

2024 Annual report





Message from key bodies

Chief Executive - Chris Rehn

It is an immense privilege to lead an organisation that has delivered 164 years of continuous service to the Australian community.

We made important progress in our efforts to better harvest the rich expertise across our services. This meant beginning to work in new ways, creating opportunities for greater collaboration and knowledge sharing.

In 2024 we began to explore how to share our insights on best-practice education services more broadly and reach more children with sensory disability.

We reached more than 180 children through education at our preschools, kindergartens, primary schools, and with new lead roles in school and pre-school we are continuing to increase our capacity to help best practice and help children grow as learners.

We worked extremely hard to transition our students to their new learning environment here at Macquarie and succeeded. Our students are very much at home and enjoying the custom-built spaces.

We also explored new remote models of education and worked on ways to reach more children with sensory disability. It has been quite incredible the difficult job of moving a school and preschool environment to Macquarie Park, but to advance our learning and the outcomes possible has been a great credit to our education staff.

Our work we did this year has laid the foundation for the NextSense of tomorrow. We hope you will continue to be part of our ongoing story.



Chris Rehn
Chief Executive

Head of School – Antonella Dolores

It is with great pride that I present the 2024 Annual Report for NextSense School – Blind and Deafblind Program.

This year's achievements reflect our ongoing commitment to providing an inclusive and supportive learning environment where every student can thrive.

Thanks to the dedication of our students, staff, therapists, and families, we've continued to deliver specialised programs tailored to meet each learner's unique needs. From adaptive technology to individualised education plans, our approach ensures every student is supported to reach their full potential.

Our students have shown remarkable growth, and their enthusiasm, resilience, and determination inspire us all. I am deeply grateful to our staff for their passion and to our families for their continued trust and partnership.

In Term 2 of 2024 our NextSense organisation and school moved from our North Rocks site to Macquarie University, Macquarie Park. NextSense School was officially opened by The Hon Anthony Albanese MP in August 2024. Our state-of-the-art building is custom designed for children with sensory disabilities. Our students leverage cutting-edge technology and resources to explore, develop, and expand their talents.

In 2024 we introduced a new Leader of Diverse Learning role at our school to help us identify and develop strategies for students needing extra support or extension so they can grow as learners. This role also supports our parent community with transitioning into High School.

2024 also brought about a new staff change in our Blind/Deafblind Program with a new classroom teacher and four new teacher aides who brought new ideas, a passion for teaching and learning and a wealth of experience. Our new team of staff have worked collaboratively and collectively to cultivate the expertise of the team and build capacity. This developing culture has allowed a focus on a collective purpose.

This year our focus has been to become accustomed to our new school facilities and neighbouring area, sustain whole school processes for improving literacy outcomes, improving our wellbeing practices and initiatives through the Be You framework and our organisations Incredible Colleagues Program, continue our improvement on our approach to accessibility and deploy a new student management system.

Thank you for being part of the NextSense community. Please see the following pages for more details on our 2024 achievements.



Antonella Dolores
Head of School Services

Students

2024 was a very exciting year at NextSense School! We finally moved into our brand-new school building at Macquarie University. We had been waiting a long time, and when the big day came, we were so happy and couldn't wait to explore!

When we arrived, Antonella gave us a tour. We could hear how big and bright the new school was. Some of us even said, "Wow!" out loud! It felt amazing to walk through the new building and learning spaces. We knew straight away it was going to be a great place to learn and have fun.

One of our favourite places is the playground. On the Gumtree Playground, we love playing bull rush and with a sound making balls. In the Mackenzie Playground, with support we climb on the spider web, swing on the big net, spin around, build sandcastles in the sandpit, a liberty wheelchair swing, and learn how to use our cane as we make away around the school. Playtime goes so fast because we're always having fun!

Our classrooms are quiet and have fun things, which help us learn. We have special lights and a skylight that we can control, a doorbell so we know when people are entering the space and a bathroom. We also have awesome technology like big touch screens, iPads, laptops, classroom speakers, brailers, CCTV and even lights and taps that turn on by themselves.

We also love our Sensory Room. It's a calm, fun place where we can take a break. There's a ball pit, a climbing frame, a swing, a slide, and even a dark, quiet room where we can relax. The Sensory Room helps us feel calm and ready to learn again—just like superheroes charging up!

