



# Strategic Plan



35 Mulley St, Holder ACT  
(02) 6287 1962  
[www.cms.act.edu.au](http://www.cms.act.edu.au)



# Contents

1

**Welcome**

Welcome from the Principal  
Message from the Board Chair

4

**Introduction**

Background to this Strategic Plan

- Canberra Montessori Society Mission
- What is Montessori?
- School background and composition
- Strategic Plan 2013 - 2015

Creating our Strategic Plan 2016 - 2025

10

**Excellence in Student Development**

Holistic Student Achievement  
Montessori Teaching Excellence  
Strategic Directions 2016 – 2025

16

**Excellence in Community**

Our CMS Community  
Alumni & Friends of CMS  
The broader Canberra and Australian community  
Strategic Directions 2016 – 2025

24

**Excellence In Business Operation**

Governance and operations  
Business sustainability and development  
Enrolment Base  
Strategic Directions 2016 – 2025

30

**Appendix**

Strategic Plan 2015-2025 Summary  
Parent Engagement in their Child's Learning



## Welcome from the Principal



I began my Montessori journey as Principal in 2015, so the timing for our review of the Strategic Plan was perfect. It's been an excellent opportunity for me to directly contribute to the development of long and short term goals for the school from the very start of my time here. The outcomes for our students are, of course, the centre of any effective School Strategic Plan. Naturally, there are a range of elements that will impact any plan, either directly or indirectly. This Strategic Plan assigns specific importance to Montessori teaching excellence, community engagement and the long term sustainability and growth of the school.

Canberra Montessori School provides a stimulating and meaningful learning environment for our students. We value collaborative relationships with parents. We continually strive for a community centred on ensuring Montessori schooling is recognised as a leading provider of individualised and child-led learning and ideal for delivering, and exceeding, the standards and outcomes expected of a modern education. As our School Board and the wider community have worked together to develop the 2016-2025 Strategic Plan, we have recognised the ongoing importance of these goals. This Strategic Plan will guide our school to achieving the future we envisioned at the planning sessions, while continually building our strengths for the long term.

This Strategic Plan offers opportunity for significant organisational growth and continuous improvement over time. You will see in the plan that we have focused on clearly identified initiatives and ways to measure progress. These years our children spend at Canberra Montessori School are invaluable and the foundations we build on together will have a profound influence on each child. Throughout their learning

journey with us, they will develop a love of life-long learning and a spirit of intellectual inquiry that will be a natural part of their everyday life. Each time you enter Canberra Montessori School, we are confident you will feel the warmth of our school community, the dedication of our staff, and the joy our students exhibit when they run into the school grounds.

I look forward to working with all members of our community over the coming years as we see everything we have envisioned in the Strategic Plan come to life.

For those of you who are not yet members of our school community, I invite you to visit our school to experience personally our quality, professional learning environment and our incredibly caring school community. Our school is committed to ensuring we develop the natural instinct for exploration and learning in our students that creates a lifelong love of continuous education. As is readily acknowledged in the Montessori community, the opportunities we provide every day for our children to use their own initiative, apply creative thinking and problem solving as well as demonstrate their independence builds their natural confidence. These are all qualities required, and often lamented as missing, in the modern workforce. Our Staff would be delighted to share with you the demonstrable joy our children have for our thriving school and for learning.

Please join us and experience what we have to offer on our compelling journey towards making our Montessori... 'simply the best'.

**Anthony Vandermolen**  
Principal



## Message from the Board Chair



CMS is a wonderful school. It has a strong, supportive community and culture and the students are just a pleasure to be around. As a proud parent of two former students at CMS, I can say whole-heartedly it has contributed to a solid basis for their journey into society. The values and the self-inquiry they demonstrate continues to impress me. I also see these similar traits in other children who have been at CMS. It has been a pleasure to be on the Board for the last five years and to be part of the development of this Strategic Plan.


The development of a longer-term Strategic Plan is a great opportunity for CMS. CMS is at a stage of development that can be underpinned by solid direction and strategies in this Plan, to continue making it the best it can be for both Montessori education and student outcomes overall. With the development of this Strategic Plan, which is a result of consultation with the whole school community including staff and parents, I trust we have created a plan that will meet the needs of the students over the next 10 years.

