Highfields Preparatory and Kindergarten School

2024

Annual Educational and Financial Report

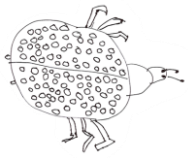


Annual Report

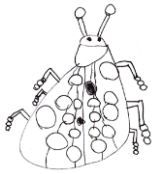
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About Us



Highfields is an independent, co-educational, non-denominational school, catering for children from the ages of 3 to 8, in Preschool to Year 2.

Highfields is known for its vibrant community, outstanding early childhood programs, and ability to inspire a love of learning. The School offers its students a warm, nurturing environment; small class sizes; and meaningful and stimulating programs that encourage enquiry, curiosity and critical thinking. It provides learning experiences that respectfully and powerfully meet the needs of children both as individuals and as a group; and support and encouragement to embrace challenges, 'have a go' and feel good about themselves as learners. Focus is placed on the inquiry learning process, the pursuit of knowledge, skill, and personal academic success.

Highfields staff enjoy a close partnership with parents in the support of each individual, and parents are active and supportive within the school community. Highfielders enjoy a beautiful learning environment, with a beautiful natural playground, well-resourced classrooms and the latest technology. Opportunities exist for students to pursue a variety of interests including choir, Chess Club, STEM, Drama, French language and tennis classes.

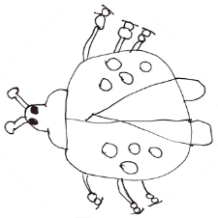
Message from the Chairman of the School Board

It was a pleasure to watch Highfields evolve and grow in 2024, and to see our students and community thrive in these post-COVID times. The Highfields School Council recognises that the landscape of preschool and early primary school education on the North Shore is rapidly changing. Highfields strives to remain strong in its holistic approach to the education and development of the students. Through the Association of Independent Schools' Perspectives Survey, we were able to canvas feedback from parents, staff and students as a 'pulse check' on our current performance. This process has provided invaluable insights. Highfields' scores were excellent in all aspects measured. Much of the credit for these results lies with every member of staff of Highfields, reflecting the hard work and effort of the Highfields staff, under Mrs Cook's leadership. The results have also provided information regarding areas for the school to develop, for example, a focus on wellbeing and community. The results have provided a basis for developing strategy to carry the School into the future.

We would like to extend thanks to the Highfield's Parent's Association (HPA) for their time and effort in arranging so many fun events in 2024. Family involvement in the Community is a fundamental element in the quality of the student journey at Highfields. We are delighted with parent and friend engagement at the many events including the Ball, the Disco, the Play, the assemblies. Such activities are important episodes in the children's journey and contribute to enrichment of their growth. We are also grateful for the Class Parents for arranging all the extras that make life special such as the Plays in the Park and the Easter Egg Hunts. Rest assured, all the other Mums and Dads appreciate the energy you put in, and the connections that evolve from these ventures.

We thank and farewell three of our very valued School Council members. Jill Cai (Valerie) has been a terrific sounding board and has been tirelessly enthusiastic with her input. Andrew Wilson (Eleanor and Henry) has been a dedicated and meticulous Treasurer, further cementing the School in a sound financial position. Henny Stier (Johan, Oscar, Leo) is greatly appreciated for her longitudinal knowledge of the School, her insights into the local community and her capacity to get things done. On behalf of the School Council, I wish all families a happy and safe 2025 as we look forward to another exciting year ahead at Highfields.

Susan Tomlinson



Message from the Principal

There is much to report and celebrate this year.

Whole School Survey

In 2024, Highfields used the *Perspectives: Your school in focus* suite of surveys developed by AISNSW to support our school improvement endeavours. The results gathered will assist in furthering the growth and development of our school community and help inform and direct future school planning and improvement strategies.

The surveys have been specifically designed to assist schools in gaining an understanding of stakeholders' perceptions of five important areas: School Environment, Teaching and Learning, Student Wellbeing, Leadership and Community. All staff, Year 2 students, parents/guardians, leaders, and board members were invited to participate.

The input and contributions from all stakeholders are important to the success of our continuous school improvement process as we endeavour to improve the learning experience for everyone at our school.

Vision, Mission and Values

In 2024 our Vision, Mission and Values Statements were reviewed, updated and shared with our families.

They are as follows:

Vision (what we want for the future)
For Highfields to be a leader in early childhood education, respected for its happy, engaged, competent and connected learners, rich teaching and learning programmes, and vibrant community.

