

NextSense School
Blind and Deafblind Program

2023

Annual report



Head of School Message

It is with great pleasure and pride that I present to you our annual report for 2023, highlighting the achievements and progress of NextSense School – Blind and Deafblind Program.

At NextSense School – Blind and Deafblind Program, we are committed to providing a nurturing and inclusive educational environment where every child, regardless of their sensory challenges, can thrive and succeed. This year has been a testament to the dedication and hard work of our students, teachers, support staff, therapists, central office staff and families who continue to collaborate and support each other in the pursuit of excellence and working towards our vision to 'redefine what's possible'.

Our school's specialised programs and resources have played a pivotal role in ensuring that each student receives the individualised attention and support they need to reach their full potential. From adaptive technology and sensory-friendly classrooms to tailored individualised education plans and therapeutic interventions, we strive to meet the unique needs of every student.

Throughout the year, our students have demonstrated remarkable growth and achievement in academic and personal development. Their resilience, determination, and enthusiasm for learning inspire us all. Whether it's through innovative teaching methods, inclusive extracurricular activities, or community outreach initiatives, we are constantly evolving to provide the best possible educational experience for our students.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff for their unwavering commitment and passion for teaching and learning. Your hard work and creativity have made a profound impact on the lives of our students and their families.

To our parents and guardians, thank you for your continued trust and partnership. Your involvement and support are invaluable in creating a supportive and nurturing environment for our students.

As we look forward with excitement to the future and our move to our new school on the Macquarie University campus, I am confident that together, we will continue to build upon our successes and create even more opportunities for our students to shine. Let us celebrate our achievements and embark on the journey ahead with optimism and enthusiasm.

Thank you all for being part of our NextSense community. Your contributions make a difference every day.

Please refer to the subsequent pages for detailed information regarding the school's achievements in 2023. For further information about NextSense and NextSense School, you can access the [NextSense Annual Report](#) by visiting the NextSense website.

In partnership,

Antonella Dolores

Head of School Services

Context

NextSense School is a specialist campus for children with hearing or vision loss.

NextSense School - Blind and Deafblind Program is a fully inclusive, accessible program that prioritises high quality teaching to achieve positive student outcomes. Within our program, students not only acquire academic knowledge but also cultivate a sense of belonging, confidence, and essential life skills for their future.

Through a rigorous individual planning process, we identify learning outcomes, teaching, and learning activities, assessment strategies, necessary adjustments, accommodations, and resources. Our program aligns with the key learning areas outlined in the syllabus documents provided by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA). In addition, we incorporate selected areas from the Expanded Core Curriculum designed for students with vision loss. By combining academic and functional skills, we create individualised educational programs for each student.

Our specialised team of educators, supported by teaching assistants, conduct classes in small groups to ensure personalised attention. And, we have a team of allied health professionals who work collaboratively to facilitate students' access to various teaching and learning activities. We firmly believe that through explicit teaching and systematic instruction in relevant environments, our students can make remarkable progress and actively contribute as engaged members of the community.

In 2023 a school and preschool operational review took place and a restructure of leadership was established to reflect the contemporary vision of NextSense and its strategic priorities. Three key leadership roles were developed: Leader of Pedagogy, Leader of Partnerships and Advocacy and Leader of Research. Our leadership team prioritised the adoption of research based contemporary approaches to learning and assessment to develop a new approach for 2024.

Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

The wellbeing and pastoral care at NextSense School aspire to enhance the wellbeing of students, staff and parents within our school community. Student wellbeing, learning and safety are reinforced by the procedures, resources, communication and values that create a safe and inclusive learning environment and positive and caring relationships.

Some wellbeing programs in 2023 included:

- Professional development for all staff on the Child Safeguarding Framework
- The introduction of the Be You Framework to all members of the school community
- A wellbeing survey to all members of the school community
- Student voice at assemblies to discuss school initiatives
- Zoom meetings every term, for parents to improve communication between home and school
- School psychologist to support student learning and behaviour
- Opportunities to live out the school's values of empowerment, communication, community, collaboration and integrity.

An ongoing focus on building each student's social and emotional skills is a priority in each child's Individual Education Plan. This includes transition into high school and into mainstream

primary school.

