



2023

Annual report



Head of School message

We are pleased to present the Annual Report for 2023, a comprehensive account of the operations and accomplishments of NextSense School – Sign Bilingual Program. This report provides a detailed overview of the progress made by the school in providing high-quality educational opportunities for all students. It highlights our commitment to integrating academic, social, and emotional development to foster each student's success.

With a rich history spanning over 160 years, NextSense School – Sign Bilingual Program is of profound significance for us. Our roots trace back to the visionary Thomas Pattison, a Scottish migrant who was deaf, and established Australia's first school for children who were deaf. The legacy of those who paved the way for us is deeply cherished, and their contributions have shaped our commitment to serving individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind, or have low vision. We have built on this legacy to expand our range of comprehensive services over the years.

The year was 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 is possible'.

Throughout the year there have been significant achievements across all facets of our school. Academically, our students continued to show growth, demonstrating their ability in Auslan and their transference of language to literacy and numeracy. The commitment of our staff and the dedication of our students have ensured that learning remains engaging, inclusive, and rigorous.

Beyond the classroom, our school community has thrived through community events and partnerships that enrich the educational experience. These opportunities not only foster a sense of belonging but also nurture leadership skills, creativity, and a deep appreciation for Australian Deaf culture and history.

I am particularly proud of our students' achievements in various academic competitions and showcases, where they have consistently demonstrated excellence and creativity. These accomplishments are a testament to the hard work of our students, the support of our families, and the dedication of our staff who continually inspire our students to reach their full potential.

Looking ahead, we are committed to building on our successes and embracing new opportunities for growth and innovation. We remain steadfast in our vision to redefine what's possible and provide a nurturing environment where every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed. Together, we will continue to uphold our organisational values of integrity, empowerment, community, inclusivity, respect, courage and collaboration that define our Auslan school community.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our entire school community for their unwavering support and commitment to the success of our students. Our partnership is invaluable as we continue to shape the future leaders of tomorrow.

Antonella Dolores

Head of School Services

School context

NextSense School - Sign Bilingual Program has established itself as excelling in providing a comprehensive sign bilingual program. Our program caters to Deaf children from Kindergarten to Year 6, addressing their academic, social, and cultural needs. We prioritise the acquisition of Auslan, which forms a foundation for our bilingual approach. Students develop this competency not only through written English but also through spoken language where possible.

Aligned with the NES A Key Learning Areas, our curriculum is delivered by a team of dedicated specialists, including teachers, teacher's aides, and allied health therapists. Planning and programming within each learning area emphasise a high level of differentiation, ensuring that teaching and learning strategies are tailored to meet the unique strengths and needs of individual students within each class. To further enrich their educational journey, each student has an Individual Education Plan, informed by parental priorities and assessment information. Additionally, we offer supplementary programs to enhance students' academic, creative, and social skills. Our school is recognised as an inclusive and nurturing environment, where students are actively engaged and experience a strong sense of belonging.

Our school has a clear vision to empower students as lifelong learners, and to foster their confidence, self-esteem, and identity. Identity development is nurtured through meaningful interactions with other Deaf children, Deaf staff, and Deaf adult visitors. We prioritise the wellbeing of all our students, enabling them to form connections, achieve success, thrive, and learn. We understand that each student has unique learning needs, and we collaborate closely with parents and caregivers to tailor education to their individual requirements. This collective responsibility ensures that learning takes place under optimal conditions, leading to students' continuous success. Our teachers are committed to challenging each student to reach their full potential within a signing environment that promotes language development and a positive self-concept. We value Auslan and English, while fostering cultural diversity and promoting mutual respect among our students.

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.

How we promote respect and responsibility

The aspiration of wellbeing and pastoral care at NextSense School is to enhance the wellbeing of students, staff and parents within our school community. Student wellbeing, learning and safety are reinforced by 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 each 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 mainstream high school.

Student population

In 2023, the Sign-Bilingual Program had sixteen students from Kindergarten to Year 6. There were four boys and twelve girls across the school. Students travelled from all over the Sydney metropolitan area to attend school. All students use Auslan to communicate, with 80% of students having a language other than spoken English used in the home. Most students have been fitted with and wear assistive hearing technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implants.

Student outcomes

In the National Assessment Program, the results across Years 3 and 5 literacy and numeracy assessments are reported on a scale from Band 1 to Band 6. The achievement scale represents increasing levels of skills and understanding demonstrated in these assessments.

The school had an 80% participation rate in 2023 utilising the online platform. We are proud of our students' courage and perseverance in completing their assessment tasks.

