



Forestville
MONTESSORI School
Thriving beyond...

2020 Annual Report

Photo: An art submission by an FMS Graduate for the 2020 Annual Art Auction.



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“Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war.”

Dr Maria Montessori

ABOUT FMS

Message from the Chair and the Principal



Photo: Chris Rehn and Denice Scala

2020 SNAPSHOT

Connection was our theme. Little did we know at the beginning of the school year how important this theme would become. We walked quietly and normally into the new academic year in January 2020. It evolved as a year like no other.

“Only time will tell how this health outbreak will unfold.” Denice wrote in the 2019 Annual Report.

That quietness and normality was not to last for long as the unfolding global pandemic was to change our lives forever.

SUCCESS HIGHLIGHTS

We continued to enhance our exemplary Montessori education whilst also focusing on the rollout of our strategic plan, *Beyond Today*, with the following initiatives:

- In response to the ever-changing world we live in, All Day Montessori (ADM for Pre-School students age 3, 4 and up to school age) was a significant new offering introduced in Term 4, 2019. With the success of Phase 1 we introduced Phase 2 in Term 4 2020. The enrolment numbers grew with 39% of students enrolled in ADM by Term 4 2020.
- Designed and produced a series of FMS Learning from Home packs packed full of Montessori ideas to keep learning during lockdown engaging, fun and challenging for our Lower (6-9 Years) and Upper Primary (9-12 Years) students.
- Produced top ideas and starter packs for parents to assist with Learning from Home for our Toddlers and Pre-School (3-6 Years) students.
- Produced a Learning from Home Handbook for parents
- Produced ‘The Gift of Learning’ videos as a Christmas gift for families who, due to COVID, had a year of not observing in classrooms.
- Continued to strengthen our internal student transition processes.
- In the absence of school tours, introduced online prospective parent conversations-personal calls or zoom meetings with the Principal to talk about your child and the school
- Parent teacher conferences moved to an online platform
- Increased social media presence by 128% on Facebook and 718% on Instagram
- Produced 42 blogs to further enhance the impact of the FMS offering
- With agility, kept abreast of the Government and Health changes to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our students and staff
- Remained open for all Essential workers when NSW Government announced a Stay at Home option for students
- Monitored attendance after lockdown with 82% returning by week 3 in Term 2 demonstrating a strong confidence from parents in the school’s approach.
- The Community Team offered zoom get togethers to keep our families connected.
- The Community Team moved the Annual Art Auction online and raised \$10,000
- Designed the new Pre-School (3-6 Years) play equipment and outdoor learning space with installation commencing in December 2020.
- Prudent financial management to ensure sustainability of all operations during uncertain times.

“Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavour always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.”

Dr Maria Montessori

2020, a year that stopped the world from taking every day small pleasures for granted. 2020, a year that saw the air cleaner as the aeroplanes stopped flying. 2020, a year where we started to see how much we must be at one with the planet. 2020, a year when we genuinely had to rethink many areas of our lives like our attitudes, our compassion, our priorities. 2020, a year where we started to see that our future cannot be like our past. 2020, the year our students thrived beyond lockdown.

This year saw us hosting the end of year performance in the local hall. With a COVID safe plan, we were at least able to host our Graduate parents. A recording of the farewell to our Graduates and musical performances by our Lower (6-9 Years) and Upper Primary (9-12 Years) was later distributed to all families to enjoy in the comfort of their lounge rooms at home. The words from the song prepared for our Graduates continue to echo:

*“I will learn and I will grow
Feed my mind
Nourish my soul
I will learn and I will grow
Out into this world I must go.”*

We were grateful to be able to host, albeit much smaller than normal, a celebration of our 2020 Graduates. Sue Birdsall, one of the six Founders of Forestville Montessori School often says with passion: “The world needs Montessori children.”

She is so right. The world needs thinkers, the world needs people with great respect for others. The world needs learners who will use their imagination to thrive, to adapt, to create. The world needs people who will be learners for life. The world needs peacemakers. The world needs people who respect animals. The world needs people who will care for our planet. The world needs our Forestville Montessori school graduates and we know they will go well as ‘Out into the world you must go.’

Schools were finding out what was happening in Sydney during the pandemic from media bulletins. No sooner had we distributed one piece of communication to families than another directive was sent from the State or Federal governments and we were back at the drawing board with

more changes. Everyone's safety was paramount and from the beginning of the crisis we held true to the Government and the health advice to inform decision making.

APPRECIATION

‘One thing we do know for certain is the positive power of a strong community in a crisis. FMS has a community that goes beyond strong and whatever happens, we will be there for our families.’

Denice Scala, 2019 Annual Report.

It is often said that it is easy to steer a ship in safe harbour but oh so more challenging in rough seas. 2020 was a year of rough seas but steer ship FMS we did and we landed safely back at shore by the end of 2020. This is testament to the collaborative, spirited effort of all concerned; staff, parents, the Community Team and our Board Directors.

All in all, after a rollercoaster year, we stepped into the summer holidays with renewed hope for the future and gratitude.

FMS has a community that goes beyond strong, and it showed in so many special ways during 2020.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

‘Of all things, love is the most potent.’

Dr Maria Montessori

We hope you enjoy reading this Annual Report and encourage you to contact the school on (02) 9452 2044 or visit our website www.forestvillemontessori.nsw.edu.au to find out more.

Follow us on social media.



Denice Scala
Principal

Chris Rehn
Chair, Board of Directors



Our Story

OUR IDENTITY

We are a Montessori School educating children for life and for peace.

OUR VISION

To be the launchpad for every child to lead a fulfilling life.

OUR MISSION

To provide an exemplary Montessori education for all children by:

- Presenting an enriched, intentionally prepared environment that embodies Montessori principles
- Nurturing individual growth and development
- Fostering independence, self-discipline, personal and social responsibility
- Enabling natural curiosity to thrive and develop into a love of learning
- Designing learning that promotes a child's own explorations, discoveries, imagination and creativity
- Making positive contributions to the world beyond school.

