out learning experiences. Success is measured in terms of the progress made by the individual child, not in competitive terms measured against other children.

Montessori schools are not inclined to submit children to situations that can be regarded as ranking them or putting them in a competitive situation. We also acknowledge there are many qualities that we value in Montessori education; creativity, persistence, curiosity, collaboration, motivation, leadership, self-discipline amongst others, which cannot be measured in this way. Nonetheless, we recognise the need to undertake NAPLAN and we use these results to inform our teaching practice.

In reading the following statements about our results, it is important to realise that our small numbers make variability from year to year more likely than in a larger school.

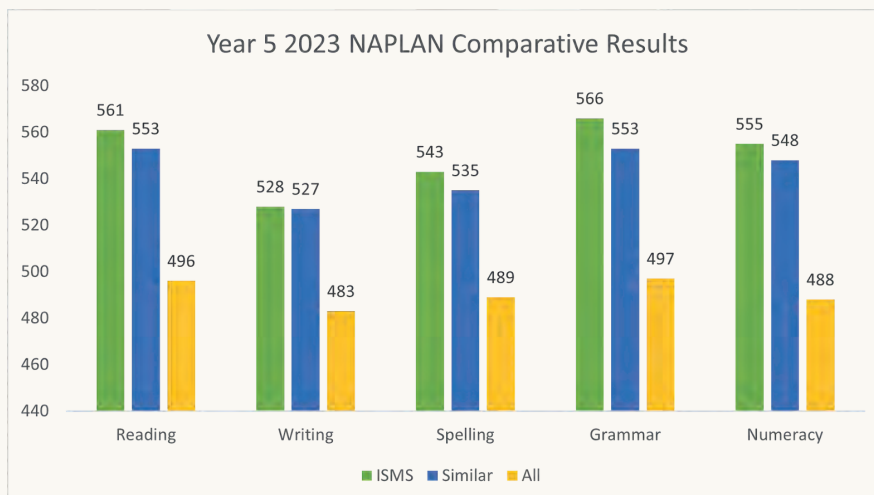
YEAR 3

ISMS had 16 students in Year 3 and the table below outlines their results in comparison to similar schools and all Australian schools:



YEAR 5

ISMS had 20 students in Year 5 and the table below outlines their results in comparison to similar schools and all Australian schools:



TEACHER ACCREDITATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Details of accreditation status (as defined by the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004), as at the end of 2023, for staff who are responsible for delivering the curriculum.

LEVEL OF ACCREDITATION	NO.
Conditional	1
Provisional	1
Proficient Teacher	25
Highly Accomplished Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Total number of teachers	27



Workforce Composition

WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

The ISMS workforce consists of teachers, with both traditional tertiary and Montessori qualifications, classroom assistants, and support and operational staff.

At ISMS, we embrace all faiths and backgrounds for all our staff and students. None of our staff members have identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, but we strongly encourage applications from First Nations teachers and other staff.

School Staff	No. of Individuals	Full-time Equivalent
Teaching Staff	21	18.6
Non-teaching Staff	34	29.6
Total	55	48.2



STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF NON-ATTENDANCE

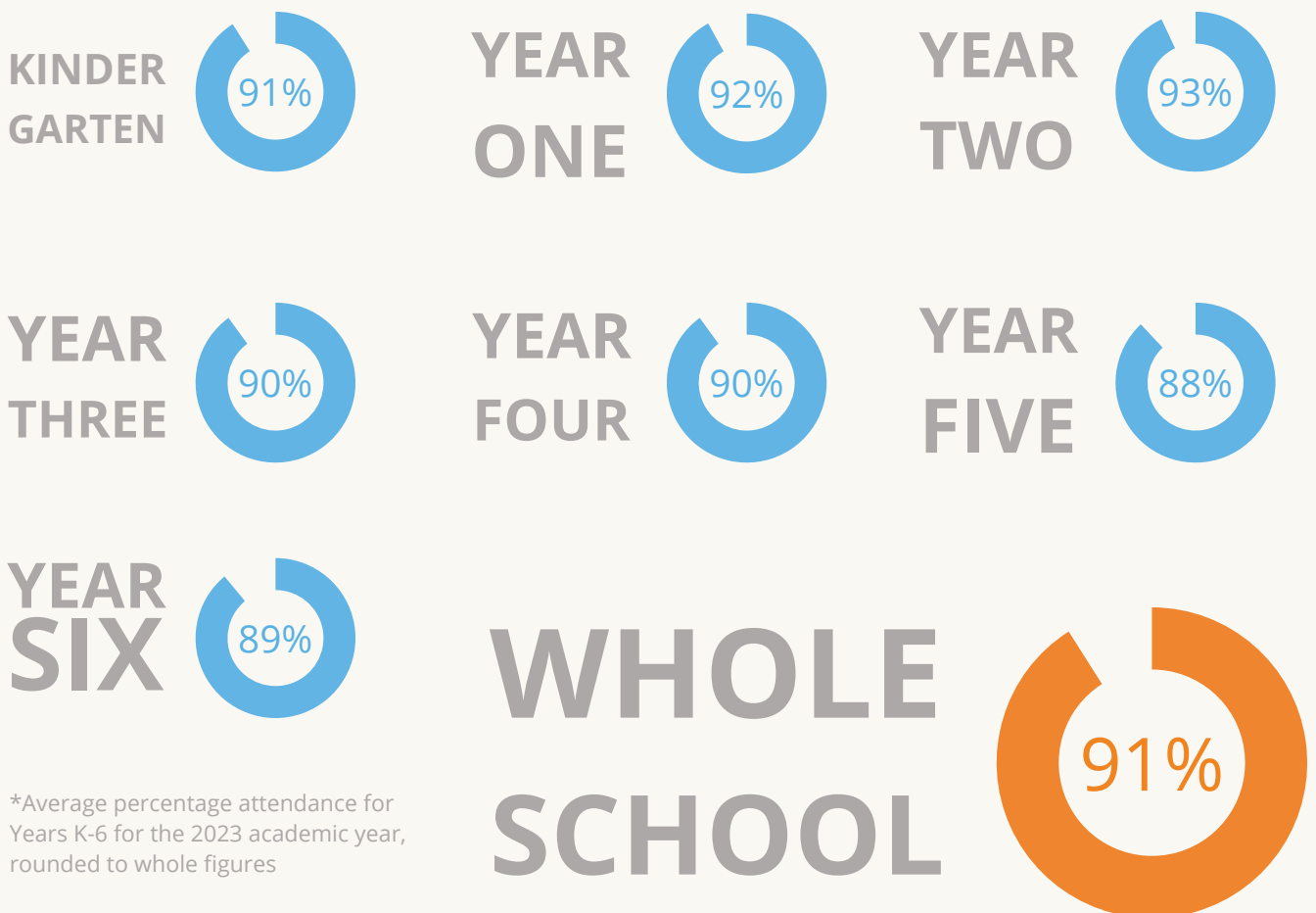
Extended or repeated absence is usually due to illness. The rare exception to this is managed by pastoral processes, initially through the classroom teacher and Principal, if required.

Parents and carers report planned absences to the Principal in advance. Classroom attendance rolls are electronically submitted to Reception by 9:00am each morning (30 minutes after the start of the day), where any planned or unplanned absences are recorded. Parents report any unplanned absences by phone, email or via the ISMS School app. An automated text message from the School messaging system is sent to parents of children still absent at 9:45am. Responses are monitored and families are called by phone should further information be required. These prompts allow us to track absences and support the safety of children.

Partial absences are also monitored through the School roll. Absences of children arriving late (after 8:45am) or departing early, or for part of the day for various reasons, are recorded at Reception where parents are required to sign children in and out. These partial absences are managed by pastoral processes, initially through the classroom teacher and then by the Principal, if required.

In 2023, 91% of students attended school each school day on average. This represents an increase in attendance from 88% in 2022.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE



*Average percentage attendance for Years K-6 for the 2023 academic year, rounded to whole figures

School Policies

The ISMS Policy Suite has been developed collaboratively to support culture, compliance, and practices which inform our teaching and learning. Importantly, key policies define a safe and supportive environment for our students. The School seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment which:

- Minimises the risk of harm and ensures students feel secure;
- Supports the physical, social, academic, spiritual and emotional development of students;
- Provides student welfare policies and programs that develop a sense of self-worth and foster personal development.

Although our policies are available on request, and relevant policies are published to families and staff through our Intranet, ConnectISMS, a number of our policies, noted and linked below, are available to the public through our website:

- [Anti-Bullying Policy](#)
- [Child Protection Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Complaints Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Enrolment Policy](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Student Discipline Policy](#)
- [Whistleblower Policy](#)

Hard copies of our policies are also available on both campuses.

PARENT, STUDENT AND TEACHER SATISFACTION

At ISMS, we encourage parents, students and teachers to have respectful open conversations. We foster a variety of different opportunities and avenues for our community to provide feedback to the School and to be involved.

PARENT SATISFACTION

Parental involvement and attendance would suggest parent satisfaction is high throughout the School. Parent's concerns are noted and are responded to in a considered and timely manner. Parent Liaisons continued to meet throughout 2023 which provided parents an avenue to express their satisfactions or concerns. ISMS continues to see a high level of involvement within our Parent Liaison body.