Student outcomes

To ensure personalised support, we collaborate with families and students, as needed to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every student. Each student's IEP outlines their specific learning objectives in the Key Learning Areas and areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum, tailored for students who are blind, deafblind or have low vision. Furthermore, the IEP incorporates the development of functional daily living skills.

In addition to academic content, the IEP identifies the necessary adjustments and accommodations to facilitate students' access to all teaching and learning activities. These accommodations are carefully listed to ensure that students can fully engage in their educational journey. By addressing the unique needs of each student, we strive to create an inclusive environment that promotes their overall growth and success.

We cater to students with complex and high support learning needs. As a result, many of these students are exempt from the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). In 2023, there were no students that took part in Year 3 or Year 5 NAPLAN.

Higher School Certificate (HSC)

In 2023, the school did not have any Higher School Certificate graduates.

Recognition of School Achievement (RoSA)

There were no Year 10 school leavers.

Our staff

Teacher accreditation

Our teachers have teacher education qualifications obtained from higher education institutions. Furthermore, all teachers are accredited by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA), qualifying them to teach in schools across NSW. We place great importance on professional learning and teacher accreditation and consider it a vital aspect of our educational approach. Our teachers actively pursue higher levels of accreditation and engage in ongoing professional development, including pursuing Masters level studies to enhance their knowledge and expertise.

Level of accreditation	Number of teachers
Provisional	1 fulltime
Proficient	1 fulltime

Throughout the school, there were a total of 3.28 part-time equivalent positions filled by four teaching assistants. These teaching assistants are highly experienced and have completed the Certificate III in Education Support - Teacher's Aide (Special) from TAFE or an equivalent

qualification.

As well as our teaching assistants, specialist services were provided to support and enhance our educational programs. This support came from orthoptists, audiologists, access technology consultants, psychologists and a librarian. Each member of our expert team holds recognised tertiary qualifications relevant to their respective fields. Some have higher academic qualifications, including master's degrees.

To cater to the students' healthcare needs, the school's Health Centre has a qualified registered school nurse. This nurse is responsible for managing the students' health care requirements.

Our team

Position	FTE*
Principal	1
Deputy Principal	1
Leader of Learning	.2
Teacher(s)	2
School psychologist	.3
School assistants (support staff)	3.28
Librarian	.3
School administration	.6
School nurse	1

Professional learning

In 2023, our unwavering commitment to student progress and achievement remained at the forefront of our focus. Throughout 2023 we continued the approach of our school curriculum teams in developing a new K-2 Scope and Sequence for mathematics and English. To support the successful implementation of these new syllabuses, the leadership team organised and facilitated extensive professional development opportunities for our teachers.

These sessions equipped teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to effectively deliver the revised curriculum. Additionally, our leadership team actively participated in courses offered by the AIS Leadership Centre, further enriching their leadership skills and knowledge.

Our dedicated staff also engaged in a range of activities throughout the year, contributing to our students' educational experience and overall growth. Some of these activities included:

Professional Learning	Staff attended
Mathematics K-6 Scope and Sequence (6 days)	1 teacher and leadership team
NCCD Knowledge and understanding and data evaluation	2 teachers and leadership team
Vision workshop	2 teachers
Review of English Scope and Sequence	2 teachers
New school site and resources	All staff members
Mathematics Scope and Sequence and Content	1 teacher and leadership team
Mathematics Curriculum and Resources	2 teachers
NextSense Organisation Review	All staff members
Manual Handling	All staff members.
ProWise Touchscreen Professional Learning	2 teachers
Years 3-6 New English Syllabus	2 teachers
Midazolam Training	2 staff and admin staff
CPR Refresher	All staff members
Safeguarding Training	All staff members
Spelling Mastery	Teachers and teacher assistants
Warden Training	Administration staff

School Pedagogy - Mathematics Structure Scope and Sequence review	2 teachers
School Pedagogy – English Structure, Reading And Explicit Teaching	2 teachers
Code of Conduct	All staff members
Wellbeing Framework	All staff members

Student attendance and retention rates in secondary schools and post school destinations

Regular school attendance plays a crucial role in shaping the long-term outcomes for children and young people. When students are absent from school, they miss out on valuable learning opportunities, the chance to foster friendships, and the development of important skills through play. Therefore, ensuring regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working collaboratively, NextSense School positively impacts and supports our children and young people to maintain consistent school attendance.