OUR VALUES

Our core values inform all that we do from our day to day practices to our decision making and long-term thinking, at every level of our school.

Respect: Acknowledging, accepting and celebrating others' differences

Relationships: Bonding with others, conducting ourselves with dignity and sincerity

Integrity: Knowing right from wrong, taking responsibility for our actions

Scholarship: Competent, confident and smart thinking that leads to empowered, capable doing

Citizenship: Seeking ways to contribute to society locally and globally

Community: Sharing a sense of belonging by connecting and collaborating

From our Community Team

“There is a great sense of community within the Montessori classroom, where children of differing ages work together in an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competitiveness. There is respect for the environment and for the individuals within it, which comes through experience of freedom within the community.”

Dr Maria Montessori

For the FMS community, 2020 started with a bang! We commenced the year with our annual Welcome BBQ with a great turnout from families from birth all the way to 9-12.

In early March we held our inaugural Wine and Cheese Night, an event just for parents, it was a fabulous evening made more special when just a week later Sydney was in lockdown and 2020 turned into a year that many of us won't forget in a hurry.

With Covid restrictions in place, our Community Team meetings became a little different as all our usual events were put on hold while we waited to see what would happen.

In Term 3 things started to look more promising and despite events still being off the table we focused our efforts on our amazing teachers and staff and FMS and organised some personalised gifts to coincide with World Teachers Day at the beginning of Term 4.

We also kept our Annual Art Auction alive, and the children once again produced the most incredible artworks that were auctioned in an online only event in Term 4. We couldn't hold a school run event for the Art Auction, but we had some lovely parents host an evening in their homes and with a Zoom call to connect us all, it was all very 2020! The Art Auction was a great success, and we finished the year raising \$10,000 (less the cost of holding the auction and creating the artworks).

Throughout the year we were able to continue our weekly organic fruit and vegetable boxes which continue to raise money for the seed to plate program that our children enjoy all year round. A huge thank you to Anjali Sivapalan and the other parents who volunteered throughout the year to keep this going.

We're all looking forward to a more eventful year in 2021 where we can finally be together again and celebrate 40 years of FMS!

Sal Smith, Community Team Leader



From our Students

A collection of voices from 2020 Upper Primary graduating students:

“I like all my subjects and the way we get to learn. We get to do interesting work and are challenged in our thinking. Nothing is every too easy or if it is, you get to move to the next level, and I like that.” “Our teachers are really good, and I love the materials. It's the materials that help you remember things and make you enjoy learning.”

Ria Aung-Thein

“I've made so many great friends. We're a small group but we're really close, and really respect each other.” “My mum and dad sent me to FMS because it's a great school. You learn more about how to manage your time, do really interesting things and it's just so much fun.”

Maree Barbara

“We learn faster, we go further, the teacher guides you into more advanced stuff so that's going to really help me in high school.” “I have a preference for mythology and action books. But I've enjoyed the activities like creating characters and designing a new community where we had to imagine that the climate is mild, wet winters with warm, dry summers. We could make up our own rules like how long school would be open or what laws we would invent.”

Jade Mantica

“The teachers are really nice at FMS because they encourage you to take a subject you are excited about and go even further in your thinking. You have a lot of freedom to learn in your own way. It's a balance because our teachers keep telling us that with freedom comes responsibility.”

Marlin Olsen

“I remember the feeling of having freedom to learn new things and unlike my last school, we didn't have to spend so much time lining up for everything!” “When I started it was very different, and I liked it instantly. We could choose where we sat to do our work and I had a lot more choice about what and how I wanted to learn. It made me love FMS right away. We learnt very quickly that with freedom comes responsibility.” “The best part is the teachers gives you a lesson when you are ready. You never have to wait until the group is ready to advance, you get to advance you when you are ready. There's no waiting around and wasting time.”

Nishabel Rehn

“The teachers adjust the lessons for us. We have more time to learn without pressure. I have enjoyed using the materials as they help me to understand different ideas. I like that we have different ages in our classroom. I can work with my friends who are younger than me. We get to share ideas, work on projects together and have a good time. I also like that FMS doesn't give us individual grades because it doesn't make learning scary.”

Almos Szarka-Kovacs

“Friendly people, that's one of the best things about FMS. All the children and all the staff are friendly. It makes me feel so comfortable being here.” “I really like having a choice – it is motivating! I like that the teachers don't make everyone do the same thing, and that they don't make us rely on them. We have to be independent.”

Ella Williams

Students at FMS

By the end of Term 4, 2020, the school has approximately 141 students in total from our Birth to 3 and Pre-Primary (0-6 Years) to the Lower and Upper Primary (6-12 Years). By the end of Term 4, there were 65 students in Primary (5-12 years), comprising 26 girls and 39 boys. FMS students come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, including many with language backgrounds other than English. Students with diverse learning needs are fully integrated, accessing all aspects of our programs.

FMS operates a Birth-3 Program from 3 months of age, a Parent Toddler program from 18 months, a Toddler Program from 2-3 years and a Pre-Primary Program for 3-6-year-old.

The school attracts Pre-Primary students from its Parent Toddler and Toddler Program, and Primary students from its three Pre-Primary Program classes.

The school follows an authentic Montessori philosophy and practice of education, attracting families who wish to educate their children within this philosophy and methodology.

Our students mainly reside in the Northern Beaches and Upper and Lower North Shore of Sydney, coming from the following postcodes, in order: 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2071, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2090, 2092, 2093, 2095, 2096, 2099, 2100, 2154, 2570.