Mission (what we are doing right now)
In collaboration with educators, children and families, we support and guide Highfielders in becoming empowered learners and contributors in the community.

Core Values
Strength in demonstrating curiosity and love of learning, employing a 'have a go' attitude and working effectively with and alongside others.
Knowledge in knowing how you learn best, how to actively engage in the learning process in order to make the most of every learning opportunity, and how to apply learning to real-life situations.
Resilience in being responsive and taking courageous steps when needed, bouncing back in the face of unexpected challenges, and working within the 'stretch zone' for learning.

As the year progressed, and on the basis of Perspectives survey data received and additional School targets, a Strategic plan for 2025-2027 was developed.

Preschool Focus for 2024



Each year, the preschool teachers have a curriculum focus for growth and in 2024 we looked at all aspects of our learning environment. The staff wholeheartedly understand how well-designed and cared for learning spaces can positively impact children's learning and their relationships with other children and teachers. We also recognise that the moment children and families enter 'the preschool gate', we are communicating what we value as a preschool team.

Quite simply, we wish for every child, family and teacher to feel welcomed, inspired, curious, relaxed and joyful. Our environment is also a promise of deep learning and care, and a space for relating and developing strong connections with children and families. When teachers prepare materials and set up spaces thoughtfully, we are showing respect not only for the children, families and each other, but for the environment. It also teaches children to appreciate beauty and look after their learning spaces.

In 2024, the outdoor learning spaces and the different opportunities we can provide to increase children's learning and wellbeing were examined through a magnifying glass. It was Buckminster Fuller, a scientist and architect who said that "Outdoor play spaces should be renamed 'research environments' because that is what children are doing so vigorously. They are finding out how everything in the universe works."

The big questions that stretched and expanded our thinking about the learning environment in 2024 were:
For Teachers - Dreaming and Re-Designing Spaces for Learning, Imagining and Connecting. 'How can we transform the indoor and outdoor learning environment so that it becomes a significant educator for children and adults?'
For Children - Sharing The Land Together, 'How does the land provide opportunities for learning, connection, care and imagination?'

April Study Tour to Reggio Emilia



We were thrilled to advise our community that Sandy Ireland our Educational Leader in the Preschool, and Lisa Hutchinson Lead Teacher of the Cockatoo Class, were to join early childhood educators from around the world at the April Study Tour in Reggio Emilia.

The Municipal early childhood programs in Reggio Emilia, Northern Italy, for children aged three months to six years, are internationally acclaimed for the inspirations, challenges, and provocations they provide for all those concerned with the care and education of young children. Founded and developed by educational theorist, Loris Malaguzzi, the schools demonstrate a distinctive and innovative curriculum and pedagogy as well as a method of school organisation which recognises the potential of young children to question, reflect, problem-solve, theorise, and experiment.

The schools in Reggio Emilia demonstrate, by making children's learning visible, that children are capable of devising creative ways of knowing, understanding and making connections and meaning. There is a particular emphasis on the role of the environment, both social and physical, and the cultural, geographic, political, economic, and historical experiences of Reggio Emilia are incorporated into learnings. This history, combined with the theories, ideas and practices in the schools are always changing and evolving, meaning that the schools cannot provide a model for practice in Australia. However, they offer an inspiration for our own thinking and practice.

Sandy and Lisa provided valuable information to staff and families on their return to Highfields!

Designing for Deep Learning in K-2



Designing for Deep Learning is a specialised AISNSW program that supports teachers to incorporate the learning competencies (6Cs) Collaboration, Creativity, Critical thinking, Communicating, Character and Citizenship into their whole school teaching and learning programs to underpin the curriculum.

Our Deep Learning journey started in 2022 and in 2023 and once again in 2024 Highfields continued this work, embedding key language and competencies from K-2 and focussing on empowering students to be the learning leaders in the inquiry space.

Let's Talk About Character in Terms 1 and 2

Our Deep Learning focus for this first semester was the key competency of 'Character'. As they explored this key competency through their Inquiry work, our Highfielders had a spotlight shone on learning how to learn, the importance of showing care and compassion, making the right decisions even when it's hard and exploring how someone else will be feeling (empathy).

We hope that through our focus, the children will develop (if they don't have it already) a proactive stance toward life and learning, as well as a deep understanding of what grit, tenacity, perseverance, resilience, empathy, compassion and integrity mean and how they can be demonstrated.

Parents were encouraged to reinforce these important character traits at home by noticing and commenting when they saw examples in book/movie characters, in their own child's choices and actions, and in observations of others when out and about.

