



The Armidale
Waldorf School
and Boongaia Preschool
FOR RUDOLF STEINER EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT

Board and AGM 2025

Released June 2026

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“Receive the children in
reverence, educate them
with love and send them
forth in freedom.”

Rudolf Steiner



Acknowledgement of Country

Ilaan nyaka raakya-ti-na kyunta Anaiwan

Today we stand on Anaiwan ground

Niitika ayitika nakutika ruunpa ilaan

Let's sit, look and listen well today

Developed in collaboration with members of the Anaiwan language revival group

We acknowledge that our School stands on the Country of the Anaiwan people. We respect and acknowledge that here, people are surrounded by a sense of belonging, both ancient and contemporary, bestowed on us by one of the world's oldest living continuing cultures. We will share in caring for this Country together with the Anaiwan, Gumbaynggirr, Kamilaroi, and Dhunghutti Nations. We would like to pay respect to the Elders, past and present, of these Nations, and to those who are yet to come.

Context

Origin

The Armidale Waldorf School began in February 1985 as Boongaiai School, meaning ‘shaded place’. It opened as a Preschool, with Kindergarten and Primary classes added in the following years. Thanks to the generosity of benefactor Kit Wyndham, the school acquired its current bushland site, transforming existing buildings and adding uniquely designed classrooms. With ongoing community support and donated labour, the campus has flourished into a natural, nurturing learning environment. In 1993, the school adopted its current name and since 2025 offers education from Preschool to Class 12.

Vision

The Armidale Waldorf School provides a comprehensive education from early childhood through to secondary school, that works clearly out of anthroposophy and the indications of the late Dr Rudolf Steiner, providing children and youth with a foundation for life and inspiring them toward fulfilment of their destiny. It is a school where students are educated to take their place in the world in a meaningful way for humanity, secure in their earthly existence, with their souls nourished and their creative spirits liberated.

An integral part of the School is the College of Teachers, which has the purpose, responsibility and authority to lead the School on pedagogical matters; to maintain and develop the quality of the educational programs and experiences; and to enrich the spiritual heart and purpose of the School.

The School’s dynamic approach to education permeates every aspect of school life, with students, teachers, parents and friends all being recognised and valued as the unique spiritual beings that they are. The school community seeks to nourish and support this vision. The School has clear structures and processes to facilitate trust, objectivity and communication.

We empower each other with the mandate to take responsibility for the tasks identified, and to work together with an attitude of openness, honesty and trust.

We strive to make decisions through consensus, with honest and respectful discussion, and to ensure that all the voices in our school community have the opportunity to be heard.

We, the School community of students, teachers, parents and friends, interact with the world with courage and love; truth, beauty and goodness stand as an inspiration for all.

“Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able, of themselves, to impart purpose and direction to their lives”.

Rudolf Steiner.

Governance and Structure of The Armidale Waldorf School

The Armidale Waldorf School Ltd is a company limited by guarantee. Its objectives include ‘establishing and maintaining a preschool and a school, the latter comprising Primary and Secondary sections of the highest standard’ ... and ‘at all times to work out of and foster the educational philosophy and principles of the late Dr Rudolf Steiner in their application to the education of children and the training of teachers, including those that:

- emphasise the harmony of nature;
- respect the individuality of the child;
- foster self-determination in the child;
- develop the child’s creative and critical abilities;
- stress cooperation rather than competition, and
- stress active involvement of learners in a wide range of educational situations.’

Governance

The Armidale Waldorf School Board is the School’s and Preschool’s governing body, or board. It holds financial and legal responsibility for the conduct of all matters relating to the objects of the company, including capital and human resource management, strategic planning, financial planning and oversight, approval of policies and the management of risk. The College of Teachers is established under the Constitution to hold certain educational responsibilities, especially in relation to curricular matters.

The Board receives reports from College, the Principal and Business Manager, and has established committees from which it also receives advice. Additionally, it receives input from the School community at large, as well as class carers and parents/guardians, from time to time.

The management staff of the school consists of the Principal and Business Manager. There are support staff in the form of a finance officer and office administrative staff.

Membership of Board, College and Committees in 2024

The Armidale Waldorf School Board

Elected:
Mattias Grasselli (Chair until July 2025),
Susanne Hermesch (Chair from July 2025)
Peter McClenaghan (Deputy Chair until July 2025)
Rami Bahnas (Deputy Chair from July 2025),
Kip Werren (Treasurer), Martha Baker

Ex officio:
Zana Clarke (Principal)
Will Winter (Business Manager)

The Finance and Compliance Committee (TFCC)

Kip Werren (Chair)
Peter McClenaghan
Susanne Hermesch
Zana Clarke
Will Winter
Syed Raza
Other board members on a continual open invitation basis.