During 2020, we welcomed international students from France.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE FOR 2020

Average attendance for 2020:
Infant program 92%
Preschool 88%
Lower Primary 85%
Upper Primary 85% (Total Primary 85%)

Student Attendance Term 1, 2020 – the average attendance in Term 1 was 73%. Prior to COVID-19 lockdown, the average attendance was 92% (from 29/01/2020 to 13/03/2020). Student Attendance Term 2, 2020 – by Term 2, week 3 2020 average attendance was 82% and continued to rise in subsequent weeks.

MANAGEMENT OF NON-ATTENDANCE

Absences from students currently enrolled at the School will be identified and recorded in a consistent manner using the Minister's codes by the delegated staff member. Attendance is monitored daily by teachers and trained administration staff and recorded in digital records (ESR) or hard copy against student records.

The Principal may exercise the Ministers delegation under section 25 of the Education Act in relation to granting and cancelling a certificate of exemption from being enrolled and attending school in certain prescribed circumstances.

REGISTER OF DAILY ATTENDANCE

The School maintains a register of daily attendance of all enrolled students which records information about each enrolled student in line with the Education Act and NESAs requirements. Staff entering the details in the register of daily attendance enter compliant codes that align to the Education Act and AIS accordingly. The register of daily attendance is retained for a period of seven (7) years after the last entry was made.

Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing

Performance on NAPLAN is documented on the My School website. Many FMS parents have consciously opted out of standardised testing for their children.



Assessment in a Montessori School

“Do not tell them how to do it. Show them how to do it and do not say a word. If you tell them, they will watch your lips move. If you show them, they will want to do it themselves.”

Maria Montessori

When it comes to assessments, Montessori teachers don't rely on standardised tests; they rely on the power of observation. They have notebooks brimming with evidence of what their students have mastered, need more support with, and are curious about. They are constantly recording what they notice children working on, how that work is being executed, and ideas they might have in anticipation of a child's next steps.

assidere: (Latin) to sit beside

Montessori teachers exemplify the Latin meaning of assessment, *assidere*, which means to sit beside. **Assessment** in a Montessori school means to sit beside the learner.

They sit beside a child and determine exactly what they know about a wide range of content areas.



FMS Teachers are Highly Qualified

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MONTESSORI TEACHER?

What, exactly, is the role of the Montessori teacher? How is it so different from that of any other teachers?

Sometimes it's easiest to begin by explaining what a Montessori teacher *isn't*.

A Montessori teacher is less like the traditional idea of an instructor, and more like a gentle guide. They don't consider it their job to give a child information. Rather, they lead children in the general direction and give them the tools they need to find the information themselves.

Maria Montessori once said, "The greatest sign of success for a teacher... is to be able to say, 'The children are now working as if I did not exist.'"

MONTESSORI TEACHERS CULTIVATE INDEPENDENCE

In a Montessori classroom, rather than seeing a teacher at the front of the classroom giving the same lesson to every child, the teacher will be working quietly with individual children or small groups. While that is happening, the rest of the children are free to spend their time doing the work that calls to them. A Montessori teacher works hard to create structures that allow children to be independent and to trust themselves as learners.

One large part of what a Montessori teacher does is to intentionally prepare a classroom environment that is developmentally appropriate, is inviting to children, and supports them on their journey to work independently. This environment is constantly changing in tiny ways as the teacher notices new and evolving needs of the students.

MONTESSORI TEACHERS ARE TRAINED TO THINK LIKE SCIENTISTS

Parents should know that Montessori teachers are exceptionally well trained. Most have recognised Montessori credentials in addition to their university degrees. Here at Forestville Montessori School, all of our teachers hold one of the most highly regarded Montessori credentials: an Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) Diploma.

To be a certified AMI Teacher means a teacher:

- **Understands** child development and acts as a guide to help children find their natural path
- **Creates** a hands-on, self-paced, collaborative and joyful classroom
- **Transforms** lives by implementing the principles of Montessori education
- **Believes** in education that meets the child's physical, emotional and intellectual development
- **Guides** children to enthusiastically follow their interests and passions whilst developing strong academic skills, leadership, self-discipline, responsibility and independence
- **Trains** rigorously and has graduated with a set of high-quality skills
- **Connects** to a global network across numerous countries with trainers and teachers to continuously develop their craft.

Montessori teacher certification programs are intensive and demanding; one might compare them to the equivalent of another university degree. These training programs don't just teach Montessori educators how to use the specialised materials; there is extensive coursework about Montessori philosophy, child development, and integrating the arts.

All of our Teachers at Forestville Montessori School hold Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) Diplomas, which means that we have a consistently high-quality approach to teaching from Birth to age 12, with all of our teachers speaking the same language about child development and pedagogy.

MONTESSORI TEACHERS THINK LONG-TERM

Students remain with their teachers for a three-year cycle. This means that teachers have the unique ability to consider the big picture when working with students. There is a natural tendency to allow the children to genuinely learn at their own pace. Getting to know a child and their family well over the course of a few years really supports this approach.

MONTESSORI TEACHERS ARE OFTEN CALLED 'GUIDES' ...

... and for good reason. While children in Montessori classrooms have an abundance of choice in their educational pursuits, Montessori is based on the idea of 'freedom within limits'. It's the Montessori teacher's job to carefully craft those limits. Children rely on having a certain amount of structure in place. This gives them comfort and a safe place



in which they can take risks and try new things. Montessori teachers set boundaries and then carefully help students navigate within them.

What if your child loves to read but tends to avoid mathematics? Their Montessori teacher will find ways to ensure the mathematics still gets done. Sometimes this involves a gentle discussion with a child about time management skills, priorities, or setting goals. We call these discussions student conferences. Sometimes the teacher will find a way to integrate the child's interests into the less desirable work. Sometimes all it takes is a minor change in the environment. Montessori teachers give children freedom, but they assist children in finding their way to success in this environment.

Montessori teachers value independence, self-reliance, and intrinsic motivation.

They also value 'grace and courtesy' – cooperation, kindness, and strength in community.