Focus on Citizenship in Terms 3 and 4

In Kindergarten to Year 2 classes in the second semester, we were excited about our focus on another of the six Deep Learning Competencies – Citizenship. We made the most of every opportunity for Highfielders to learn about what this means and how as a citizen, they can make positive contributions.

In Terms 3 and 4, K-2 Highfielders through their learning inquiries considered:



- what is happening beyond their own life - in their neighbourhood, their country and their world,
- the role our actions have on the environment (Kindergarten),
- how everyone can play a role to positively contribute to the world,
- diverse values and world views (Year 2), and
- how real-world problems can be solved (Year 1).

Families were encouraged to ask some great questions of their Highfielder when they shared ideas/opinions, solved a problem, or answered a question that would help to build their citizenship skills as follows:

- What makes you say that?
- What did you notice about that (issue, event)?
- How does doing _____make a difference?

What about the other key competencies of Character, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity? These will continue to be embedded in our teaching and learning programs, but from 2024 on, two different competencies will be the subject of intense focus with Highfielders each year.

In 2024 the Deep Learning journey took Mrs Cook, Mrs Dundas-Smith, Ms Siemon and Mrs Milner to Summerland Christian College in Ballina. They were invited to join the staff of the College for a day of professional learning focused on Inquiry, facilitated by Trevor MacKensie – speaker/ facilitator/ educator/researcher/author, and were excited to bring their learning back to rest of the teaching team at Highfields.

Leading School Transformation

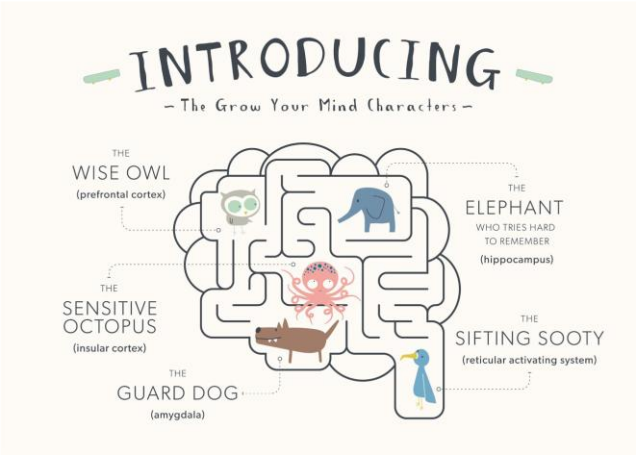


This year also, Deep Learning consultants at the Association of Independent Schools NSW invited our staff to speak at the annual Deep Learning conference, and it was eagerly accepted. The conference was held at St Aloysius College on 8 November, and Deborah Cook, Fiona Dundas-Smith, Emma Siemon and Katie Milner within the broad title of the conference 'Leading School Transformation', were asked to speak about 'Connecting Families to Learning'. This was achieved through the sharing of our Deep Learning Inquiry journeys with our Highfielders, and the Windows into Learning events which provide families with insights into the inquiry learning processes undertaken in each class, and how their child learns with and alongside others. The sessions were well attended, and we hope teachers from a range of other schools were inspired to consider:

What opportunities lie in their class or school, to connect families to their child's learning in ways that take them beyond theoretical understanding to a deeper level of knowing about what is happening in the classroom?

The Grow Your Mind Program at Highfields

This year families may have heard their child talking about having animals in their brain and wondering "what are they talking about?" Our clever Highfielders were actually demonstrating their growing understanding about how their brain works through the 'Grow Your Mind' program which has been carefully selected and introduced at Highfields in 2024. The aim of this program is to support mental health by building wellbeing skills in children (which is a key factor in protecting against mental illness). 'Grow Your Mind' (or GYM) has been developed using four key pillars of research from: Positive Psychology, Public Health, Social & Emotional Learning and Neuroscience. One of the key concepts includes animals that represent different parts of the brain. This year we have been introducing the program across the school, and the children have become familiar with each animal and its corresponding brain function. The children have responded so well to it and are already starting to make connections with their own life experiences.



Grow Your Mind summary and animal descriptions.



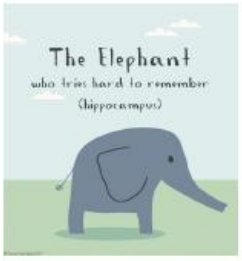
The Sifting Sooty (reticular activation system) helps us engage our focus and block out distractions. Resilient people are very deliberate about where they put their focus.



