



Inspiring our children
to create a better world
with their *own* two hands

**Melbourne
Montessori
School**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 – 2017

MMS BOARD OF DIRECTORS, revised 14th November 2013

Vision

“Inspiring our children to create a better world with their own two hands.”

Mission

Our mission at Melbourne Montessori School is to:

- provide excellence in Montessori education
- provide an enriched and welcoming learning community that embodies the Montessori principles of respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment as well as respect for our country's freedoms and democratic principles
- nurture, inspire and support each child's individual development
- foster the growth of self-confidence, independence, self-discipline, personal and social responsibility
- foster children's innate love of learning and to make their introduction to education a joyful and purposeful start to a journey of life-long learning.



1. Student Experience and Outcomes

“To consider the school as a place where instruction is given is one point of view.
But to consider the school as a preparation for life is another. In the latter case,
the school must satisfy all the needs of life.” — Maria Montessori

The Montessori approach offers a broad vision of education as an “aid to life”. It is designed to help children grow from childhood to maturity. It succeeds because it draws its principles from the natural development of the child. Its flexibility provides a matrix within which each individual child's inner directives freely guide the child toward wholesome growth.¹

To deliver the highest standard of Montessori education and experience requires an unyielding focus on excellence in teaching. MMS will strive to employ well-trained and experienced Montessori teachers and will continue to invest in the professional development of existing staff.

The National Montessori Curriculum will drive the subject content and focus areas for MMS for students aged 0 – 12, across Cycles 0, 1, 2 & 3. A Cycle 4 program will be introduced in 2015, catering for students aged 12 – 15. Our goal is to provide excellence in Montessori education encompassing all aspects of childhood development including appropriate focus on the creative arts (art, music, drama), physical education, technology, as well as traditional academic focus areas of language, mathematics, science and humanities.

GOAL – Fully implement the National Montessori Curriculum, focusing on excellence in teaching and ensuring the core values of a Montessori education throughout all Cycles.

MEASURE – Participation in the Montessori Quality Assurance Programme, annual teacher appraisal, improving performance against the Australian Professional Standard for Teachers, increasing level of teacher and assistant qualification and the continual investment in professional development of teachers and assistants.

HOW TO ACHIEVE – In order to achieve our goal we need to undertake a number of actions including:

- Assess MMS' current operation against the Montessori National Curriculum and identify gaps. [2013]
- Define a 3-year implementation plan to address any gaps between the MMS curriculum and the Montessori National Curriculum.
- Ensure facilities and IT investment plans support addressing these gaps.
- Leveraging the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership standards to develop MMS Professional Development plans, Performance Management approaches and hiring capability.

¹ Extract from Montessori Approach on Montessori Australia website (montessori.org.au)

2. School Structure and Facilities Plan

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

MMS will be structured in a way that facilitates delivering excellence in Montessori education and the fulfilment of Montessori principles. Montessori Australia Foundation (MAF) advises that having Cycle 0, 1, 2 & 3 students together in a single campus would provide the best experience and Montessori education for MMS. Currently, campuses and school buildings are at capacity.

Therefore, MMS will be a focused Montessori school with a dedicated campus for students in Cycle 0 to 3. As such we will:

- adhere to the Montessori approach of ½ days for Cycle 1 Year 1 students.
- provide Parent/Toddler and Early Learners’ programs (Cycle 0) to prepare future Cycle 1 students.

Creating appropriate learning spaces for students and teachers requires investment. MMS owns the current property in Roselea Street in Caulfield and leases the facilities at Brighton. The existence of two campuses is based on historical reasons rather than a defined strategy.

Given the long-term nature of education, owning the physical facilities, or a long-term lease (20+ years,) is desirable to ensure the sustainability of the school. As MMS intends to consolidate its operations for Cycle 0 to 3 to a single campus, it is required to secure a long term lease, or purchase land, and invest in capital works as needed, to develop appropriate facilities to accommodate the entire pre-school and primary student base.

Cycle 4 will commence in 2015 with the intention to organically start Cycle 5 in 2018. These secondary Cycles will, in the long term, be located at a separate site. Similarly it is required to identify and secure a site for this campus.

By the end of 2013, a separate detailed feasibility plan, outlining all options, will be developed to define the specific MMS property requirements.

GOAL – Consolidate MMS Cycle 0 to 3 classes into a single campus facility, and create a campus facility for Cycle 4 and 5, delivering a high-quality Montessori experience for all students.

MEASURE – Two secure campus sites, enabling the school move towards a campus dedicated to serving Cycle 0 to 3 and a campus dedicated to serving Cycle 4 and Cycle 5 by 2018.