Our staff

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW and the school monitors their accreditation status. All teaching staff are proficient and maintain their registration through NESAs. Our teachers are experienced, and the teaching staff remained stable throughout 2023. Most teaching staff have specialist teaching qualifications at Masters level in addition to their original teacher qualifications. Four of the teaching staff are Deaf.

Position	FTE*
Principal	1
Deputy Principal	1
Leader of Learning	.2
Leader of Advocacy and Partnerships	.2
Teacher(s)	3
School psychologist	.3
School assistants (support staff)	2.44
Librarian	.3
School administration	.6

Teacher accreditation

The following table provides details of the accreditations of teaching staff who were employed during 2023.

Level of accreditation	
Proficient teachers	3

In 2023, we had no Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander staff members. In addition, our school assistants are qualified with teacher qualifications or hold a Teacher's Aide (Special) Certificate 3.

Teaching and learning

Specialist Teachers of the Deaf provide students with high-quality individualised teaching and learning programs that seamlessly integrate language, literacy, Deaf studies, and social and emotional learning into the curriculum.

Our school employs school-wide practices, such as adhering to assessment timelines and conducting consistent teacher judgment to ensure continuous monitoring of student progress and achievements. Teachers regularly utilise student data and the attainment of their goals to adapt their programs and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The class programs clearly reflect a responsive approach to addressing specific learning needs of Deaf students. In addition to the dedicated full-time teaching staff, our school regularly welcomes NextSense allied health therapists who provide targeted support for specific students. This team includes psychologists, occupational therapists, speech-language therapists, and physiotherapists. Our students' overall wellbeing needs are regularly addressed through visits from the school psychologist.

As a result of ongoing formative assessment and differentiated programs, post-assessment data clearly demonstrate growth in student outcomes. Formative and summative assessments provide valuable feedback to students and their families regarding their progress and guide adjustments in teaching and learning programs.

During 2023 staff participated in a variety of English twilights and face to face professional learning experiences facilitated by the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) and NextSense. The particular focus of professional learning was to explore language development, early reading and writing skills, syllabus structure and content.

In mathematics, staff worked collaboratively with Anita Chin and the school leadership team to build the whole school Mathematics Scope and Sequence. Staff continued to deepen knowledge of content and effective pedagogy. Staff participated in a variety of professional learning experiences facilitated by Anita Chin to explore the mathematics syllabus structure and content.

Professional learning and teacher standards

Professional learning meetings are aligned with our school strategic plan and encourage professional discussions to take place. In 2023 we continued to focus on building a schoolwide, effective approach to accelerating progress for all students using more consistent and robust assessment and teaching practices in English. Significant progress has been made to ensure effective systems, processes and practices are utilised to gather, analyse, report, and use student achievement to monitor and evaluate curriculum effectiveness.

Six complete days were allocated to professional development activities for all school staff. In addition, teachers, teacher's aides, and specialist staff had significant access to additional professional development in weekly staff meeting workshops. Teachers are also actively engaged in planning their own professional development to improve their performance by driving the development of their professional development plan. Staff are guided to professional learning opportunities to fulfil and develop their skills to ensure the very best learning outcomes are available for students.

Throughout 2023 we continued the approach taken by our school leaders 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 them 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)	5 staff members including 1 teacher
NCCD Knowledge and understanding and data evaluation	3 teachers and leadership team
Review of English Scope and Sequence	3 teachers
New school site and resources	All staff
Mathematics Scope and Sequence and Content	5 staff members including 1 teacher
Mathematics curriculum and resources	3 teachers
NextSense Organisation Review	All staff
Manual Handling	All Staff
ProWise Touchscreen Professional Learning	3 teachers
Years 3-6 New English Syllabus	3 teachers
CPR Refresher	All staff members
Safeguarding Training	All Staff members
Spelling Mastery	3 teachers

New Auslan Syllabus	3 teachers
Warden Training	1 teacher
School Pedagogy - Mathematics Structure, Scope and Sequence review	3 teachers
School Pedagogy – English Structure, Foundations, Finger spelling, Reading and Explicit Teaching	3 teachers
Code of Conduct	All staff members
Wellbeing Framework	All staff members

Teacher accreditation

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach and are accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, with a recognised teaching degree.

All teachers must hold a valid NSW Working with Children Check clearance and criminal history clearance.