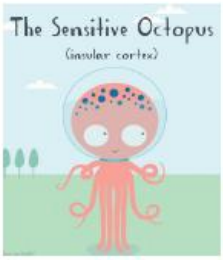
Our Wise Owl (prefrontal cortex) is how we make good decisions. It helps us with problem solving and higher order thinking. This is where our executive functioning happens - that's a fancy thing our brain can do when it is able to take in the big picture.



Our Guard Dog (amygdala) keeps us safe and protects us - but it can't always tell the difference between a real and imagined threat. We can help calm it so it can identify "Is this a threat, challenge or opportunity?"



The Elephant (hippocampus) tries hard to remember. This part of the brain stores information, memories, things you are learning and helps you recall them when you need.



The Sensitive Octopus (insular cortex) enables us to be a good friend. It can helps us recognise our own feelings but also care and wonder about the feelings of others. It gives us the super power of empathy!

New Playground Agreements for Preschool and K-2 Children



In 2024 new Playground Agreements were created using the contributions of Preschoolers for their Agreements titled the 'Upstairs and Downstairs Playgrounds' and all K-2 children for their Agreement. They provide clear behavioural expectations, and we hope that play choices and decisions will be positively influenced as a result.

Ongoing Indigenous Collaboration

Des and Isaac

Deslyn and her son Isaac continued to collaborate with and working alongside teachers and children in classes from Preschool to Year 2 to enrich their inquiries on a termly basis in 2024. To mark the beginning of a new year, they facilitated a 'smoking ceremony' which was of interest to the whole community. Through the year they shared Indigenous perspectives, language, and culture. Our Highfielders listened to stories, sang, danced, learnt some Aboriginal words, explored authentic artifacts, and created art. We look forward to the relationship being an ongoing one.

Adding to our Indigenous knowledge in 2024, research led us to discover that Highfields sits on the land of the Durramurragul people. In response in 2025, we will update our Acknowledgement of Country to reflect this.

Keeping Families Informed



Every two years we offer families **First Aid demonstration sessions** provided by an accredited trainer. This year the training was provided by St John Ambulance NSW on 17 and 21 June.

The demonstration sessions focussed on building the knowledge of participants so they know how to manage minor to more serious accidents, injuries, and medical conditions. There was also a practical component on 21 June where participants had the opportunity to engage in CPR practice.

In addition, Sarah Jones, our wonderful Learning Support coordinator, organised two powerful

sessions for Kindergarten parents and interested others about **the learning to read process** including the latest research.



On Wednesday 24 July our families were invited to a **session with Karen Lyth,** Child and Adolescent Psychologist (Specialising in Behaviour).

In this presentation, strategies to manage fearful and anxious behaviours, as well as tantrums, were discussed. When used effectively, these techniques can have long-term positive effects into adolescence and adulthood. The presentation also assisted attendees in either affirming current ways of parenting or lead them to reconsidering how they respond, and together explored new ideas that might be beneficial.

'Tea and Talk' mornings were offered each term, and a number of families chose to join the conversations on a range of topics including Learning Environments and Risk Assessments, Reflective Journals, Healthy Eating, Communication, and Transitioning to school.

The **Preschool Reflections** shared with families each week provided information about why we do what we do, and how our programming, environment, and teacher interactions, seek to impact learning outcomes for all children in positive and effective ways.

Sandy Ireland, our Preschool Educational Leader, provided termly newsletters titled **The Preschool Lens**. The Preschool Lens documents covered such areas as what is happening in Preschool in 2024, Healthy Lunchbox Ideas, The Environment as the Third Teacher, Risky Play, Consent, and Building Outdoor Play Furniture.

In addition, **Windows into Learning** sessions in each class from Preschool to Year 2 powerfully shared how learning takes place at Highfields and in many cases shared a learning journey undertaken by a class over the course of the term.

Special Events

Mother's, Father's and Grandparent's Days

Mother's, Father's and Grandparent's Days continue to be much loved and well attended events on the School calendar each year.

Anzac Service

On 3 May Mrs Dundas-Smith, Miss Madden, Mrs MacCue and Year 2 children departed from their usual assembly practice to conduct a special Anzac Service. All children and teachers from Kindergarten to Year 2 participated in the ceremony which included an Acknowledgement of Country, Year 2 children outlining the purpose and importance of Anzac Day and its traditions, the significance of the poppy and rosemary as symbols of remembrance, the raising of the Australian flag, listening to 'The Last Post' capably played by Zoe Mann (ex Highfielder) on the trumpet, a minute of silence, and the National Anthem. We were delighted to welcome special guests Jeni McDermott, past Principal of Highfields School, and husband Captain John McDermott (ret. Navy) once again.