The College of Teachers

Michelle Hollands
Kim Bizo
Belinda ‘Woody’ Nano
Joanne Lowe

Chair of School Board Report

It is with a sense of achievement and immense gratitude that I write this report. 2025 has been an exceptional year for our School with significant growth and exceptional accomplishments. Our School celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2025. This is indeed a remarkable achievement as it represents 40 years of providing Steiner Education to our Community. I acknowledge the courage and vision of the founders of our School and the unwavering support of the whole School Community over the last four decades and into the future to support and sustain the courageous vision for our School.

Thank you and Acknowledgements

I thank all staff for their dedication in providing a nurturing, inclusive and supportive School environment that is the foundation for deep learning experiences of our students. This forms the foundation for life-long learning in each of our students based on Steiner Education which emphasises the learnings of the head, the hands and the heart of each individual student at their own pace. This foundation prepares our students well for fulfilling their purpose in life.

The Teachers of our School have excelled in providing a comprehensive education and learning experiences from Early Childhood to Year 12 based on Steiner Education. In 2025, we have much to celebrate. Over the last three years, the School has continuously expanded its curriculum in High School from Year 9 to Year 12. Our first students completed three HSC subjects in 2025 as part of their two-year journey through the Senior years. I am excited to see our first students completing their HSC in 2026.

Our teaching offerings would not be possible without deep-rooted support in administration, wellbeing of students, finance and maintenance of our buildings and grounds provided by the Support Team. The

never-ending enthusiasm and professionalism of every member of the Support Team has ensured that the growth of our School is well supported. The extension of systems and construction of new buildings to support our expanded offerings to the whole School community have been completed to meet the requirements of a larger School that expands to Year 12.

These achievements were guided by Zana Clarke and Will Winter. I thank Zana for her leadership in guiding the School in this expansion phase with its opportunities and challenges. A big thank you to Will for managing the process of implementing new systems and completion of our new buildings. Also to Michelle Hollands for stepping into Principal role while Zana was on leave. I appreciate and acknowledge all of you for your care and passion for our School.

Board Updates

The Board has seen multiple changes throughout the year. Mattias Graselli left as Chair of the Board. I thank Mattias for his dedication and commitment to the School in taking on this important role in a voluntary capacity as all Board Members do. Your knowledge of

Steiner Education and your guidance of the Board over the last three years have been exceptional.

We welcomed Gabrielle Price as the Company Secretary to the Board. Gabrielle has extensive knowledge and experience in supporting boards in regard to governance and legislative requirements. Thank you Gabrielle for your outstanding work on supporting the Board.

Board members have complimentary skill sets, and each Board member brings their own unique expertise to the Board. In 2025, Vicky Howell left the Board and we welcomed Rami Bahnas and Martha Baker as new Board members joining Peter McClenaghan and Kip Werren on the Board. I thank every Member for their contributions on the Board and for their excellent teamwork in bringing this Board to the School.

The Board continued focussing on maintaining and strengthening good governance for our School and made the strategic decision to engage a Company Secretary for our School. The Board also made the strategic decision to engage Somerset Education who have over 25 years' experience in the financial sustainability of non-government schools. Somerset Education has benchmarking tools as well as budgeting and reporting tools that improve the School's decision-making processes for long-term financial sustainability. These tools will be invaluable for our School as our School continues to grow.

Each year, the Board has two planning days where all Board members meet to explore future directions for our School. The Board also holds a Community Conversation each year. Feedback received from Community Conversation was around the topics

“The smallest thing in its rightful place can lead to the highest goals.”

Rudolf Steiner.

of Community Engagement, Pedagogy and Future Visions. I thank everybody who contributed to the Community Conversation, an important feedback mechanism for our School and the Board. The Board incorporates this feedback in the process of making strategic decisions about preparing our School for the future.

It takes a whole Community to support a School. Following on from the legacy of Mattias Graselli and using some of his words, I thank each one of you that feed and nourish the heart, body and soul of The Armidale Waldorf School.

Susanne Hermes, PhD, FTSE

Director and Board Chair

College of Teachers Report

Introduction

The college of Teachers works with the principles of Rudolf Steiner as they relate to the stages of child development and the development of human consciousness. The college strives to deepen their understanding of these principles and apply this to our pedagogical practices.