Professional Learning 2019

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	STAFF PARTICIPATING
Model Montessori United Nations Teacher Coordinator	1
An introduction to Adolescence with the International Montessori Training Institute (35 hours) Director of Training- Laurie Ewert Krockner	1
Seemi- Trillium Montessori Special Needs subscription	7
"You Can Teach It All" – Managing the Elementary Montessori Curriculum Course (30 hours) Michael Dorer – The Montessori Foundation	1
First Aid- online course. Practical postponed due to COVID	All staff
CPR-postponed due to COVID	All staff
ALS annual online Child Protection Course	All staff
Bushfire Emergency Training Update	1
Teacher Accreditation supervision	3
ACECQA Quality Support Training Program	2
AMI Training Trainers Course Assistants to Infancy level	1
Teacher Training Australia Autism: <i>Differentiating For Students on the Autism Spectrum</i>	1
Reading and Spelling Gains with Systematic Phonics	1
Expanding Emotional Intelligence in a Learning Setting	1
Working Memory & its Impact on Learning	1
Montessori School Observations-postponed due to COVID	0

The average expenditure on professional learning per staff member in 2020 was \$745.54 which was lower than average in previous years as many courses were cancelled.

TEACHER ACCREDITATION AUTHORITY (TAA)

FMS has engaged the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) as its Teacher Accreditation Authority for Proficient Teacher. By way of background:

- NESA has approved AISNSW as a Teacher Accreditation Authority to make Accreditation Decisions in accordance with Part 4 of the ACT
- The School may only engage teachers who have gained Accreditation
- The school has requested AISNSW to provide Accreditation Services
- AISNSW has appointed authorised Delegates to make Accreditation Decisions
- An agreement sets out the terms on which AISNSW will provide the Accreditation Services to the school through ISTAA.

WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

SCHOOL STAFF 2020	
Teaching staff	22
Full-time equivalent teaching staff	14.5
Non-teaching staff	6
Full-time equivalent non-teaching staff	4.9

There are no Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff.

TEACHER ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

Teachers at FMS are highly qualified, dedicated and committed educators. The teaching attendance rate is high at 97.65%, which is similar to previous years. FMS is known as a school that retains its excellent staff. Every year, of course, it is natural for some staff to move to new positions, make changes in their lives, achieve promotions or retire.

LEVEL OF ACCREDITATION	NUMBER OF TEACHERS
Conditional	0
Provisional	3
Proficient Teacher	6
Highly Accomplished (voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Total number of teachers	9

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

(Types of qualifications & Montessori qualifications)

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	NUMBER OF ASSISTANTS
Bachelor Degree from an Australian University or overseas equivalent	9	3
Masters Degree from Australian University or overseas equivalent	1	0
Diploma qualified from an Australian Higher Education Institution or overseas equivalent	6	5
Certificate IV or III from an Australian Higher Education Institution or overseas equivalent	5	6
Montessori Qualifications – AMI Diploma or equivalent	6	2

STAFF PERFORMANCE AND REVIEW

Teachers share a significant responsibility in preparing young people to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Both national and international evidence indicates that a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on students, with a broad consensus that teacher quality is amongst the most important factor influencing student success. Regular staff reflection is therefore an ongoing part of our review.

We seek for staff to reflect in an open and ongoing way on their professional responsibilities and performance, both towards their students and colleagues. Work continued on mapping the Australian Professional standards for Teachers with the Montessori Assessment Playbook instrument designed for teacher appraisal.

Ordinarily our educators would regularly visit other Montessori schools to participate in observations however, that was not possible during 2020 due to COVID.

STAFF BENEFITS

FMS is known as a great place to work. Superior working conditions for staff mean that we continue to retain great teachers and attract talented educators when we are seeking to recruit. We actively strive to recruit educators with the highest standard of Montessori credentials.

The administration team is structured to ensure teaching staff are provided with support that reduces administrative loads in favour of time to plan and teach. Assistant educators work in every classroom from Birth to 12 Years, providing ongoing support to prepare the environment and work with children.

In striving to provide benefits for our staff, we offer:

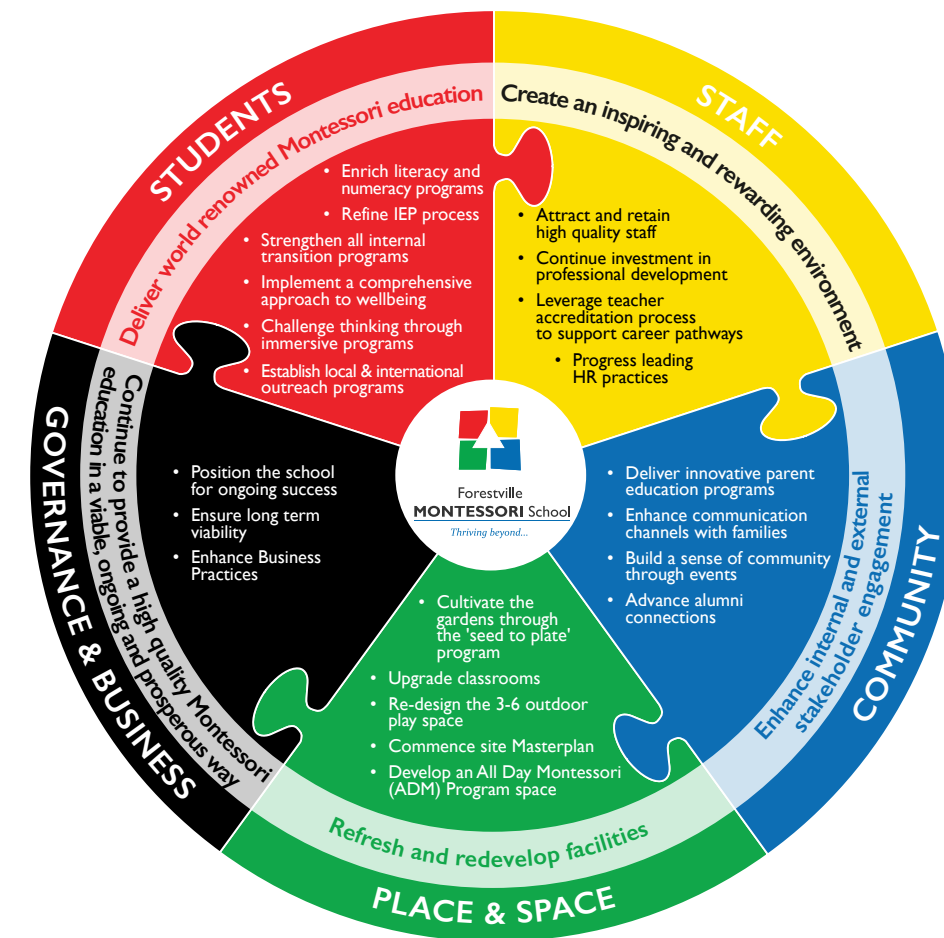
- An attractive award rate that has seen year-on-year percentage increases above inflation
- Access to flexible remuneration packaging
- Human Resources practices to support different needs
- Complimentary, confidential Employee Assistance Counselling services
- Negotiated leave, long service leave provisions, external observations at other Montessori schools and regular social events.