Magic of Literature Workshop
Learning Enrichment Through Collaboration

Highfields School is an active member of a unique group called The Northside Gifted and Talented Network, comprising of a small group of teachers who strive to offer enriching workshops for talented students across K-6, from 15 member schools.

In collaboration with The Northside Gifted and Talented Network, on Monday 8 April, Mrs Handel and Mrs Jones hosted twenty-six Year 2 students from thirteen schools in a literacy workshop called "The Magic of Literature".

The students involved had a thought-provoking day, shining the spotlight on the seven basic story plots used in well-known texts, as well as creatively brainstorming a range of figurative language including similes, metaphors, hyperbole, alliteration, onomatopoeia and idioms.

They finished the day focussing on persuasive language used in texts, and how opinions and personal responses towards characters can vary and pose different perspectives for consideration. We were extremely proud of Robbie Symons and Willow An, who represented Highfields in this exciting workshop. We were thrilled to see them make our guests feel so welcome and collaborate so willingly in group tasks alongside the other students.

Sporting Highlights in 2024

Gymnastics & Olympics Fun



The children completed a wonderful Gymnastics program in 2024 facilitated by expert Gymnastics coaches from **'The Activated Group'.** The program focused on the basics of using apparatus such as bars, beam, floor and trampoline to assist in developing skills such as balance, coordination and strength. It was a huge hit with the children and we will offer the program biannually from now on.



Sport Carnival

On 14 May we were excited to host a Sport Carnival at The Lindfield Sports Centre once again. It gave our Year 1 and 2 Highfielders the experience of what a real School Sport Carnival is all about. The activities included running, novelty and co-operative races, tipping games, javelin, shot put, and frisbee challenges. A lot of fun was had by all!

Sports Fun Days

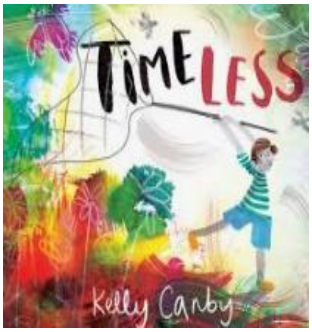
On 23 October our Kindergarten students explored various activity stations set up around the school with the fun-filled activities including scooter board and novelty dress up relays, gymnastics and throw and catch circuits.

On 30 October our Preschool students enjoyed an exciting array of activities which were spaced out around the school: gymnastics circuit**,** striking skills circuit**,** parachute games and overarm throwing circuit.



For all special sports days, parents were welcome to spectate, and they eagerly joined parent races when they were offered.

Book Character Dress Up Days



Children across the school took part in the Book Character Dress up days on 20 and 22 August, and the teachers joined in as they always do. The children were so excited to be 'stepping into character' and a variety of traditional tales and more modern books were represented. This year the teachers came dressed as soccer players from the book 'We are the Matilda's' by Shelley Ware.

The week culminated in a special Book Week performance which showcased the shortlisted book 'Timeless' by Kelly Canby.

K-2 Play



This year the K-2 Play was inspired by a Year 2 Science and Technology based inquiry. Through key characters – narrators, guardians, scientists – and dance, visual images and song, the audience was taken on a journey through different weather types – sun, rain, wind, snow, thunder, lightning and heat wave.

The children were in equal part nervous and excited as the big day arrived but delighted us with their dance moves and clear spoken and singing voices.

Many thanks must also go to Bronny Carroll who once again guided the development of the children's voice, drama, and performance skills, and to the teachers for their script writing and choreography with the children.





An Evening of Music

On 16 August for the first time our Music Teacher Amy Nero hosted an Evening of Music here in our school hall which gave our talented musicians, one solo singer and the choir, an opportunity to showcase their abilities ranging from beginner to advanced in front of a supportive parent audience. It was a wonderful event which we hope to repeat in 2025.

Community Activities and Events



Our School Community enjoyed our regular annual events including the Vivid Cruise, Disco, Winter Wonderland Fundraising Ball and Carols evening, and a Movie Night attracted a BIG crowd eager to see 'Trolls'.

Excursions and Incursions

As usual the school calendar was packed with visitors to Highfields, excursions to wonderful destinations and important annual school events. These opportunities enriched class inquiries and elevated learning beyond what can take place in the classroom alone.