Current members of College

Kim Bizo, Belinda ‘Woody’ Nano, Joanne Lowe, Michelle Hollands

Focus Areas for 2025

Artistic/Practical Activities

College members have continued to work on Bothmer Gymnastics and Eurythmy sequences. We also worked on the development of a school song to represent and strengthen the cultural values of our school.

College Study

College has focussed on the following Pedagogical literature:

- The Joy of Profession by Christof Wiechert
- Moral imagination in a digital world: Holding space for childhood by Briony Lipton

We have continued to study ways to meet the diverse needs of the students in our care both pedagogically, through differentiated teaching and learning activities, and therapeutically through movement and the arts.

Educational and Operational Plan

College reviewed the ‘Educational and Operational Plan’, refining the pedagogical focus areas and discussing ways we can further build on the progress we have made through the three lenses of head, heart and hands. We have focussed on:

- Our music, library, camps and PE programs
- Continuing our strong environmental education and sustainability focus
- Further development of our whole school wellbeing program
- Creating a strong differentiated literacy and numeracy program
- The integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum

Environmental Programs

Environmental sustainability and developing a sense of reverence and stewardship for the natural environment remains a strong college focus and an integral part of our ‘Educational and Operational Plan’. College has instigated many environmental awareness activities such as bird week activities and raising funds for a koala hospital empowering the students to take action towards caring for the natural environment.

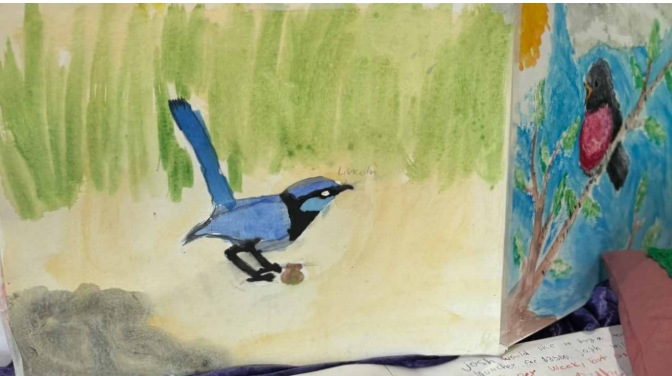
Regeneration projects

College initiated a grant application to regenerate a bush area in the school carpark. With the funding received, a regeneration program was organised involving students from all classes across the primary school. The focus of the program was on creating a native bird habitat requiring the students to research native birds in our local ecosystem and the optimal habitat required. The students worked together to prepare the soil, plant vegetation, and landscape the area. This project provided a wonderful opportunity for students to engage with sustainable practices in a meaningful way.

Nocturnal Ecology

A visit from a local ecologist, Dr Heidi Kolkert – Fauna Ecologist, specialising in threatened species management was arranged. Heidi has been working with us to study the endangered microbat colonies found on our campus. Her visit fostered an appreciation of the richness of our school’s nocturnal ecology and supported our commitment to the stewardship of our local environment.

We focused on developing sustainable perspectives across the school including tackling the issue of waste and minimising packaging and discussed opportunities to embed this in the curriculum.



Curriculum

The importance of craft, and in particular handcrafts, in the Waldorf curriculum was revisited. We reviewed the purpose and sequence of our activities and considered the effectiveness of projects in meeting the student’s developmental needs. Recommendations were made to be included in the craft and creative arts section of our curriculum.

Literacy remains a curriculum focus, and we explored ways to enrich our writing instruction across the primary school.

We reviewed the efficacy of our differentiated maths groups and discussed ways to increase their effectiveness.

Technology in the School

College reflected on the use of technology across the school and discussed its implementation in the primary school. We looked at what is currently provided and ways that this can be developed and improved in relation to an ever-changing technological context.

Focus was also given to the impacts of social media and screens on child development. This is an area that requires from collaboration with parents and the community as a whole.



Cultural inclusiveness

College has worked in support of deepening the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum which is a key deliverable in our ‘Educational and Operational Plan’.

Acknowledgement of Country

We initiated a process in collaboration with Aunty Sharon, our Aboriginal Cultural Support Worker, to develop an acknowledgement of country that is specific to our context and is meaningful to the students. After discussion with students and the gathering of student responses, an acknowledgement of country was developed that represents our context and based on input from our students.