I am very optimistic for the future of CMS. I look forward to walking down the path in 10 years' time and seeing all the aspirations and dreams in place through this plan being realised. CMS will be a thriving school and community with the hard work and determination of our dedicated and highly valued Principal, teachers, parents, and of course our children. And as always, I look forward to seeing the CMS alumni reaching their potential and making the world a better place for all in their own unique way.

In peace,  
**Vyt Vilkaitis**  
Board Chair



# Introduction



Our past ten years have been about establishing our Holder campus as the home of Montessori education in the ACT and creating a welcoming educational environment at our school. Our next ten years at CMS are about continually reaching higher to achieve the educational and social outcomes we want for our students, refining and celebrating those achievements at every step. We will be 'simply our best'.

To achieve educational excellence, we must have:

- Great teachers and staff;
- Engaged parents; and
- Learning environments conducive to excellence.

Clear and consistent guidelines help staff and parents work together to achieve our long term goals. When any members of our community, be they staff, parents, Board members or other volunteers, are acting in the community, we encourage everyone to consider the following guiding question:

**Are my actions now helping CMS to deliver educational excellence?**

This can be further supported by also asking:

**How can I demonstrate my actions are effective?**

These two questions have already worked to shape the formation in this document and determined the Strategic Directions set out in **Appendix A**.





## Background to this Strategic Plan

### Canberra Montessori Society Mission

**‘To be a leader in modern educational practice by employing Montessori principles as the catalyst for creating self-driven, life-long learners.’**

While traditionally, this has meant that the Society has done this by directly providing Montessori education to children via the Canberra Montessori School, it is now time to extend in other ways, including:

- Direct provision of education
- Outreach programs to extend the understanding and take-up of Montessori in the broader community

- Increasing the number of qualified Montessori teachers in the sector by providing accredited training opportunities

This clarification of the mission is a reflection of the School's progress and the direct input from the community during the development of this Strategic Plan.

### What is Montessori?

Montessori is a child-centred method of education based on over a century of scientific observation of children at work. At its core is the understanding that children have an intrinsic desire to learn and ‘construct’ themselves and, if provided with the appropriate environment, support and materials, will learn a diverse and deep curriculum more naturally than in a ‘traditional’ classroom environment. This curriculum ranges from practical life and responsibility for self and community to complex mathematics and language.

Montessori directors (or teachers) are trained to believe in and nurture the inherent ability of the child. They carefully observe each child every day to ensure that the materials and opportunities best able to

enhance the education of that child at that time are available when required. In this way, directors are able to cover all areas of the curriculum harnessing whatever is motivating the child at a particular moment. As a result, Montessori students approach each subject from a multitude of directions and with a variety of materials, leading to a deep and thorough understanding of each area.

Most importantly, because the child is always presented with choice and opportunity each day in the classroom, Montessori students become independent, self-motivated scholars who have learned how to learn; a critical skill for high-school and the world beyond.

### School background and composition

Canberra Montessori School was founded in 1981. Beginning with two classrooms for three to five year olds, the school gradually grew, in a succession of rented premises, to include upper primary classes and an under-three's programme.

In 2015 there were 28 teachers and assistants, and seven administrative staff. This includes a dedicated Business Manager who directly supports the Principal in administering school finances and business operations.

In 2004, successful negotiations with the ACT government and a large commitment of resources through the School's Building Fund, together with Commonwealth and Territory assistance, enabled the School to establish its current purpose-built campus in Holder, offering a complete suite of early education and primary classes from age 18 months to 12 years.

More than 200 students, aged from three to 12 years, are enrolled at the school. A “Parent Toddler” program is offered for children and their carers six days of the week for children aged 18 months to three years. This program is available so younger children can begin to learn with their families important self-motivational skills early on and experience the wonderful and peaceful surrounds. It is always a pleasure to see these very small children engaging with the equipment and even making themselves morning tea!

The campus at Holder is situated in the growing area of Weston Creek in Canberra. The second campus at Red Hill is a dedicated facility for Montessori training and other professional development available to worldwide Montessori educators. There is also a Parent Toddler program operating in Gungahlin. The grounds at Holder have been created with “Learnsapes” in mind and are designed to teach children vital skills outdoors while allowing them to play freely. Following the establishment of an additional permanent building in early 2016, the campus is purpose built to accommodate nine classrooms, each with three-year cohorts, a library, creative arts rooms, out of school hours care, community room and administration offices.