Thank you to the FMS staff who work tirelessly to see that our students are thriving beyond.

ACHIEVEMENTS, HIGHLIGHTS & NEXT STEPS

“The education of even a small child, therefore, does not aim at preparing him for school, but for life.”

Dr Maria Montessori



Beyond Today is the title of our strategic plan, outlining five priorities from 2018-2023. 2020 saw us taking significant steps to achieving our goals.

Central to everything we do is our Montessori philosophy and our commitment to delivering world-renowned Montessori education. This is strengthened by our vision and values. Pivotal to FMS is our vibrant community.

The strategic plan is organised under five key priorities:



Tracking our progress: current priorities and improvements already underway

STUDENTS

Deliver world renowned Montessori education

“We do not want complacent students but eager ones.”

Dr Maria Montessori

FOCUS	ACTION
Inclusive education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent Classroom continued to offer families a 'look inside' the Montessori environment. Updated to include reporting • Checklist developed to strengthen internal transition programs
Student wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URSTRONG Program implementation continues • Sporting Schools Grant received in Terms 2, 3 & 4. Money used to employ a professional Judo coach and purchase sports specific equipment for Table Tennis, Athletics, Badminton and Tennis. Grant assisted in the delivery of 6 different sports chosen by the children for the before-school sports program. • “Challenge at home videos” created by the children at school during COVID restrictions for children who were learning for home. • Regular check-ins with families during lockdown • Yoga and Wellbeing Wednesday introduced during lockdown
Challenging thinking: Designing and introducing immersive programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadly due to COVID, almost all of our planned activities were postponed • Throughout the year students worked together to care for the chickens, gardens, and other endeavours to support FMS initiatives and raise funds for various causes. The students look at the net costs and track the profits of produce sold. Money raised is used to offset the costs of the production of goods. Students are helped to make decisions on how to reinvest or spend their profits.
Citizenship endeavours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish local outreach programs • Partnering with the Montessori community to offer international outreach experience • Collaborating with Montessori schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local outreach in partnership with Forestville Sub-Branch of the Returned and Services Leagues of Australia to provide Christmas gifts to Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre continued for a second year • Combined Montessori Sports Day postponed due to COVID • International outreach to Thailand in liaison with Thailand Montessori Association postponed due to COVID



GIVING YOUR CHILD THE WIDE VIEW OF THE WORLD

Experiences of relationships and participation in communities contribute to children's belonging, being and becoming. From birth, children experience living and learning with others in a range of communities. Through the primary and secondary years, this is strengthened by children developing a positive sense of identity and experiencing respectful, responsive relationships. This strengthens children's interest and skills in being and becoming active contributors to their world.

Over time, the variety and complexity of ways in which children connect and participate with others increases. When we create environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships with people and the environment, children respond accordingly. Children's connectedness and different ways of belonging with people, country and communities helps them to learn ways of being which reflect the values, traditions and practices of their families and communities. Over time, this learning transforms the ways they interact with others.

We believe that through our school we can reach out to the local and international communities to bring to life our core goals of Respect, Relationships, Integrity, Scholarship, Citizenship, and Community.

“An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking; it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live.”

Maria Montessori:
Education and Peace, ch. 3, p. 30



STAFF

Create an inspiring and rewarding environment

FOCUS	ACTION
Widening professional development opportunities offered to staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onsite professional development courses were postponed due to COVID. Staff undertook online courses All primary staff involved in designing NESA units of work aligned with Montessori practices Work commenced on designed a teacher reflection tool that aligns the Montessori Assessment Playbook with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
Leverage Teacher Accreditation process to support career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School engaged AIS consultant to work with staff in the process of obtaining accreditation.
Continuing investment in Montessori training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsored 1 Pre-School (3-6 Years) educator to complete AMI Diploma-postponed due to COVID, will recommence in 2021