We feel so lucky to learn in such a wonderful school with kind, supportive, and fun teachers. Every day at school is a day we look forward to, and we're grateful to be part of this amazing community.



School Features

NextSense School – Blind Deafblind Program is an independent school that caters for children from Kindergarten to Year 12 who are blind, Deafblind or low vision. The school has a strong focus and reputation for quality, innovative teaching and learning across all areas of the curriculum, as well as exploring the use of assistive technologies.

The school is designed to ensure each student has access to our high-quality curriculum in an inclusive environment. Students are educated in purpose-built learning spaces by specialist teachers who hold a Masters in Sensory Disabilities and have expertise in Braille and its instruction.

Our wholistic approach to education allows teachers to consult with occupational and speech therapists, ophthalmologists and educational psychologists. With a highly motivated and committed team, this program nurtures and supports each student to reach their goals.

Our NextSense school utilises the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). The ECC is a framework of essential skills and knowledge designed to support blind/low vision students. It complements the NSW Education Standards (NESA) curriculum by addressing the unique learning needs associated with vision loss. The ECC equips students with the necessary tools to enhance their independence, access learning, and participate fully in all areas of life. It does not replace the NESA curriculum, it serves to enrich and support it, ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all our students.

This year we explored how our new leadership roles of Leader of Pedagogy, Leader of Partnerships and Advocacy, Leader of Research and Diverse Learning teacher could collaboratively work with teachers to analyse student data, connect with external support networks and explore new research to address student needs.

How we promote respect and responsibility

Through wellbeing and pastoral care initiatives, NextSense School aspires 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.

Wellbeing programs in 2024 included:

- professional development for all staff on the Child Safeguarding Framework.
- the Code of Conduct refresher.
- the introduction of a new organisation initiative of 'Incredible Colleagues'.
- the first domain of Mentally Health Communities from the Be You framework to all members of the school community.
- creation of mentally healthy continuums for students, staff and home.
- student voice at assemblies to discuss school initiatives.
- school holiday camps.
- parent forums with allied services.
- 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. These Plans can also include the transition to high school.

2024 Priority areas for improvement

Priority	Key actions
Transition to our new home on the Macquarie University precinct.	<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.
Sustain whole school processes for improving English outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current research is implemented and continually reflected upon for a K-6 approach to teaching literacy. • Teachers and Teacher Aides are supported in implementing assistive technologies, pre-braille strategies and braille literacy. • Teachers are implementing effective structures for a literacy 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 Syllabus. • Teachers are effectively analysing data and continually implementing effective intervention programs in literacy. • Teachers take part in ongoing reflective conversations on student learning and addressing student needs through the case management approach. • Resourcing is a priority to effectively implement programs in literacy. • Throughout the year Teacher Aides receive professional development in implementing intervention programs.
Improve well-being practices and initiatives following a consistent approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be You consultant and framework are utilised. • The Wellbeing Action Team has been established. • Wellbeing data analysed to create a wellbeing action plan. • A wellbeing action plan for mentally healthy communities is shared and implemented.
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. • The Enterprise Agreement represents clear and transparent processes for staff career paths.



Outcomes and Results

Students in Year 5 participated in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The purpose of NAPLAN is to provide information to parents and schools about the achievements of students in literacy and numeracy. NAPLAN supports the school to identify a student's area of strengths and need and supports teachings in developing intervention strategies.

This year one student from Year 5 participated in NAPLAN. This student participated in Numeracy, Reading, Writing and Conventions of Language assessments with appropriate ACARA approved adjustments.

Student Outcomes in Standardised National Literacy and Numeracy Testing for NAPLAN results, please refer to My School website <https://www.myschool.edu.au/>

Post School Destination

In 2024, one Year 12 student and one Year 11 student successfully completed their studies through the Blind Deafblind Program. Following graduation, both students will engage in a variety of local day programs aimed at further developing their life skills and participating in enrichment activities.