Our parent community showed welcome and positive engagement in our School over the 2023 calendar year, with many in attendance at Parent Information Evenings, in-class activities and exhibitions, and as volunteers inside and outside of the classroom. A committed group of parents coordinated the Lilyfield campus hosted Summer Fair, a thoroughly enjoyable community event for all.

The Principal and the Directors have an open door policy with the parent body and meet regularly with parents on an individual basis, when required.

STUDENT SATISFACTION

The School continues to observe a high level of satisfaction amongst the students which culminates in the reflections by our Graduates in their Graduation speeches, and through informal discussions throughout the year. ISMS provides students with opportunities to develop life skills, including, conflict resolution, effective communication and resilience. The classroom communities engender a sense of ownership and responsibility over learning and the environment, promoting the joy of learning. This joy is observable in our community and often commented on by visitors to our School.

Past students occasionally visit the School throughout their high school years, and many are eager to join our alumni panel at our annual Beyond ISMS evening, happy to share their stories and how their Montessori education shaped their transition to high school, further education, and the workforce.

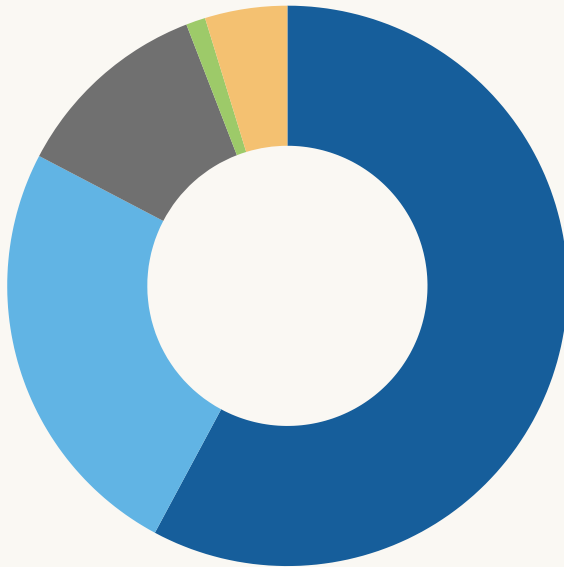
TEACHER SATISFACTION

Teachers have regular opportunities to provide feedback at staff meetings and professional reviews throughout the year. Feedback would suggest that teachers were generally satisfied in all areas of the School. ISMS continues to work towards building relationships and fostering positive staff morale. The Principal's open door policy ensures that all staff have an equal opportunity to discuss personal or professional matters.

The School Council is largely composed of current or past parents and feedback in that context is both regular and formal, as required.

Summary Financial Information

2023 REVENUE



School Tuition Fees - 57.84%
\$4,897,742

Government Grants & Subsidies - 24.83%
\$2,102,887

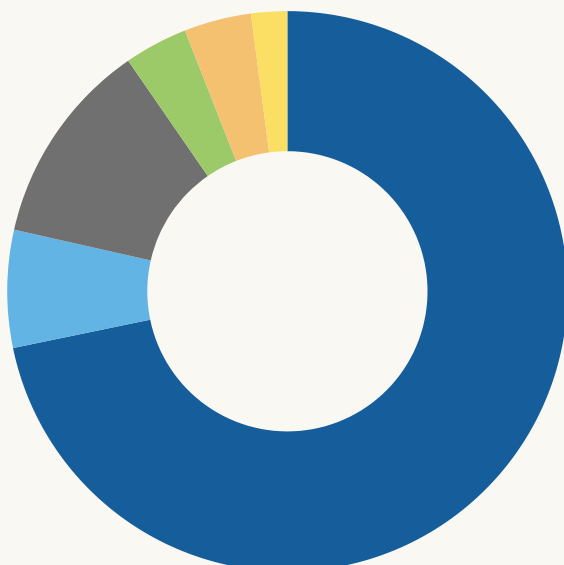
School Care Programs - 11.46%
\$970,037

Enrolments Applications & Memberships - 1.12%
\$94,955

Other Income - 4.75%
\$402,141

Total
\$8,467,762

2023 EXPENSES



Employee Expenses - 71.76%
\$6,322,379

Property Expenses - 6.78%
\$596,952

Depreciation & Amortisation - 11.85%
\$1,043,808

Administration Expenses 3.66%
\$322,366

Other Expenses 3.88%
\$341,626

Tuition Expenses 2.08%
\$182,941

Total
\$8,810,072





Balmain Campus

(Preschool, Primary and
Administration)

44 Smith Street

Balmain NSW 2041

Lilyfield Campus

(Parent and Child Program,
Preschool and Kindergarten)

10 Trevor Street

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