Reconciliation Week

College, in collaboration with the RAP (Reconciliation Action Plan) working group, celebrated Reconciliation Week through the theme, “Bridging Now to Next”. A local Anaiwan man visited the school spending time with each class to share stories and talk to the students about reconciliation. There were activities planned throughout the week to encourage the students to listen, learn, and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and perspectives. We hope that through these experiences; the students will be inspired to strive towards healing and understanding and feel empowered to help build a united and inclusive society.

Festivals and Community events

College looked at the purpose of each festival and ways we could foster meaningful community engagement. Ideas were discussed and implemented to deepen the significance of these events.

We planned the Class 6 farewell and developed a shared understanding of how we can celebrate this transition in a meaningful and consistent way each year.

Child Study

Child Study is an important component Steiner pedagogy. It is a collaborative and reflective approach involving teachers coming together to develop a deeper understanding of a student’s physical, social emotional and intellectual development. Through this process, the group strives to find a shared understanding of a student’s need and a consistent response in support of the student’s growth. College initiated processes to ensure that child study sessions were held purposefully in faculty meetings. Key focus areas and processes were outlined to ensure that these in-depth studies of the needs of particular students were identified and plans made to respond to these in a consistent and collaborative way.

Friends of Waldorf

College liaised with representatives of “The Friends of Waldorf” to clarify the role of the group within the school structure and to establish communication channels to ensure efficient processes moving forward.

College will continue to meet each week to nurture the principles of Steiner pedagogy across the school.

Warm Regards,

The College of Teachers

Principal Report

Overview Whole School

In 2025, the Armidale Waldorf School marked 40 years of providing Steiner Education in the Armidale community. From humble beginnings, our school was guided by the vision of Kit Wyndham (1911-2005) and supported by a small group of committed parents and educators. Beginning with a playgroup, it has unfolded into the rich educational offering it is today.

Our 40-year celebrations reconnected past parents, teachers, students and families who were welcomed back into a vibrant and growing community. These moments of connection offer time to reflect and rejoice, celebrating the deeply transformative influence of the school, carried forward through its enduring vision.

Significantly, in this anniversary year, the school welcomed its first Senior Years cohort, completing the full Steiner Education pathway in Armidale. This milestone reflects the long-term vision of the school, with students undertaking a unique and immersive HSC program, completing their first stage of study and sitting their first HSC examinations in Term 4.

Finally, the school welcomed a new addition with the completion of the Teaching and Learning Centre. This new building provides dedicated spaces for wellbeing, including a Zen garden, as well as areas for learning support, small group teaching, and student support with staff, parents, and external providers.

It is a school where students are educated to take their place in the world in a meaningful way for humanity, secure in their earthly existence, with their souls nourished and their creative spirits liberated.

The Armidale Waldorf School Vision

Focus Areas 2025

The focus for 2025 was in the following key areas:

- Consolidating enrolments numbers throughout the school.
- Increase enrolments in the upper primary and high school to feed into the Senior Years.
- Continued work in numeracy and literacy to improve student outcomes in in the early years.
- Continuation of Student Learning and Wellbeing Assistants across all classes to assist students to access and engage with the curriculum and school life.
- Keeping our Reconciliation Action Plan at the forefront of everything we do.
- Excellence in Teaching through increased resources and professional development.

Expanding the High School – Senior Years (Class 11/12)

The Senior Years (Stage 6) program has had a strong first year, completing its first compressed curriculum cycle. The subjects offered were Mathematics Standard 1 and 2, Ancient History and Earth and Environmental Science.

The compressed curriculum structure allows space for deep learning, where subjects are brought to life through creative practice, excursions and engagement with visiting professionals and academics from the University of New England. This year the Senior Years cohort and teachers have cultivated a strong and positive social environment in which students have developed curiosity, independence, and a genuine willingness to explore and take educational risks.

Students have the added challenge of completing their first cycle of HSC examinations while in Year 11; however, they rose to the occasion, with students achieving a Band 5 in Earth and Environmental Science and Band 4 results in both Ancient History and Mathematics. These outcomes are to be celebrated, reflecting not only academic achievement but also the significant personal growth and sustained commitment shown throughout the year.

Students look forward to repeating the process, carrying forward their learning to reach further in both academic success and personal growth in the second compressed curriculum cycle, while also supporting peers who have entered the composite Stage 6 class and are beginning their own journey, guided by this shared experience.