The demographics for the local area are changing with the additional suburbs in Molonglo attracting many new families to the area. Predicted growth for the new suburbs is expected to exceed 10,000 by 2019<sup>1</sup>. This means there is real opportunity for Montessori to grow.

The School is independent and is governed by its Constitution. The Board is comprised of up to 12 members of the Society who, along with the members of the Society, guide the strategic direction of the School.

### Strategic Plan 2013-2015

The previous Strategic Plan, from 2013 - 2015, was based on our existing three pillars of Education, Community and Business. The community consultation day developed this further into ‘Pathways’ (18 - 18! Articulate a complete educational pathway for students from 18 months to 18 years), ‘Growth’ (Investigate and implement avenues of growth for our community, including growth in enrolment, Society membership, programs and opportunities for students and families) and

‘Community’ (Foster positive relationships with our community and within the greater educational community at large).

Many very positive steps forward were made over the previous three year period. However, when our Principal at the time was recruited to become the Director of the Center for Montessori Education at Loyola University, Maryland, at the end of 2013, we needed to recruit a new Principal. Choosing a

<sup>1</sup> ACT Population Projections for Suburbs and Districts 2007 to 2019, retrieved from [http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/119734/suburb-population-projection.pdf](http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/119734/suburb-population-projection.pdf), 3 December 2015

## Strategic Plan 2013-2015 (cont.)

Principal is the single most important task for a school Board and we had very high standards for our candidates to meet. Because Principal recruitment can be a lengthy process, we engaged a Caretaker Principal to steward the school through this period. There can be no denying that during the recruitment period, certain elements of the plan needed to take a back seat. However, significant progress was still achieved, including:

### Pathways:

- Furthering research into complementary programs for graduates of CMS, including the International Baccalaureate's middle year program
- Establishment of a Gungahlin Parent Toddler Program
- Establishment of a Mums, Bumps and Babies group
- Research and purchase of a comprehensive school management system, PCSchool, to better capture and track student progress

### Community:

- The 'Friends of CMS' program was relaunched in 2014 and progress continues to be made developing this as a resource for alumni, former parents and former staff as well as the wider community.
- Our new School website, including more dynamic content on both the school and Montessori in general as well as an application for mobile devices to enhance parent communication, was launched in 2015.
- In 2012 we established a partnership with Karinya House to provide places for some of its clients in our Parent Toddler Program. In 2015, we have set up a scholarship for a full primary education for one of the families to commence in 2016, which we hope will grow from there.

### Growth:

- A great deal of effort was put into developing models for predicting enrolment and other business factors, which contributed to the school recognising the need for a more sophisticated school management system (PCSchool).
- Critical ICT infrastructure has been installed at the school, a milestone which has finally enabled modernising the educational and operational activities of the school as well as our ability to further develop in certain areas.

Since 2012, the Board and Principal have undertaken detailed research into most of the strategic goals listed above. In many ways, the biggest achievement of the last three years has been that this has led to a comprehensive understanding of what we needed to be asking and setting in place to achieve our goals.

However, there have been challenges in achieving other strategic goals over the last few years. Some of these can be attributed to the change of school leadership during this time. Others have just not eventuated. These include:

#### Increased enrolments

Student growth has been slower than predicted and this has decreased the immediate need to acquire additional adjoining land. This has also affected funding (both from fees and the government) for these last few years, and will also have a longer-term effect on funding as those student vacancies progress through the school.

#### Increasing awareness of Montessori

We have not been overly successful in creating and providing more resources in regards to Montessori education to the wider community as it was decided that this was now a priority while recruiting a new Principal and bedding down a new leadership. However, significant progress is now being made.



## Creating our Strategic Plan, 2016 - 2025

In 2015, the Society extended our planning horizon from three to ten years. This extended focus allows us to better plan for the implementation of longer-term goals and ensure our compass for delivering excellence in education is pointed in the right direction. A key consideration for this change was that, by the time each child completes three cycles, each of three years, many families will spend nine or more years as members of our community. Given this time frame, it is important to give the community, children and parents confidence in where the school is heading and how we will get there.