To fulfill our obligations regarding students' education, safety, protection, and wellbeing, our school diligently monitors and maintains accurate attendance records. We have established policies and procedures to manage student non-attendance effectively. When a child is absent, the primary parent receives an automated text message, providing an opportunity to provide the reason for the absence. Additionally, parents can communicate via email or our online class communication system to inform the school about an absence. Our teachers actively promote and monitor regular school attendance, and our schools have implemented effective measures to record attendance and promptly address student absences. These practices are guided by the School Attendance policy, which outlines the procedures for managing non-attendance.

Throughout 2023, the overall student attendance rate was documented as 74.99%. This was a 7.63% improvement on the previous year.

Year level	Attendance rate %
Kindergarten	N/A
Year 1	51.35%
Year 2	55.80%
Year 3	N/A
Year 4	86.20%
Year 5	89.95%
Year 6	79.90%
Year 10	81.00%
Year 11	89.40%
Whole School	74.99%

School policies

The following school policies are available on the NextSense website:

- Enrolment policy
- Child protection policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Discipline policy
- Complaints policy

Stakeholder satisfaction

The school highly values and actively encourages feedback from parents and families, as it plays a crucial role in improving our school community. In 2023, we conducted parent Zoom meetings each term, to gain ongoing information regarding the key priorities for 2023 and to assess the level of parent satisfaction.

In comparison to surveys that were sent in 2022, these Zoom meetings offered an ongoing form of involvement and voice and had higher parent participation. Parents were informed of the progress of the new site at Macquarie, curriculum development, wellbeing and the restructure of leadership.

The use of Class Dojos has continued to have a positive impact between home and school. Class Dojo has allowed for positive communication between students and parents about learning and open communication between staff and parents.

We conducted a wellbeing survey for staff, students and parents on the five domains of Family partnerships, Early support, Responding together, Learning resilience, and Mentally healthy communities. The key findings were:

- Staff, parents and students identified Mentally Healthy Communities as our highest scoring domain.
- Staff and parents identified the Responding Together domain and the students identified Family Partnerships as areas to be further explored and developed.
- Key stakeholders averaged the school wellbeing as four out of five.

The survey results indicate staff, parents and students feel well-informed about their child's social and emotional development, as well as their progress at school. This open communication and transparency is vital to ensuring parents are actively engaged in their child's educational journey.

In our school, we strongly encourage students to express their opinions and share their perspectives on all aspects of their learning and school life. Here are some examples of the feedback we received from our students:

- I feel accepted at my school and I belong.
- My teacher helps me take on new challenges.
- My teacher and my family want me to be the best that I can be.
- I love our library and being read to.
- I like the staff in our classroom.
- I would like a canteen.

We greatly appreciate the feedback provided by parents, students and staff as it helps us continuously improve and create a supportive and collaborative learning environment. We remain committed to fostering open lines of communication and collaboration between all members of our school community.

School determined priorities for 2024

Priority	Key Actions
Transition to our new home on the Macquarie University campus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure policies and enrolment processes reflect name change. • Macquarie move process is clearly documented and shared across the school with all key stakeholders. • Review school policies & procedures to reflect Macquarie site school environment. • Develop orientation to new site process for staff, students, and parents.