Praise and congratulations are due to the students and faculty for such a fine first year of the Senior Program. Due to our size and simplicity, the success of the Armidale Waldorf School Senior Years Program rests almost wholly on teaching excellence, a positive social environment and effective pastoral care. This creates a high interpersonal demand on staff as well as students, causing each person to live into the ideals of Steiner education and philosophy to the best of their ability every day. The fruit of this labour is a learning community that is treasured by all those who participate in it: school leadership and administration, teachers, students and their families.



Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)



Guided by the NAIDOC Week 2025 theme, “The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy,” the RAP team focused on celebrating culture, supporting future generations, developing cultural respect and inclusivity, and building stronger partnerships with Elders, families, and the wider community.

Throughout the year the RAP team organised activities and events encouraging students and staff to engage in educational conversations around reconciliation, identity, culture, and respect.

NAIDOC Day was a highlight of the year, bringing together students, staff, families, Elders, performers, and community members for a day of shared learning and cultural celebration. The day began with a Smoking Ceremony led by Darrell Ahoy, followed by storytelling, cultural sharing activities including weaving, rope-crafting, clay work, and damper making. Local band, Terra Firma, was a particular highlight with students and staff engaging with the storytelling and cultural knowledge shared through music and performance. Finally, we marked 50 years of NAIDOC through a display accompanied by a discussion led by Candice Strong, supporting reflection on the history and continuing significance of NAIDOC Week.

The RAP team encourages sharing of local cultural knowledge within the school, drawing on the wisdom and experience of Elders and community members. This year we were presented a booklet created by Aunty Raelene, Callum Dixon, and Darrell Ahoy focusing on local plants, their uses, and Language. Copies were donated to the school to support future learning by staff and students, enhancing bushwalk activities and the inclusion of local cultural knowledge in classroom learning. We have also actively sought to expand our local networks, including connecting with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG). Nurturing connection to local Anaiwan community, and other passionate education professionals, will continue to be an area of focus for the RAP team.

Overall, 2025 was a highly successful and positive year for the RAP Team, thanks to the commitment, collaboration, and enthusiasm shown by Elders, staff, students and families. The RAP Team looks forward to continuing this work into the future, building stronger relationships, increasing cultural knowledge, and creating opportunities for the next generation to learn, lead, and thrive.

- Aunty Sharon and the RAP Team 2026



Community, Events and Festivals

Seasonal Festival and Community events are a vital part of our school life. They offer opportunities for connection, celebration, and shared purpose—bringing together students, families, staff, and the wider public. Festivals, in particular, are an integral aspect of Steiner education, marking the turning points of the year with beauty, reverence, and joy. They help establish a strong yearly rhythm for our children. Each Festival will include a creative activity, cooking, singing, and sometimes dancing and/or instrumental performances. These gatherings nourish social warmth and foster a deep sense of belonging amongst students, staff and families.

Highlights for 2025 include:

Internal Events

- **Autumn Festival** (Term 1) – harvesting produce and preparing for winter.
- **Winter Festival** (Term 2) – Finding inner light with a sense of reverence. Featuring a Welcome to Country, singing, lantern spiral, high school fire performance, and community bonfire.
- **NAIDOC Day** (Term 3) – Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony, Elders storytelling, and hands-on cultural education activities.
- **Spring Festival** (Term 3) – floral wreath making and energetic songs and dancing.
- **Summer Festival** (Term 4) – a celebration of Summer and end of year.
- **Spring Fair** – fundraising event with volunteer run activities, games and food stalls.

External Events

- **Armidale Show** (Term 1)– entered artworks, scarecrow, and produce in the local show.
- **The Armidale Autumn Parade** (Term 1)– an annual event all students enjoy partaking in, with this year our strongest turn out from students and families, resulting in Best Float.
- **Armidale Council Lights Festival** (Term 2) – High School students performed their Winter Festival fire performance to a crowd of hundreds of local residents.
- **DaVinci Decathlon** (Term 1) – teams self-selected to take part in this academic event.



Library

The school library serves as both a resource centre and a welcoming community space, supporting students, staff, and families. It is regularly used for recreational lunchtime visits, small group learning, meetings, class plays, music performances, and other creative activities.

In 2025, a new library management system (Oliver) was introduced, improving access to and organisation of the collection for both staff and students. Alongside this, significant work was undertaken to catalogue materials and improve the library’s stocktaking system, supporting greater accuracy and visibility of the collection. Updates to shelf signage, the introduction of engaging displays, and the addition of comfortable floor cushions have also made the library more accessible and inviting for students.