The formulation of this Strategic Plan has seen input from a broad range of people. In early May 2015, the entire community, including staff, parents and friends of the school, were invited to a whole day workshop to define the core threads to be examined in the Strategic Plan. These key threads were then captured in an online forum. The community was

invited to participate and expand on each, as well as pose additional questions or suggestions. The results were collated by the Board and fed in into a Draft Strategic Plan, which was then put out to the community for review and comment before being finalised. As a result, the Plan contains three key pillars:

**Strategic Pillar #1: Excellence in Student Development**

**Strategic Pillar #2: Excellence in Community**

**Strategic Pillar #3: Excellence in Business Operations**

The Plan contains a summary of actions to achieve each of these pillars (**see Appendix A**). While this is a ten year plan, it will be the basis for annual work plans and will be reviewed by the Board annually. In addition, the wider community will review the Plan every three years. In this way, we will ensure the ten year horizon remains future driven and present.

Strategic Pillar 1

# EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT DEVELOPMENT



In every Montessori environment, there is a partnership between the staff, the students and the parents. Thus, in considering our key pillar of Excellence in Student Development in our Strategic Plan, we examined how we can best support and develop our students, our staff and build the capacity of our parent community in playing a vital role in their children's learning journey.





Strategic Pillar 1, Focus 1

Holistic Student Achievement

Canberra Montessori School takes great pride in the Montessori education we provide for our children. By following the key Montessori philosophy of allowing the child to develop according to their intrinsic needs, the School delivers life-long learners into the broader community, ready to constructively contribute to their society. We do this really well. Our students also benefit from being part of a strong community that they can contribute to long after they’ve left the school.

Challenges:

Curriculum

Demonstrating our students exceed the requirements of the Australian National Curriculum while delivering a best-practice Montessori National Curriculum and demonstrating the provision of quality education.

Resources

Providing our students with a diverse range of high quality resources and educational opportunities, while also providing value in school fees to parents.

Opportunities:

Effective use of data and metrics

Demonstrating through measurement, validation and reporting, the educational standards and well-being outcomes achieved by students of the Canberra Montessori School.

Montessori National Curriculum

Validating that our delivery of the Montessori National Curriculum exceeds the requirements of the Australian National Curriculum.

Data-driven decision making

Focusing on documentation and clear reporting on all aspects of our educational services, allowing us to make the best possible decisions and anticipate opportunities for our students and the School.

Increase parental engagement

Establishing an effective learning network between students, parents and teachers to maximise the benefits positive parent engagement has on each child’s educational outcomes.

Model modern Montessori

Demonstrating that the principle tenets of the Montessori method can be applied to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as successfully as they are to traditional curriculum areas such as Mathematics, Language, Sciences and Arts, thereby successfully preparing our modern, 21st century students to take full advantage of the technology-based society we are all a part of.

Set our education scope

Determining the optimal range of educational services (e.g. pre 18 months or post cycle 3) that should be provided by the Society by 2025.



Strategic Pillar 1, Focus 2

Montessori Teaching Excellence

As a school we ask more of our teachers than many other schools. Our teachers must meet Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) requirements and we want them to have additional Montessori qualifications.

Challenges:

This is an ongoing challenge for all Australian Montessori schools, not just CMS. More than this is that even a teacher with Montessori qualifications does not, by default, make a great teacher and we strive for great teachers. How then can we, as a school, ensure we have excellent teachers, who are Montessori qualified and meet TQI requirements?

Opportunities:

Become the employer of choice

Positioning the school as a highly desirable, cutting-edge employer that attracts only the best teaching graduates and professionals who want not only to provide excellent education for young people, but be part of an organisation driving the education sector forward.

Increase the pool of Montessori teachers

Actively contributing to an increase in the number of qualified Montessori teachers in Australia, for the benefit of our school and all Australian Montessori schools.

Improve staff development opportunities

Providing a diversity of professional development opportunities to allow staff to progress through the professional standards for teachers and principles as set out by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

Montessori outreach

Introducing new and improved opportunities (both online and face to face) to build parent and broader community understanding of the Montessori education system, philosophy and resources utilised. This shared understanding of the children’s learning environment will maximise the benefits to students through positive partnerships between schools, parents and the broader community.

Embrace technology

Continuing to improve our utilisation of technology to capture the data required for effective educational decision-making.





Strategic Pillar 1: Excellence in Student Development

Strategic Directions 2016 – 2025

1

**Data-driven student development**

We will objectively collect, analyse and use data from every area of our education delivery to students to ensure we can accurately demonstrate student achievement, identify issues and opportunities early, provide transparent reporting to parents and make evidence-based decisions.

2

**Increase in-house training opportunities**

We will create cadetships and other programs to provide in-house, approved Montessori training to talented, TQI certified graduate teachers.