OUR COMMUNITY

Enhance internal and external stakeholder engagement

FOCUS	ACTION
Seeing an increase in parent attendance at events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, events on school grounds were limited during the year.
Connecting with the local community to increase involvement and 'front of mind' school of choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our social media and outdoor marketing became the main way to reach prospective families within the local community.
Delivering innovative and comprehensive parent education programs including exploring more family-friendly ways to offer parent education about the benefits of a continuous Montessori education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed the 'Learning from Home' packs, which were available to all parents both internal and external. Used as a way to show prospective parents what a Montessori education includes and also were valuable resources for our students who were home learning.
Introducing a fresh selection of community events aimed at expressing our gratitude for our parents and their contribution to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All events usually held on school grounds did not go ahead as per normal.
Strengthening alumni connections through introducing Alumni Q&A sessions for current families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made contact with some key Alumni and planned activities that would take place in 2021 – the 40th Anniversary for FMS.
Enhancing the communication channels with parents; including introducing new ways to strengthen student transition between cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to promote weekly e-newsletters and the FMS Blog. Internal transition policy continued to work well.
Expanding communication channels to parents by increasing the number and quality of parent interaction points; increasing information provided; and restructuring parent/teacher conference days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to send the weekly newsletter to all parents. Parent/teacher conferences were held via zoom.
Designing and launching a new website helping to increase our reach and grow our reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website was a main communication channel, used to house the 'Learning from Home' resource packs. Any COVID updates relevant for our families was updated on the 'COVID-19 Update' section on the website.
Developing a comprehensive marketing plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted the new 3 Day Pre-Primary Program for 3 and 4 year olds Continued the outdoor marketing campaign aimed at increasing awareness of FMS at high traffic areas
Increasing our social media presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to increase our social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, with more sponsored posts, expanding our reach capacity Continued to see a growth in our engagements across Facebook and Instagram

OUR PLACE AND SPACE

Refresh and redevelop facilities

“The child should live in an environment of beauty.”

Dr Maria Montessori

FOCUS	ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seamless indoor and outdoor learning Creating a place of beauty Continuing to enhance the gardens, food growing and sustainability practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-School (Years 3-6) outdoor play space was designed and building commenced in December 2020 Composting continues and was increased
Long term planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commenced work to scope upgrading of physical assets and reconfiguration Full maintenance schedule scoped for next 3 years



OUR GOVERNANCE AND BUSINESS

Ensure FMS continues to provide a high-quality Montessori education in a viable, ongoing and prosperous way

“Imagination does not become great until human beings use it to create.”

Dr Maria Montessori

FOCUS	ACTION
Positioning the school for ongoing success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced All Day Montessori program, offering three full days to 3 and 4 year old students
Business practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing focus on continuous improvement in processes and systems to improve operational excellence



TRANSPARENT CLASSROOM

Designed by Montessorians for Montessorians, this online portal is a winner with staff and parents alike. Staff spend less time on administration and more time on planning their presentations and students' learning. Parents can see at a glance what their children are learning, who they are working with and what's next for their ongoing development. Now implemented across all programs from age 3-12 Years. Next phase will see implementation for our Toddler Program.

Educating children for life and for peace

“Character education cannot be taught. It comes from experience and not from explanation.”

Dr Maria Montessori

The Montessori method fosters respect and responsibility as well as social awareness in children. The critical three-year cycle and the integration of children with special learning needs offer a microcosm of society within which children have the opportunity to develop skills essential for interacting in the wider community. The environment promotes individuality, independence, interdependence, awareness of and consideration for the needs of other human beings, which leads to the appreciation of life.

“When children come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength.”

Dr Maria Montessori

As it was not possible to offer excursions due to COVID, staff offered alternative in-house programs and a suite of Learning from Home packs for all age groups.



What people say

"Thank you very for your wonderful work. We really appreciate all the communication that has been sent and we really value what you put in place on the website to helps us home schooling our kids.

Thanks for being such an amazing team, we feel privileged to be part of FMS community."

FMS Parent

"I just wanted to pass on a huge thank you the Birth-3 class for being such amazing teachers, they have helped to shape my own Montessori methods at home. I also have to commend Denice on her timely and informative emails. She has done such a great job in keeping us informed, equipped and calm amongst this unusual and unsettling time. I love her emails and all the resources! Thank you to you all."

FMS Parent

"I just wanted to say thank you for the amazing job you and the team at FMS are doing at this time. I always look forward to reading your beautifully crafted emails and all the communication and help we get from you and from my daughter's teacher – it is so helpful.

The school is feeling like a very supportive community and the resources being put in place now are going to be invaluable."

FMS Parent

"I admire your leadership, clarity and strength at FMS - especially in these surreal times. I appreciate their constant support for the wellbeing of the staff, families and school. We are grateful for all the 'behind the scenes' work going on at this time. We send much love and encouragement to you, the teachers, staff and everyone involved in helping our community stay calm and safe."

FMS Parent

"I just wanted to take a moment to thank you and all the staff for working so hard, and in such good faith with us, the families of all the children at FMS, during these extraordinary times. I see anxiety on most adult faces that I pass in the course of a day, and I'm sure that is shared by you all. But there is simply no hint of it in my children beyond what I would expect with so many small but necessary changes being made to school protocols. I take my hat off to you all for your courage and calmness."

FMS Parent

"I wanted to congratulate Denice and the team for having such a fantastic communications strategy across the board. I'm very impressed with how FMS handles parent communication in general so you and the team should feel very proud of yourselves."

FMS Parent

What our staff say

"I have always received a nice welcome from the FMS family since I started. You could feel the genuine community spirit that is embedded in the curriculum and ripple throughout engagements in the school community. It has been a pleasure to get to know the families and the get into the community spirit. It is a blessing to be part of a community of like-minded families where in you can get the support and understanding from all involved. You can see the effects of the Montessori philosophy in the happy countenance you see with all the confident children you meet. The school has been able to keep an ongoing Montessori atmosphere in the school."

Emma Elegado-Kotulic, Director Toddler Program, Coordinator Birth-6 Program

"I love working at FMS as it's a harmonious community where staff, children and parents all come together for the good of the school and each other.

I am very fortunate to be able to specialise in my favourite subjects, visual arts and sport and even more fortunate to teach them at a school with so much flexibility to work on projects and activities that enable children to develop their interests and greater explore their strengths. I always feel supported by other members of staff, the leadership team and Board and am grateful that I am given the opportunity to take my professional development in the direction that is needed to best suit my role and growth as a teacher."