Staffing

Staffing profile

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2024:

Total Number of staff	10
Number of fulltime teaching Staff	2
Number of Part time teaching staff	3
Number of non-teaching staff	5

The table below identifies teacher accreditation:

Level of accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	1
Provisional	1
Proficient	3
Highly Accomplished	0
Lead	0

All teachers at our school, whether they are casual, temporary, or permanent, possess the necessary approval to teach defined by the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 (NSW). Furthermore, our entire staff, including teachers, hold valid NSW Working with Children Check clearance and have undergone Criminal History clearance, so we can provide a safe and secure environment for our students.

All our teaching staff have pursued or are currently undertaking specialised teaching qualifications in addition to their initial teacher qualifications. We value the continuous professional development of our staff and actively monitor their accreditation status. We support our staff in seeking higher levels of accreditation, fostering a culture of ongoing growth and expertise within our school community.

Professional Learning

Professional learning is aligned with our school's strategic direction priorities. The ongoing professional development of each staff member is highly valued. Professional learning may be NESAC Accredited, or it may be Elective which is identified by the teacher. Professional Learning at our school can take many forms including whole day staff development days, conferences,

curriculum or disability specific and a range of professional learning programs offered by the NextSense Institute.

The school leadership team along with Head of Education and Head of Organisation Development takes responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating its staff professional learning. Staff through their professional growth plans take responsibility for their ongoing professional development. All staff have been involved in professional learning opportunities during the year relating to student learning and wellbeing.

Summary of Professional Learning

Term one staff development day involved staff receiving mandatory training for school staff requirements and in the teaching and learning of the English outcomes, review of school policies, the strategy of explicit teaching and the knowledge and understanding of Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) process.

Term two staff development days included the induction to our new site at Macquarie Park and a wellbeing day on 'Our school, our children our wellbeing'. Staff meetings continued our professional development in writing outcomes, explicit teaching and moderating our NCCD.

Term three staff development day included the development of our school wide pedagogy and our reading data analysis. Term three also included our twilight on mentally healthy communities using the Be You framework and learning modules. Our staff meetings continued our professional development in meeting the needs of our students through the English outcomes. Teachers and Teacher Aides were also trained in Braille and Pre-Braille knowledge and strategies.

Term four staff development days included our mandatory training and the teaching of reading and writing. Term four also included a twilight meeting on the continuation of the mentally healthy communities modules from the Be You framework.

Curriculum, Learning and Teaching

The school delivers an educational program aligned with the mandatory syllabuses set by the NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA) for primary education. Teachers use the syllabuses to design learning programs that ensure consistency, coherence and continuity across stages of learning. Cultivating a collaborative culture provides us with the opportunity to utilise the expertise of all staff and work towards a focussed collective purpose.

The Blind Deafblind Program utilises the ECC to complement the NESA curriculum. The ECC equips students with the necessary tools to enhance their independence and access learning,

Teachers work collaboratively, drawing on the diverse skillsets of staff across NextSense organisation to plan, program and evaluate all aspects of teaching and learning.

This year as a staff we developed our school wide pedagogy, 'Redefining what is possible: research and wellbeing empower our education community to be curious, resilient, confident and compassionate active learners and member of society'. Our new school wide pedagogy and research guide us in selecting our practice principles and our high impact teaching strategies for learning.

We continued our consolidation with the English Syllabus and how we explicitly teach within literacy. We introduced a writing matrix and spent time moderating writing samples. We also introduced a reading data wall and set whole school benchmarks. As a staff we analysed running records for a shared understanding of students' reading behaviours and encouraged a more cohesive and responsive approach to our reading programs.

Using our previous years Be You wellbeing survey results we started our professional development on Mentally Healthy Communities. We completed two of the three modules. Our first being, understanding mental health and wellbeing and our second, connecting through strong relationships. Using these two modules, the students, parents and staff created staff mentally healthy continuums for their context. These continuums are used within school and at home to provide us with a common language, understand that wellbeing is dynamic and changing and provide strategies to support you moving along the continuum.

With our new role of a Diverse learning Teacher and along with our teacher aides and teaching staff we ensured a more collaborative approach in addressing student needs and that students receive the interventions they require.



Attendance

Student Profile

The school caters for students in Years K – 6. Students attending this school come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. Our school has eight students enrolled, two boys and six girls with 62.5% of our students coming from a language background other than English.