HOW TO ACHIEVE – In order to achieve our goal we need to undertake a number of actions including:

- Identify the property and building requirements for all Cycle 0 to 3 students.
- Identify site and requirements for Cycle 4 and Cycle 5 students.
- Develop a Master Plan incorporating the identified requirements.
- Raise the capital required.
- Transition students.

3. Operational Sustainability

“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.” — Maria Montessori

Financial

MMS will target delivery of an annual surplus of between 5-6% of total revenue in order to ensure the school’s financial viability and to invest in future years’ growth projects. From time to time MMS will plan for, and accept, surpluses below this range to support strategic projects.

The school will use surpluses, firstly to reduce any debt to appropriate levels, and then during normal operations, surpluses will ensure sufficient operating capital. They will also allow MMS to make small annual investments aimed at improving student, staff and parent experience. The Board will implement an annual investment plan to outline how the previous year’s surplus will be used. Generating this level of surplus will also help ensure that MMS can invest for the future and will not have to rely on fundraising activities to maintain basic operations.

The creation of the MMS Foundation was an important first step in the development of a strategic fundraising plan. The MMS Foundation will act as an umbrella structure for soliciting tax-deductible donations that can be directed to the MMS Building Fund, Library Fund or Scholarship Fund.

Fees & Cost Base

Over the past few years, MMS has made substantial investment in improving the operational and financial stability of the school.

Our intent is to maintain annual fee growth in line with the education component of CPI or lower and will maintain operational cost growth accordingly.

Marketing

Positioning MMS as a Montessori school of excellence will require a comprehensive marketing plan to ensure continual student enrolments with the school priced in the mid-range of the private education market. The marketing plan will be developed for MMS to address our marketing objectives and work with the operational management to further develop general marketing communications and materials.

GOAL – Ensure MMS establishes itself as a Montessori school of excellence and continues to operate as a viable on-going concern.

MEASURE – Deliver an annual surplus between 5-6% of revenue.

HOW TO ACHIEVE – Actions include:

- Set and manage appropriate operational efficiency targets.
- Develop a comprehensive marketing plan.
- Management of the enrolment process into Cycles 0 and 1 and the movement between Cycles.

4. Governance

2

“A sustainable governance structure should produce stable and effective leadership which underpins achievement of the school’s objectives, and which is sensitive to guarding the vision and values of the past, whilst being responsive to changes in community values and the preferences of the immediate stakeholders.”

Significant work has been undertaken in the last 3 years to improve the overall governance at MMS. The areas of governance that require further development and ongoing review include:

- **Business Operations** – ensuring we have accurate, timely and relevant operational analysis of the day-to-day business operations is critical to the successful running of MMS.
- **Operational & Strategic Risk Management** – repeatable and systematic processes need to be embedded in the daily operations and at the Board level to ensure focus on risk identification, mitigation and management.
- **Community Involvement** – active participation in the school by the parents, students and staff serves to create a broader community aspect for all members. The Board will develop a Communications Strategy to enable a broader understanding across the MMS community of the Strategic Plan and to facilitate community input into the MMS strategic direction.
- **Government Compliance** – given the age range of MMS students, the school must comply with several government agencies with different reporting requirements. This compliance is essential to the school continuing operations. MMS must ensure continued focus on compliance including ever-changing requirements.

The MMS Constitution and Government regulatory frameworks (both in respect to schools and corporations) provide the foundation of our governance.

GOAL – Ensure governance requirements are met and where necessary are improved.

MEASURE – The School maintains compliance with relevant regulatory bodies and the Constitution meets the needs of MMS.

HOW TO ACHIEVE – Actions include:

- Review the Constitution.
- Create a new Board Member Induction program, including relevant training with Independent Schools Victoria.
- Implement a formal Board-level risk management framework.
- Develop and implement a Board Communication Strategy.

² Excerpted from Independent Schools Victoria website (www.independentschools.vic.edu.au)

5. Future Growth

“Imagination does not become great until human beings, given the courage and the strength, use it to create.” - Maria Montessori

The core focus of the MMS Strategic Plan is to continue to develop MMS into a Montessori school of excellence. This plan necessitates growth in student numbers in Cycles 0 to 3, to create what we believe is an optimal sized primary school of approximately 390 pre-school and primary students.

Future expansion for MMS will be achieved through the creation of a Cycle 4 and Cycle 5 program. Cycle 4 will commence in 2015.

A Cycle 4 and Cycle 5 program will provide parents and students a Montessori based alternative to public or private secondary school that will strengthen retention in Cycle 0 to 3 by providing a Montessori secondary pathway.

This Cycle 4 and Cycle 5 program will assist in positioning MMS as the Montessori school of excellence in Victoria.