Excursions venues included Paddy Pallin Reserve which is a natural bush environment only a few minutes walk away from Highfields, Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, City and Rocks visits, and Ravenswood School for the annual Dance Showcase.

Some of our many incursions included Life Education, Ranger Jamie who talks about environmental matters, Magic of Literature, Fizzics Science, Drama Toolbox, Bush Christmas, Claymation and Ceramics, Musica Viva's 'Water Rhythms', and DigiEd.

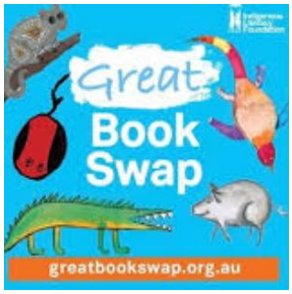
Extra-Curricular Activities

Feedback from our families in 2023 indicated that they would like some afternoon extra curricular activities in addition to the before school favourites in 2024. It is also worthy of note that Drama and French language classes commenced in Semester 2 much to the delight of a number of parents. The complete offering for 2024 included: Tennis lessons, French Language Classes, Chess Club, STEM Tech Club and Lego Engineers in the mornings, Drama and Tech Maths Club in the afternoons.

Thinking of Others

Highfielders keenly organised a number of fundraisers in support of worthy charities this year for the whole school to take part in. These included: Lifeline, Children's Ground which is a not for profit organisation, Siblings Australia and the Koala Foundation. Others are as follows:

Indigenous Literacy Book Swap Day



On 18 and 19 September, Highfields held a "Book Swap" Charity event outside the library to raise much needed money for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation. Kookaburras, Cockatoos, Currawongs and K-2 children were invited to bring in a book (or more than one if they wished) which they had enjoyed but could bear to part with and which is in reasonable condition. They were then able to trade their book for another to take home and enjoy. To participate in the Book Swap families are asked to send in a gold coin donation per book swapped.

Hope in a Suitcase

HOPE IN A SUITCASE
'PACK A LITTLE JOY'

Once again in late November we ran a very successful 'Hope in a Suitcase' Charity Drive. Hope in a Suitcase is a non-profit organisation run entirely by passionate and dedicated volunteers and through donations of new items from the community, and the generosity of groups and corporations. Since its beginning in 2018, the charity has grown to be able to provide suitcases for children going into foster care or out-of-home care, throughout NSW, Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania.

For this Drive our families donated some specific new items – drink bottles, baby bottles, small toy cars and baby dolls, face washers and baby towels, colouring books, sun hats, playing and UNO cards.

It's in the Bag

The 'It's in the Bag' charity was a focus for staff in November 2023, and as a result, we were keen to continue our support for this worthy cause in 2024. 'It's in the Bag' is one of Australia's most loved Christmas appeals, where every-day Australians are encouraged to put together Adult, Teen or Mum and Bub bags filled with essential items, maybe some everyday luxuries and a handwritten note, to donate to someone in need for Christmas. It was a pleasure once again to donate several well stocked bags to Bunnings before the deadline on 1 December.

Legacy Luncheon

Once again in 2024, our Year 2 students performed for Legatees at their Christmas luncheon at North Ryde RSL Club. The children enjoyed this opportunity to showcase their singing and musical talent for the pleasure of the assembled crowd. It was great to see the audience join in for the chorus of well known songs and to see toes tapping. At the completion of the performance the children enjoyed shaking hands and chatting with the elderly.

Two new feathered friends for Batchook the Hen





This year we were excited to announce the arrival of two new hens. Thank you so much to the Ren family (Albert in Kindergarten) for bringing the hens to us. We are so glad to have them! Our new hens were named thanks to the democratic processes undertaken in Year 2. The gorgeous black and white hen is named 'Pepper' and the beautiful brown and white hen is 'Chili'. They have both settled in very well and it didn't take too much time for Batchook to learn to share her space, water and food!

CommunityOsh

Throughout 2024, CommunityOSH has continued to provide an excellent before, after and vacation care service for children and families within Highfields. The staff are exceptional, the program is responsive to the ages and interests of the children, the children are happy and engaged, and attendance numbers are strong.

On a final note…

As we finish another exciting and successful year at Highfields it is valuable to reflect on all that has been accomplished, and recognise the significant part that students, families and staff have contributed to what has been achieved.

After a well-deserved break, we have much to look forward to in 2025 as Highfields marks its 80th Anniversary year.

Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing

No data is available for this reporting area. Highfields Preparatory and Kindergarten School is Preschool to Year 2 only. Students complete NAPLAN testing in Year 3.

Teacher Accreditation

Level of Accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	0
Provisional	0
Proficient Teacher	7
Highly Accomplished Teacher	5

Teacher Qualifications

Category	Number of Teachers
Teachers who have teaching education qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines, or	12
Teachers who have a bachelor degree from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognised within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications.	0

Workforce Composition

School Staff 2024



Teaching staff	12
Full time equivalent teaching staff	9.2
Non-Teaching staff	6
Full time equivalent non teaching staff	4.4

Our school embraces all faiths and backgrounds. None of our staff members have identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Student Attendance

94% per cent of students attended school on average each day in 2024.

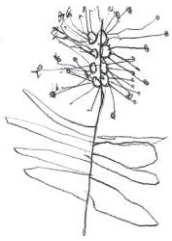


Attendance rates per Year:
Kindergarten – 93%
Year 1 – 94%
Year 2 – 96%

For whole school attendance rates please refer to the My School website
http://www.myschool.edu.au

The School Attendance Policy outlines the procedures followed to manage instances of student non-attendance. Absences are closely monitored. The School follows up where verbal or written explanations are not received from the parents and the School will raise concerns with families to resolve any issues of regular non-attendance.

School Policies



The following school policies are publicly available on the website:

- Enrolment Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying policy
- Discipline Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy

Areas of parent, student and staff satisfaction in 2024

Children

Through the Inquiry processes that are embedded so strongly at Highfields, children had opportunities to follow their interests in powerful ways. Each term class documentation displayed the diverse array of learning stories as they unfolded, capturing the children's questions and theories, alongside their research findings. Our K-2 children also had the opportunity in their Inquiry work and reinforced across all other areas of school life, to learn about the importance of 'Character' and 'Citizenship', two of six Deep Learning competencies.

A highlight for the children was once again the live K-2 Play performance this year. This was an opportunity for the children to share their narration, singing and dance skills before a rapt audience, and they didn't disappoint.

In 2024, our Year 2 children had the opportunity to contribute their voices to a Whole School Perspectives survey and were particularly delighted when they found out that usually for this type of survey hosted by the NSW Association of Independent Schools, that only children much older are usually asked to contribute. They had to consider 25 statements and select the most appropriate response based on their views to indicate on a sliding scale, agreement through to disagreement. Some of the statements requested information about the school environment, teaching and learning, and their wellbeing. These included:

The school rules are fair for everyone.
My teachers know what I am interested in.
My teachers know about my family.
Teachers make learning interesting.
If I try hard, I believe I can do just about anything.
Adults at my school help us fix problems we might have with other children.
I feel like I belong at school.



The results indicated that the children had a strong sense of safety at school, that their physical environment was clean and tidy, that the teachers know their learning strengths and challenges and use different activities to help different students learn. They strongly supported having the opportunity to work together in class to solve problems, use digital technologies to help them learn, and that teachers make learning interesting.

The results also indicated that while adults at school help them work out their problems with other students, they didn't always feel that there was someone at school they could talk to about their personal problems and that they could bounce back quickly after hard times. This feedback will be used for our Student Wellbeing planning in 2025.

Some of their written responses included the following:

"I wish we had a science lab and a rugby oval. I wish we could bring Apple watches to school."
"I love the school and never want to leave"
"I think the friendship tree is a great idea. I think other schools should do it!"
"I think this school is so hygienic."
"Why can't we have year 3, year 4 and year 5?"
"I wish we had more grades and some male teachers."
"This school is amazing at mostly everything".



In addition, Year 2 were particularly pleased to host a number of meaningful fundraising events, participate in the Ravenswood Dance as one of the youngest groups represented, and perform for the legatees at their Christmas luncheon once again.

Staff

Our Preschool team expressed satisfaction in what had been achieved through a focus on 'Dreaming and Re-Designing Spaces for Learning, Imagining and Connecting' in 2024, capably led by our Educational Leader Sandy Ireland. Two Preschool staff, our Educational Leader and one Lead Preschool Teacher, expressed delight at having the opportunity to attend a Study Tour in Reggio Emilia which they eagerly shared with others on their return. Once again, the team also expressed ongoing their high regard toward the Educational Leader for the wonderful professional learning and guidance, coaching and mentoring given throughout the year.