<p>Sustain whole school processes for improving English and mathematics outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current research is implemented and continually reflected upon for a K-6 approach to teaching literacy in school. • Teachers & Teacher Aides are supported in implementing Spelling Mastery. • Teachers are implementing effective structures for a literacy and numeracy block • Teachers take part in modelling and constructive feedback in developing the skill of explicit approach to teaching. • Teachers have a deeper knowledge and understanding of the 3-6 English and mathematics syllabus. • Teachers are effectively analysing data and continually implementing effective intervention programs in language, literacy and numeracy. • Teachers take part in ongoing reflective conversations on student learning and addressing student needs through case management. • Resourcing is a priority to effectively implement programs in language, literacy and numeracy. • Throughout the year, Teacher Aides receive professional development in implementing intervention programs. • Refine our knowledge and understanding of the Expanded Core Curriculum.
<p>Improve wellbeing practices and initiatives following a consistent approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be You consultant and framework are utilised. • Wellbeing Action Team established. • Wellbeing data analysed to create a wellbeing action plan. • Wellbeing action plan is shared and implemented.
<p>Continuous development in Auslan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onsite interpreter is employed to provide equity in access to all education stakeholders. • Auslan classes are available for all staff across the organisation.
<p>Assess, select and deploy a new Student Knowledge Management System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compass training is available for all stakeholders. • Compass is the main form of communication between school and home.
<p>Succession planning and enterprise agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have a clear view of possibilities and actions to advance career options. • Enterprise agreement represents clear and transparent processes for staff career paths.

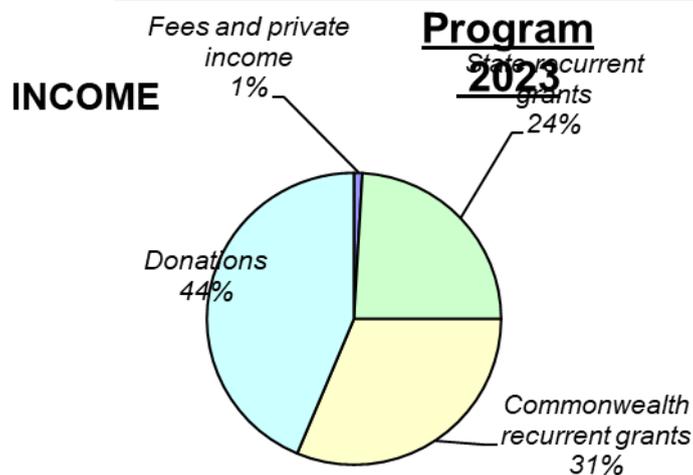
Summary financial information

Income and Expenditure Statement - Year Ended 31 December 2023 Blind & DeafBlind Program

Description

	\$ AUD
Income	
Fees and private income	12,525
State recurrent grants	330,370
Commonwealth recurrent grants	429,314
Donations	599,085
Total Income	<u>1,371,294</u>
Expenditure	
Salaries, allowances and related expenses	784,404
Non-salary expenses	586,891
Total Expenditure	<u>1,371,295</u>

NextSense School Blind and DeafBlind



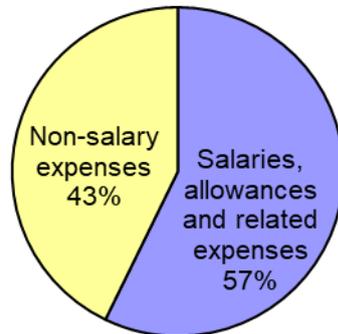
Expenditure

1,523,429

Recurrent/capital

NextSense School Blind and DeafBlind
Program
2023

EXPENDITURE



Preparation of this report

Procedures for preparing this report include:

The Head of School is the person responsible for coordinating the final preparation and distribution of the Annual Report to the Board and other stakeholders as required.

- For the first eight areas of reporting, the Head of School is responsible for the collection, analysis and storage of the relevant data and for inserting the relevant information into the report. The Accountant of Financial Corporate Services is responsible for the collection, analysis, and storage of the financial data and for providing this to the Head of School for inclusion in the report.
- The Head of School is responsible for determining the specific content to be included in each section of the report and reviewing this annually to ensure ongoing compliance, relevance, and usefulness.
- The Head of School is responsible for the preparation of the report in an appropriate form to send to NESAs.
- The Head of School is responsible for setting the annual schedule for:
 - preparation and publication of the report; and,
 - distribution of the report to the Board of Studies and other stakeholders.

Requests for additional data from the NSW Minister for Education and Training

To ensure that any requests from the Minister for additional data are dealt with appropriately, the Head of School is responsible for coordinating the school's response. The Head of School is responsible for the collection of the relevant data and for ensuring it is provided to NESA.

The Head of School and Accountant from Financial Corporate Services are responsible for completing the questionnaire. The Accountant of Financial Corporate Services is responsible for the collection of the relevant data and for ensuring it is provided.