Student attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for 2024 was 91.25%. Attendance rates disaggregated by year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance Percentage Rates by Year Group

Kinder garten	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
100	N/A	70	N/A	N/A	95	96.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	98

Managing Student Non-Attendance

Ensuring regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between parents and school, as we recognise the positive impact it has on supporting our students. We foster a collaborative approach where teachers and parents work together to promote and monitor regular attendance.

We have implemented effective measures to accurately record attendance and promptly address student absences. The school has established structures and policies to ensure strict compliance in tracking and improving student attendance, and all staff are well-informed about the attendance policy and their role in monitoring student attendance.

The school utilises the Compass Education School Management System that enables us to promptly address daily non-attendance. Our class teachers and administrative staff diligently record follow-up information for tracking purposes. It is through these measures that we strive to maintain a high level of student attendance.

We remain committed to working closely with parents and implementing strategies to improve attendance rates and ensure that every student can fully engage in their education.

The school will continue to prioritise the importance of regular school attendance for the academic and personal development of our students.

The school rigorously implements policies and procedures for the management of nonattendance. All cases of unsatisfactory attendance and unexplained part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly.



School Policies

The following school policies are publicly available on the website

- [Enrolment policy](#)
- [Child protection policy \(Safeguarding policy\)](#)
- [Anti-bullying policy](#)
- [Discipline policy](#)
- [Complaints policy \(Feedback policy\)](#)



Stakeholder Satisfaction

The views and contributions of all stakeholders in education—including parents, students, and teachers—are not only appreciated but actively encouraged. Their input plays a vital role in shaping strategies aimed at enhancing student outcomes. At the heart of our approach is the belief that each stakeholder brings a valuable and unique perspective. This year, the school has taken proactive measures to strengthen and maintain this collaborative process.

Parents Satisfaction

In 2024 parents participated in online parent forums each term, were invited to be part of a NextSense client survey and were asked for feedback regarding our Individual Education Plan process. At each online parent forum parents had the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns for discussion and discernment. Our main discussions included our educational priorities for 2024, our move to our new school site and new processes and procedures for our new site. The feedback from our surveys highlighted how pleased parents were in addressing student learning goals, how amazing our new purpose-built facility supported student learning, how they felt welcomed and that a 2024 school highlight was our first sensory disabilities athletics carnival.

Students

Student opinions were collected through a variety of methods. Informally, their voices were included in different aspects of school life, while in classrooms, teachers regularly gauged student satisfaction through class meetings. School assemblies have a dedicated segment where a school problem is voiced, and the students voice their opinions and solutions. The students provided ongoing feedback with the new school building and creating the rules and responsibilities for our new site.

Teachers

The 'PeoplePulse' survey instrument was offered to all staff in 2024. The survey measured engagement. Results from the survey will be used to identify strategic changes that will improve our culture, trust and transparency. The results detailed that teachers are engaged with the vision of NextSense, the families we partner with and being able to enhance the lives of students and families who have hearing loss. Teachers believed that communication and feedback has improved and there are more collaborative opportunities. Teachers also enjoy their new working environment and how it supports student learning.

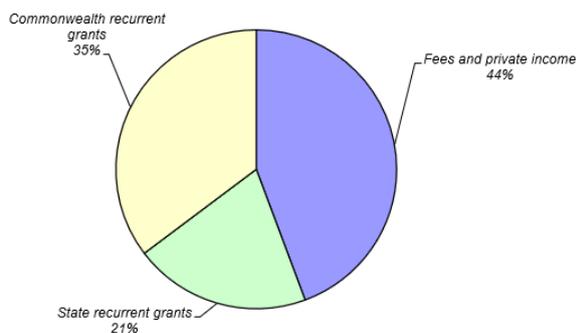
Financial Information

School financial information for the 2024 year is detailed below:

Income and Expenditure Statement - Year Ended 31 December 2024		
NextSense School		
Description	\$ AUD	
Income		
Fees and private income	574,040	44%
State recurrent grants	263,709	20%
Commonwealth recurrent grants	456,937	35%
Total Income	1,294,686	100%
Expenditure		
Salaries, allowances and related expenses	713,444	55%
Non-salary expenses	581,242	45%
Total Expenditure	1,294,686	100%

NextSense School 2024

INCOME



NextSense School 2024

EXPENDITURE