3

**Become a centre of Montessori teacher training**

We will become, or align with, a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to provide Montessori training and/or professional development to a range of applicants in Australia and worldwide.

4

**Life-long learning is for everyone**

We will establish a culture of perpetual learning and knowledge sharing amongst all staff, just as we expect our staff to instil those same values in our students.

5

**Focus on Best Practice**

We will look to all areas of education, Montessori or otherwise, for examples of best-practice, so that as a School we can continue to develop our own Montessori practise utilising the same scientific method practiced by Maria Montessori (observe, hypothesise, test, refine).

# EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY



CMS highly values the tight-knit community it has built over the last 35 years. Without the community, the school would not be where it is today. However, as a school, we continually review and improve our operations to meet the needs of modern families and their expectations around communication, engagement, partnership in their child’s education and participation in the school. This also includes how we provide opportunities for past families and staff to remain active participants in our warm school community.



Strategic Pillar 2, Focus 1

# Our CMS Community

There are two key ways the relationship between parents, families and the school can be built. Both are crucial in fostering educational excellence, a positive culture, spirit, and community for the school. They also assist parents to better understand what is happening in the school and classrooms and helps them to engage in their child’s education and more effectively communicate and advocate for the value of Montessori education philosophy. These two ways are:

**Parental Engagement in Children’s Learning**

Excellence in educational outcomes for children happens best when a child’s parents or primary care-givers are engaged in their child’s education. Parent engagement includes both how parents support their child’s learning outside of school, and how families and schools work together to connect and celebrate what children learn at school and at home. More information on effective parental engagement may be found in **Appendix B** and we encourage everyone to read this.

**Participating in the School Community**

Volunteering in school activities, committees and fundraising events is also very important. Sharing a common purpose with other families and working together to achieve results for our community strengthens the well-being of everyone in the community, and creates a positive, active and engaged environment for our children.

## Challenges:

**Empowering parental engagement.**

Being creative with how we support and empower parents to be an active part of their child’s Montessori education journey while supporting teachers to create and foster a productive Montessori work environment for the children.

**Effective school communication**

Finding the quantity and quality of information, as well as the delivery methods, that strike the balance for parents between information overload, and feeling connected, well informed, and engaged.

**Reporting**

Providing qualitative and quantitative evidence about the outcomes that each child is achieving, moving from simply having ‘faith’ in Montessori-based education, to demonstrable facts.

**People power**

Sustaining, expanding and supporting our volunteer base to the benefit of educational services, resources and outcomes. The more productive volunteering there is, the more our fees go back into the school, and remain manageable for a greater diversity of families.

**Catering for all families**

Enhancing our communication and community education sessions, encompassing content, methods of delivery and available times and technological mediums.

## Opportunities:

**Improved and diversified parent education**

Increasing the knowledge and skills of parents to engage in their child’s education, particularly in a Montessori learning environment, which is often a new experience for the entire family

**Building staff skills in parent engagement**

Building the capacity of school staff to value and promote effective family-school partnerships in the education of children.

**Better communication**

Enhancing communication channels and content to support participation in the school community in a range of school activities, governance arrangements and fundraising opportunities.

**Technology as an enabler**

Utilising technology to allow parents to easily stay up-to-date with specific information regarding their child, as well as the school more generally

**Volunteer support**

Providing greater infrastructure and support to volunteer coordinators to provide all volunteers in the school with a consistent and rewarding experience.





Strategic Pillar 2, Focus 2

# Alumni & Friends of CMS

Despite many efforts over the years, CMS cannot yet claim an effective Alumni or Friends network, despite interest on all sides. In many ways, the absence of an effective system and online support for such a network is what has hindered developing such a community. With these systems now in place, we are looking forward to significant improvements in what we can offer our alumni and friends.

## Challenges:

### Records

Historically, there was no continuous, formal tracking by the school of the details for Friends and Alumni, despite many strong efforts by individuals.

### Technology shifts

Many of our historical records have fallen out of date and don't include ongoing contact information such as email addresses which are ever more important in today's connected society.

## Opportunities:

By cultivating a long-term relationship between former students, parents and staff with those currently at the school, great benefits will be achieved for all individuals as well as the school itself. These include:

### Social engagement

Assisting friendships and support networks to not only survive, but increase, after individuals have left the school. Often reconnections occur via channels such as social media, which may also assist the school in reaching out to former students and families.