Tamlin Howard, Sports Teacher, 9-12 Visual Arts Teacher, Class Assistant

years now and begun working as an assistant and now a teacher in Upper Primary 9-12. I have been fortunate enough to have worked across the Lower & Upper Primary 6-12 classrooms and even the Birth-6 environments. Forestville Montessori School has taught me so many incredible things about the Montessori approach and the children's overall development and learning. I feel so passionate about the philosophy and the greatest gift is to work with children every day and to guide them in their journey. It has been a privilege to work with the children, families and staff over the years and I am excited to continue to be a part of this amazing community for years to come."

Lauren Wright, FMS 9-12 Program Director



"I have been at Forestville Montessori School for 6

OUR POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ENROLMENT

Forestville Montessori School welcomes children of all backgrounds and abilities. In the spirit of Maria Montessori, we provide child-relevant programs to meet diversity, need and stage of development from 18 months to 12 years old. We are a non-selective, non-denominational school.

In 2019 we updated our enrolment policy to reflect the philosophical foundations of the school and appropriate pathways for every child. Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis.

There are no pre-requisites for continuing enrolment, provided school fees are paid and enrolment conditions are being met.

Our enrolment terms and conditions are available on our website.

A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

FMS wishes to promote a learning environment where teachers and students should be mutually supportive. Respect is one of our core values and we expect students and teachers to respect each other and not engage in conduct that undermines this mutual trust and support, and also reflects the philosophy and values of the school. FMS encourages consultation between all members of the community in matters which affect them.

Code of Conduct

FMS has in place a Code of Conduct for staff which may be supplemented from time to time by specific rules and directives. In 2019, it was updated to reflect the school's expectations of professional relationships between employees and families and appropriate use of electronic communications and social networking sites. No changes made since 2019 when NESA expectations in relation to NSW Child Protection matters were updated.

Complaints and grievances

Processes for dealing with complaints and grievances raised by staff, students, and/or parents are in place and available for community perusal. These processes incorporate, as appropriate, principles of procedural fairness. An update was completed in 2020 for whistleblowing procedures to

provide a safe and confidential environment where students, staff and parents can raise genuine concerns regarding actual or suspected contraventions of our ethical and legal standards without fear or discriminatory treatment.

POLICIES SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLBEING

Our Privacy Policy reflects the Australian Privacy Principles and other amendments made to the Commonwealth *Privacy Act*. No other changes were made to our welfare or discipline policies in 2020.

Procedures in relation to the following policies and practices can be accessed via the School's mobile app or by contacting the school on (02) 9452 2044:

- Attendance and Absence
- Behaviour Management
- Communication Protocols
- Discrimination and Harassment
- Emergency Response Procedures
- Inclusive Education
- Privacy (which addresses the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988* and *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012*)
- Student Transitions.

Anti-bullying policy

Our Anti-bullying Policy provides definitions and guidelines for responding to, and managing, allegations of bullying within the FMS community. The full text can be accessed via our website, mobile app and information booklets. No changes were made during 2020.

Procedure for resolution of serious issues

We are committed to ensuring a harmonious, fair and just working and learning environment. We take our values seriously and uphold our conduct in all matters accordingly. Most issues raised can be readily resolved by direct contact with the relevant staff member.

From time to time, however, a significant issue, concern, grievance or complaint may arise. In this instance, please discuss the matter with the Principal who can advise and outline the process FMS will take to resolve the matter.

Educational facilities and safe practices

FMS continued with a commitment to maintaining and enabling compliance with Workplace Health and Safety Acts and Regulations, relevant council and government requirements and environmental and land use guidelines which include:

- *The Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *The Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011*
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- *Privacy Regulations 2013*
- *The Building Code of Australia*
- *The Environment Planning and Assessment Regulations 2000*
- *The Food Act 2003*
- *The Explosives Act 2003*
- *Animal Research Act 1985.*

During 2020, our high level of compliance was achieved through the following procedures and activities:

- Termly evacuation and lock-down rehearsals
- Staff follow-up on student incidents, parental sign-off
- Annual Fire Safety audit conducted by qualified, independent professionals and all electrical equipment tagged and tested
- Further development to our staff induction processes
- Planned responses to serious incidents
- Review of Bushfire Emergency Procedures
- Regular updating of all first aid and student health records
- Access to optional flu vaccinations, introduced in 2017 postponed due to COVID
- Further improvements to the collection of student medical information
- Injury management and monitoring of student incidents
- Security monitoring by external company.

Safe and supportive environment – legislative requirements

Staff induction procedures for new staff and regular staff briefings throughout 2020, to ensure our staff are aware of their legal responsibilities in relation to Working with Children, Child Protection, mandatory reporting, reportable conduct, teacher accreditation and other FMS expectations.



OUR GOVERNANCE AND BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Business operations and financial summary

GOVERNANCE

The School is owned and operated by The Peninsula Montessori Association Limited, a company limited by guarantee.

There is a constitution for the School which complies with the Corporations Act. It sets out the objects of the company and provides provisions about membership, general meetings, voting, the appointment and removal of directors, audits and accounts, and other matters. Copies of the Constitution are available from our School's Business Manager.

In 2019 the Constitution was changed to make membership voluntary. An invitation to become a member of the Company is provided to our parents and stakeholders annually.

The Directors of FMS meet all NESAs requirements as listed below.

GOVERNING BODY	REQUIREMENT
	Consent to Act as a Director
NESA	
3.9.1 Responsible Persons	Statutory Declaration, sufficient competence and character
3.9.2 Refusal of Registration - Disclosure	Any refusal to register (or cancellation of registration) of the school is not the result of previous actions of responsible persons
3.9.3 Proper Governance	
3.9.3.1 Policies & Procedures	Code of Conduct for Responsible Persons Confidentiality Undertaking
3.9.3.2 Conflict of Interest	Covered by Consent to Act form.
3.9.3.3 Related Party Transactions	Covered by Consent to Act form.
3.9.3.4 Professional Learning	Evidence of 12 Hours of Professional Development over 3 years
3.9.3.5 Induction Process	Induction Process for Board members & new responsible persons
3.9.3.6 External Independent Audit	Annual external audit with auditor independence declaration
3.9.4 Financial Viability	Monitor financial results, provide info to NESAs as requested, retain records
3.9.5 Notification of Matters	Notify NESAs of certain matters

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Overall Results

The school produced a healthy surplus of \$560.7K in 2020. In accordance with the Government's initiative to assist families during COVID-19, we offered free pre-school, before and after school fees during Term 2 2020. This resulted in more than a 30% loss in revenue for Term 2, qualifying the school for Government COVID-19 packages. An increase in enrolments in both preschool and primary throughout the year added to the surplus.