Student attendance

Recognising the significant impact regular attendance has on supporting our students, we emphasise the shared responsibility between parents and schools to ensure this is achieved. We foster a collaborative approach, where teachers and parents work together to promote and monitor consistent attendance. We have implemented effective measures to accurately record attendance and promptly address student absences. We have established structures and policies to ensure

strict compliance with tracking and enhancing student attendance, with all staff well-informed about the attendance policy and their role in monitoring it.

A school-wide SMS system exists that enables us to promptly address daily non-attendance. Our dedicated class teachers and administrative staff diligently record follow-up information for tracking purposes. Through these measures, we strive to maintain a high level of student attendance.

Our overall average school attendance improved this year to 86.67%. We remain firmly committed to working closely with parents and implementing strategies to improve attendance rates, ensuring that every student can actively engage in their education. The school continues to prioritise the importance of regular school attendance for the academic and personal development of our students.

Year level	Attendance rate %
Kindergarten	97.90%
Year 1	N/A
Year 2	86.78%
Year 3	90.25%
Year 4	85.7%
Year 5	83.06%
Year 6	83.80%
Whole School	86.67%

School policies

The following school policies are publicly available on the school page of 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 every term to gain ongoing information regarding the 2023 key priorities and assess the level of parent satisfaction.

In comparison to surveys that were sent in 2022, these Zoom meetings offer 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 on home and school communication. Class Dojo has allowed for positive communication between students and parents about learning and open communication between staff and parents.

We issued a wellbeing survey to 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 that staff, parents and students feel well-informed about their child's social and emotional development, and progress at school. This open communication and transparency are 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 like that I can communicate with my teachers and all the other children.
- I like that all children try to sign.
- I want to move to our new school, but I will miss North Rocks.
- My teachers help me to learn.

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, student, and parents.
Sustain whole school processes for improving English and mathematics outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current research is implemented and continually reflected upon for a K-6 approach to teaching literacy in the 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.
Improve wellbeing practices and initiatives following a consistent approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be You Consultant and Framework is utilised • Wellbeing Action Team has been established. • Wellbeing data analysed to create a wellbeing action plan. • Wellbeing action plan is shared and implemented.
Continuous development in Auslan	<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.

Assess, select and deploy a new Student Knowledge Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compass training is available for all stakeholders.• Compass is the main form of communication between school and home.
Succession planning and enterprise agreement	<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.

Financial information

Income and Expenditure
Statement - Year Ended 31
December 2023
Sign Bilingual Program

Description

\$ AUD

Income

Fees and private income	51,468
State recurrent grants	178,301
Commonwealth recurrent grants	659,249
Donations	392,103

Total Income	1,281,121
---------------------	------------------

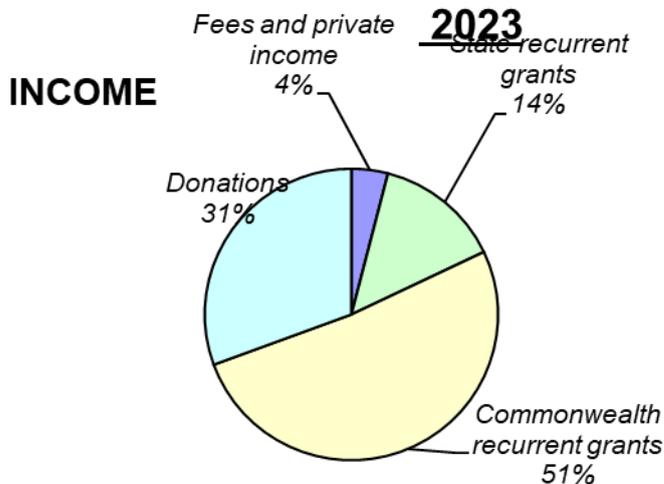
Expenditure

Salaries, allowances and related expenses	725,772
Non-salary expenses	555,348

Total Expenditure	1,281,120
--------------------------	------------------

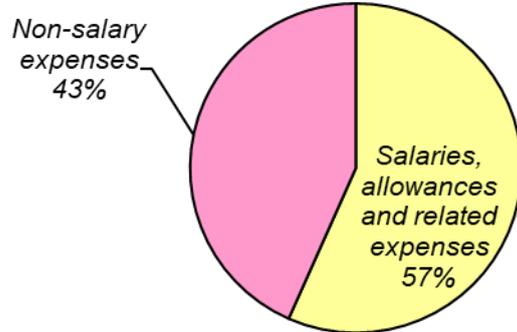
RECURRENT/CAPITAL INCOME

NextSense School Sign Bilingual Program



NextSense School Sign Bilingual 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 NESA.
- 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.