### Long term perspective

Making pathways and outcomes after CMS clear to current students and their families, as well as those joining the school.

### Long term support for the School

Providing opportunities for Alumni and Friends to contribute to the ongoing activities of the school, leaving a legacy of stronger Montessori education for the next generations.

### Improved school profile

Increasing understanding of, and support for, Montessori education in the wider community.



Strategic Pillar 2, Focus 3

# The broader Canberra and Australian community

For the Australian education sector to further embrace the capacity and contribution of Montessori as a sector, and for the sector to grow as a whole, each school must take responsibility for promoting their own work, and that of Montessori, more widely.

## Challenges:

### Montessori is not yet well understood

Generally, the Australian public is neither particularly aware of Montessori nor what differentiates it as an education system, and thus is unlikely and unable to find ways to become involved in or actively support it.

### Anti-independent schooling groups

There are individuals and groups within the Australian community who are vocally opposed to any government support for independent schools.

## Opportunities:

There is a real opportunity for the School to increase our visibility and presence in the broader educational landscape in Canberra. By being able to empirically demonstrate the value and benefits of a Montessori education to a child, and therefore the society they then live and work in as adults, we can achieve:

### Awareness and understanding of Montessori education

Increasing community awareness of Montessori education as an evidence-based educational philosophy that achieves strong results for students, not only academically, but also emotionally and socially.

### Evidence-based arguments in support of independent schooling

Helping to cement the value of government support to the Independent Schools sector, thus mitigating the potential risk of cuts to territory or federal funding.

### Establish the CMS Brand in Canberra

Increasing the demand for Montessori education provides a sustainable enrolment base for the school and increases the scope for other classrooms or campuses.

### Raising the national profile

Improving the potential for greater provision of Montessori education (whether by CMS or other providers) in other Australian communities is a leadership role we should engage in.



Strategic Pillar 2: Excellence in Community

Strategic Directions 2016 – 2025

1

Prioritise parent engagement

We will embed parent engagement in children’s education and effective family-school partnerships into the core business of the school (see Appendix B).

2

Diversify our community education

We will provide a broader range of parent-focused information in more accessible formats.

3

Enhance communication

We will enhance and expand communication channels, recognising the different needs of current and past families and staff, as well as prospective and non community members.

4

Create advocates

We will enable current and past families and staff to act as advocates for Montessori in their extended community.

5

Encourage community participation

We will facilitate flexible and rewarding participation in our school community which all members are proud and happy to be part of it.

6

Demonstrate leadership in Montessori

We will be a leader in demonstrating clearly to the Canberra and wider Australian Community the benefits of a best practice Montessori education.

## EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS OPERATION



As an independent Montessori school and not-for-profit organisation, we operate in a highly complex regulatory, governance and business environment. A rich and safe environment for children that meets all business and regulatory requirements is crucial for the successful operation of the School.





### Strategic Pillar 3, Focus 1

## Governance and operations

The regulatory environment for the School is framed by legislation such as the Education Act, best practice guides (e.g. for bullying and harassment) and by our organisational structure. The regulatory documents include, but are not limited to:

- Education Act, 2004 (ACT)
- Children and Young People Act, 2008 (ACT)
- Childcare service standards, 2009 (ACT)
- Associations Incorporations Act, 1991 (ACT)
- Education Act, 2013 (Commonwealth)
- Education Regulations, 2013 (Commonwealth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act, 2011 (ACT)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations, 2011
- Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act, 2011 (ACT)
- Privacy Act, (Commonwealth)
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Commonwealth)
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2012 (Commonwealth)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Commonwealth)
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Commonwealth)
- National Safe Schools Framework, including bullying and harassment (Commonwealth)
- the Canberra Montessori Society Constitution

### Challenges:

As a small not-for-profit business, this increasingly demanding regulatory environment means more and more time is being spent on ensuring the School remains compliant. This is a direct driver for unavoidable costs in the administration of the School. We need to continue to streamline administration and regulatory reporting, including the systems we use, in order to keep this portion of costs and effort to a minimum so we can focus the majority of our resources on the direct provision of education.

### Opportunities:

#### Future-proof systems

Using long-term planning when purchasing and implementing hardware, software and infrastructure to not only meet current requirements, but anticipate and prepare for future requirements.

#### Administrative focus

Changing the focus of school administration from simply 'running' the school to 'continually developing' the school in order to stay ahead of the curve.