The Deep Learning Core team expressed satisfaction in being invited to present at the Deep Learning Conference at St Aloysius College on 8 November. Deborah Cook, Fiona Dundas-Smith, Emma Siemon and Katie Milner within the broad title of the conference 'Leading School Transformation', we were asked to speak about 'Connecting Families to Learning'. There was also a sense of satisfaction in focussing on the Deep Learning competencies of Character in Semester 1 of 2024 and Citizenship in Semester 2 which gave our students great understanding about what grit, tenacity, perseverance, resilience, empathy, compassion and integrity mean and how they can be demonstrated, as well as learning what Citizenship means and how as a citizen, they can make positive contributions.

Our staff also appreciated the opportunity to engage in the Whole School Perspectives survey and shared their views about how Highfields is tracking in the following areas: School Environment, Teaching and Learning, Student Wellbeing, Leadership and Community. The results indicated that strong staff agreeance that the Schools Vision, Mission and Values clearly explains the School's priorities and are at the heart of everything the School does. There was confidence in the teachers knowing what interests their students, their strengths and challenges, and their ability to differentiate strategies when planning learning and teaching. They had confidence in using high impact teaching strategies and assessment strategies to support student learning, and provide feedback to support ongoing learning. The staff overall strongly agreed that the School supports professional learning, that they have opportunities to be coached or mentored to strengthen their capacity, but not all staff feel they have opportunities available to experience professional challenge. Our strategic planning and staff wellbeing focus in 2025 will seek to unpack and address this feedback.

Of enormous satisfaction to Highfields staff was parent feedback as a result of the Perspectives survey, which affirmed the intentions, mission, actions and results of the School and its staff.

Highfields Parents Association and Class Parents

A Highfields Parents Association Committee in 2024 worked closely with the School to organise and plan for our usual and much loved events on the yearly calendar including our school disco, movie night and annual evening fundraiser Ball. These events were supported by the parent community, enjoyed by a number of families and were a source of satisfaction for the organisers.

Class Parents continued to do their best to support the School, and individual classes in 2024, with a range of enjoyable and varied social events to enhance participation and encourage connections between families.

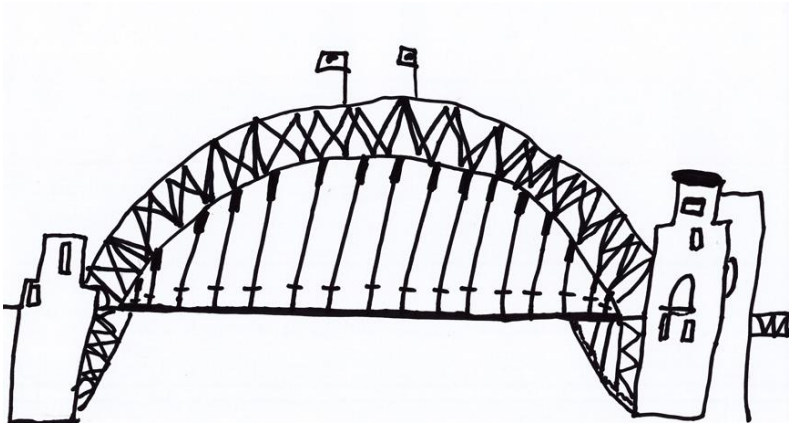
Parents

Our families gave their support to the School by completing the Whole School Perspectives survey, which communicated their views about how Highfields is tracking across all areas of operation. The results indicated families know the School's values, that school is a safe place and that their child feels a sense of belonging in the community. They strongly indicated that teachers know how their child learns best and that rigorous learning programs meet their needs and interests. They also indicated strongly the lines of communication the School uses are easy to access, clear and effective, including reports about their child's learning and progress.

The results also indicated that although their child feels safe at school, there was a proportion of parents who were not sure their child knows what to do when they see bullying happening, even through the results provided acknowledgement that the School works to ensure their child is safe from bullying and harassment. This feedback will be used for our Student Wellbeing planning in 2025.

In 2024 we hosted several valuable workshops and parents expressed their interest in what was offered through their keen attendance and appreciative feedback. These events included Tea and Talk meetings for Preschool families, two reading workshops for Kindergarten parents, and a morning with Karen Lyth our Child and Adult Psychologist (specialising in behaviour) where strategies were shared with families to manage fearful and anxious behaviours, as well as tantrums.

In 2024 parents expressed satisfaction in the Mother's, Father's and Grandparent's Days and all other school events including first aid training, assemblies and sports days where their presence was sought.



Summary financial information

Graphical representation of income and expenditure using percentages only