The school's Leadership Team continues to work closely with the Board and Finance Committee to ensure sound financial practices and principles are in place to safeguard the ongoing financial viability of the school.

SUMMARY INCOME STATEMENT

INCOME	2020	
Tuition and Other School Related Fees	1,745,470	52.0%
Government Grants	1,504,445	44.8%
Fundraising and Other Income	104,868	3.1%
	3,354,784	

EXPENDITURE		
Employment Related	2,131,974	76.3%
Teaching Materials and Equipment	191,889	6.9%
Building and Grounds	154,311	5.5%
Office and Insurance	187,774	6.7%
Depreciation	98,337	3.5%
Interest and Bank Charges	26,912	1.0%
Fundraising	2,841	0.1%
	2,794,038	

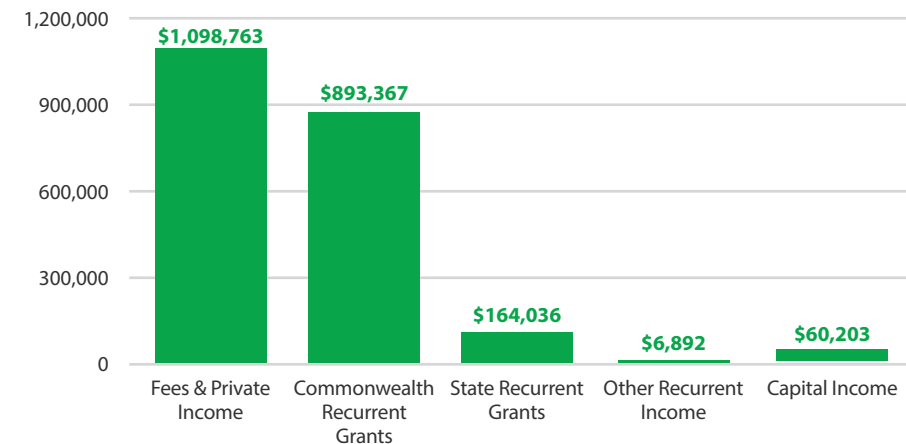
Net Surplus	560,745	
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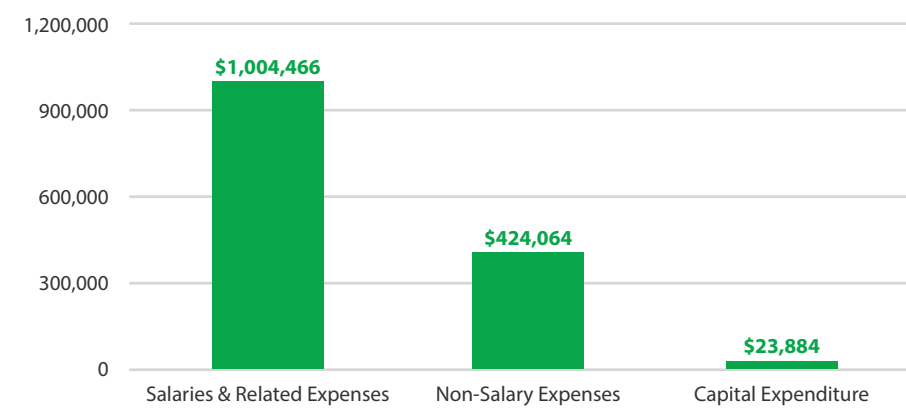
Australian Government reporting for the Primary School

These graphs depict income and expenses reported in the Australian Government's Financial Questionnaire for 2020. The School has used the overall audited financial results above, and followed the published guidelines relating to the classification, inclusion, and exclusion of income and expenses for this specific reporting.

RECURRENT/CAPITAL INCOME



RECURRENT/CAPITAL EXPENDITURE



Thank you to the FMS community of current and past parents, grandparents and friends who continue to support FMS and the benefits of a Montessori education. We really do appreciate all that you do. To our Board Directors, who are volunteers giving an immense amount of time and expertise to FMS, thank you for your wise governance.



Beyond Today

Looking ahead to 2021, Forestville Montessori School will celebrate 40 years of providing exemplary Montessori education. We are planning to launch the anniversary by inviting our six Founders back to the school for a big celebration with the extended FMS community. It is right and fitting to honour their vision and commitment to making FMS a reality. We have many plans to build on the school's current success as we look ahead to the next 40 years!

Forestville Montessori School is a vibrant community with a very special heartbeat. We hope you enjoy reading this Annual Report and encourage you to contact the school on (02) 9452 2044 or visit our website www.forestvillemontessori.nsw.edu.au to find out more.

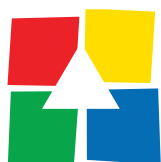
Follow us on social media.



"Our work is not to teach, but to help the absorbent mind in its work of development. How marvellous it would be if by our help, if by an intelligent treatment of the child, if by understanding the needs of his physical life and by feeding his intellect, we could prolong the period of functioning of the absorbent mind!"

Dr Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind

FORESTVILLE MONTESSORI SCHOOL



Forestville
MONTESSORI School

Thriving beyond...

**Let us take your child
above and beyond.**

Forestville Montessori School
1 Angel Place, Forestville NSW 2087
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www.forestvillemontessori.nsw.edu.au