### Strategic Pillar 3, Focus 2

## Business sustainability and development

CMS is a small not-for-profit business and must operate with a small surplus to maintain financial viability. Key revenue streams for CMS are:

- Fees from parents (70.9%)
- Recurrent funding from state and commonwealth governments. (27.8%)
- Fundraising and donations (1.3%)

### Challenges:

The government is not clear on the direction for future funding of non-government schools, except to say that we will not lose any funding in today's dollars. However, the current arrangements are seeing us lose about 1.3% of government funding in real terms per year. Over the longer term, we might see a total loss of 10% of government funding. This presents CMS with a challenge if we are not to increase parent fees to cover that short fall.

### Opportunities:

To counter this likely loss in funding, we need to increase our revenue in the other areas and continue to increase internal efficiencies. To minimise effects on parents, this means we need to look to other sources:

#### Service provision outside of CMS

Looking at making our educational services available to the broader community. By offering new services, such as professional consulting, teacher training and

professional development to third parties, or use of our facilities to community or business hirers, we can add revenue streams that were previously non-existent.

#### Focus on philanthropy and resource development

Improving our philanthropic support. By communicating and engaging better with the broader community, we increase our ability to secure support and donations to progress specific projects at the school. These could be new capital projects or programs such as our Karinya House scholarship.

#### Efficiency in operations

Continuing to develop and stream-line administration systems to ensure an efficient and well-managed school. We will be further developing our reporting and governance structures to increase transparency while focusing on increasing educational outcomes.

#### Improve best use of assets

As an example, in 2015 we reorganised some classes to provide better cohort groups for students, which allowed us to remove expensive rented demountables. This significantly improved our effective use of floor-space, which meant we were then able to access finance to commence a new permanent building with custom-built classrooms, flexible in their design, to be completed in 2016.



Strategic Pillar 3, Focus 3

# Enrolment Base

Enlarging our enrolment base meets several of our needs. It increases the total revenue from both school fees and government funding, as well as helping us to meet our mission of expanding the availability of Montessori education to the community. This can be achieved through increased enrolment and student retention.

## Challenges:

### Competition

There are a wide range of educational choices available to Canberra parents This affects us both with initial enrolments and with students leaving before the end of Cycle 3 to move to other schools, particularly those with middle-years intake of new students. Additionally, a new, private Montessori Cycle 1 and long-day care service will be opening in 2017, putting further pressure on our traditional entry point.

### Demonstrating value

Clearly articulating and proving the point of difference and value CMS offers to parents is key for parents to see CMS as the best option for all of the years we offer education for their children.

## Opportunities:

### Economies of Scale

Enlarging the student base allows us to use economies of scale to reduce our administrative and maintenance overheads, while sustaining or improving the quality of education services provided.

### Access to finance and funds

A consistent and reliable enrolment figure is key to demonstrating the need for Block Grant funds (government support for capital works) and accessing finance for business development or expansion.

### Expand services to the community

Greater enrolment numbers make additional services to the community possible which, in turn, can generate additional revenue for the school. For example, the holiday program trialled in 2015 has demonstrated the community and business potential of such an activity, while making CMS a far more attractive option to families in which both parents are working.



Strategic Pillar 2: Excellence in Business Operations

# Strategic Directions 2016 – 2025

- 1

**Improve enrolment base**  
We will increase student enrolment and retention, using data-driven models to support planning and enrolment drives
- 2

**Diversify our revenue streams**  
We will explore alternative revenue streams to reduce reliance on fees and government funding.
- 3

**Streamline operations with technology**  
We will continue the implementation of appropriate software systems to provide a framework for effective and simple delivery of key administrative, educational and organisation tasks, as well as transparency and documentation for the purposes of audit and regulatory requirements.
- 4

**Develop the Board and School Governance framework**  
We will improve the capacity of the Board to maximise its contribution in the modern educational environment.
- 5

**Renew Master Plan for the Holder Campus**  
We will create a ten-year list of strategic project priorities and timeframes for enhancing and developing the Holder Campus.

# APPENDIX





# Strategic Plan 2015-2025 Summary

Canberra Montessori School Values

RespectCommunity SpiritIndependenceCaringIndividuality

## Strategic Pillars

1. Excellence in Student Development	2. Excellence in Community	3. Excellence in Business Operations
<div>I. Holistic student achievement</div> <div>II. Montessori teaching excellence</div>	<div>I. Our immediate CMS community</div> <div>II. Alumni &amp; Friends of CMS</div> <div>III. The broader Canberra &amp; Australian community</div>	<div>I. Governance &amp; operations</div> <div>II. Business sustainability &amp; development</div>
<div><div>1. Data-driven student development</div><div>We will objectively collect, analyse and use data from every area of our education delivery to students to ensure we can accurately demonstrate student achievement, identify issues and opportunities early, provide transparent reporting to parents and make evidence-based decisions.</div></div> <div><div>2. Increase in-house training opportunities</div><div>We will create cadetships and other programs to provide in-house, approved Montessori training to talented, TQI certified graduate teachers.</div></div> <div><div>3. Become a centre of Montessori teacher training</div><div>We will become, or align with, a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to provide Montessori training and/or professional development to a range of applicants in Australia and worldwide.</div></div> <div><div>4. Life-long learning is for everyone</div><div>We will establish a culture of perpetual learning and knowledge sharing amongst all staff, just as we expect our staff to instil those same values in our students.</div></div> <div><div>5. Focus on Best Practice</div><div>We will look to all areas of education, Montessori or otherwise, for examples of best-practice, so that as a School we can continue to develop our own Montessori practice utilising the same scientific method practiced by Maria Montessori (observe, hypothesise, test, refine).</div></div>	<div><div>1. Prioritise parent engagement</div><div>We will embed parent engagement in children's education and effective family-school partnerships into the core business of the school.</div></div> <div><div>2. Diversify our community education</div><div>We will provide a broader range of parent-focused information in more accessible formats.</div></div> <div><div>3. Enhance communication</div><div>We will enhance and expand communication channels, recognising the different needs of current and past families and staff as well as prospective and non-community members.</div></div> <div><div>4. Create advocates</div><div>We will enable current and past families and staff to act as advocates for Montessori in their extended community.</div></div> <div><div>5. Encourage community participation</div><div>We will facilitate flexible and rewarding participation in our school community which will make members proud and happy to be part of it.</div></div> <div><div>6. Demonstrate leadership in Montessori</div><div>We will be a leader in demonstrating clearly to the Canberra and wider Australian Community the benefits of a best practice Montessori education.</div></div>	<div><div>1. Improve enrolment base</div><div>We will increase student enrolment and retention, using data-driven models to support planning and enrolment drives.</div></div> <div><div>2. Diversify our revenue streams</div><div>We will explore alternative revenue streams to reduce reliance on fees and government funding.</div></div> <div><div>3. Streamline operations with technology</div><div>We will continue the implementation of appropriate software systems to provide a framework for effective and simple delivery of key administrative, educational and organisation tasks as well as transparency and documentation for the purposes of audit and regulatory requirements.</div></div> <div><div>4. Develop the Board and School Governance framework</div><div>We will improve the capacity of the Board to maximise its contribution in the modern environment.</div></div> <div><div>5. Renew Master Plan for the Holder Campus</div><div>We will create a ten-year list of strategic project priorities and timeframes for enhancing and developing the Holder Campus.</div></div>

# Parent Engagement in their Child’s Learning

Excellence in educational outcomes for children happens best when a child’s parents or primary care-givers are engaged in their child’s education. For parents to be effectively engaged in the education of their children, there must be a strong, respectful and valued partnership between them and the school. Parent engagement involves:

- independence and problem solving.
- Social and emotional well-being.

This type of engagement has a huge indirect impact on the child, as it develops the child’s perception of themselves as a successful learner. Interestingly, and perhaps contrary to popular belief, this is far more important to the academic outcomes of a child than more ‘direct’ parent involvement (such as through additional instruction, academic coaching or help with homework).

**Family-led learning**

How parents support their child’s learning outside of school through everyday activities, and the behaviours, values and skills they help their children develop.

**Family-school partnerships**

How families and schools work together to support children’s achievements and connect what children learn at school and home.

Research suggests parents have the greatest impact when their engagement focuses on children’s:

- Belief in the importance and value of education.
- Motivation and engagement in learning.
- Sense of self-efficacy for learning and persistence.
- Sense of academic competence and their confidence as a learner.
- Underpinning skills for learning such as

For more information on Parent Engagement, please try the following resources from the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth:

- Summary table - The impact of Parental Engagement on a child’s education
- Report - “Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from Research”