There has been a noticeable increase in student engagement with the library, particularly in independent book selection and reading for enjoyment. Students are increasingly confident in finding and choosing books that reflect their own interests and abilities, and many are choosing to spend their break times in the library. Looking ahead, the library will continue to grow as a space that supports a lifelong love of reading and learning.

Tuck Shop

We offer wholesome food every Friday which is often created from produce grown in our own vegetable garden.

Working Bees

Working bees were held once per term to contribute to tasks that are important to the school’s maintenance and educational support. Participation offers the opportunity to contribute to the warmth and sense of place that parents feel for the campus and school community.



Summer



Autumn



Winter



Spring

Early Childhood Playtime and Preschool

Playtime

Playtime continues to be a cherished part of our community, offering a Steiner playgroup for children aged 0-3 years and their parents. This year Playtime benefitted from an updated outdoor play area, featuring new swings, a beautiful hand crafted gate and renewed vegetation. With two sessions per week, it offers a space where families can enjoy nature-based play while getting to know others in a relaxed, supportive environment, creating a sense of belonging in the community.

Preschool

In 2025, our preschool successfully undertook the Assessment and Rating process, meeting all seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard. This reflects our ongoing commitment to high-quality, child-centred learning, where children's social, emotional, and cognitive development is nurtured through experiences inspired by Steiner principles and the Early Years Learning Framework.

We continued to maintain balanced enrolments, prioritising children transitioning to kindergarten, while also beginning to prioritise 2-3 day enrolments to better support continuity and access to 'Start Strong funding'. Festivals were a highlight of the year. This year, we introduced a picnic-style format, allowing families to provide food for their own families rather than a shared plate. This created a more relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, supported inclusivity, accommodated dietary needs and allergies, and encouraged a sense of shared community.

The year included staffing transitions, as the new Nominated Supervisor began, working alongside the Educational Leader to ensure continuity of leadership and program quality. 2025 has been a year of growth, reflection, and continuity, maintaining a nurturing, inclusive environment where every child can explore, imagine, and thrive.

Key Events in 2025

- **Seasonal Festivals:** Each term, we celebrated the changing seasons with festivals that brought together children, families, and the wider community. These celebrations were a wonderful opportunity to connect with nature, through storytelling, songs, and creative activities. The festivals are a key part of our rhythm, allowing children and families to engage with the natural world in a way that feels joyful and meaningful.
- **Open Day (Term 2):** We welcomed prospective families for 2025 enrolments to experience what our preschool has to offer. The Open Day provided families with a chance to visit the preschool, meet educators, and learn about our approach to education through the Steiner philosophy.
- **Whole-School Events:** The preschool also took part in the school's broader celebrations, including seasonal festivals, NAIDOC Day, and Parent Information and Fundraising Nights. These events gave our preschool families the chance to come together as a community, building deeper connections and a sense of shared purpose.

Primary & Secondary Kindy to Class 12



Student Wellbeing Programme

Our wellbeing program continued to grow through new initiatives, additional staffing, and the strengthening of foundational wellbeing practices. A key focus was the development of a whole-school approach to wellbeing, with proactive and responsive supports, aimed at building students’ social, emotional, and relational capacity, while ensuring our approach remains grounded in Steiner pedagogy and aligned with contemporary best practice across the sector.

Key initiatives included:

- Commencement of our Wellbeing Facilitator – Social Worker. This role encompasses the provision of brief intervention style counselling, referral pathways, individual and group psychoeducation sessions, consultation around IEPs’ (Individual Education Plan) and policy development, and collaboration with leadership.
- Professional development for Primary and Secondary staff including attending Independent Schools New South Wales Wellbeing Conference and Mackillop’s Season for Growth facilitator training, with further training planned for 2026.
- Enhancing collaborative working relationships with local wellbeing teams and services such as CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services), Headspace, Armidale Secondary College, Betterspace Wellbeing, Independent Schools NSW, and Storm & Strength Therapeutic Services.

- Personal Digital Device policy review to ensure greater alignment with developmental stages, best practice research findings, and legislative changes.
- Enhancing student-focussed spaces for accessing wellbeing support, including the High School Zen Garden and the Primary Wellbeing Arts Table. These inviting calm lunch spaces are supervised by a wellbeing staff member, providing students an additional avenue to seek support for social emotional needs whilst gaining exposure to simple self-care and mindfulness practices.
- Classroom-based wellbeing programs continued in both the Primary and Secondary, covering topics such as building respectful relationships, self-management and interpersonal skills. This expanded to include specific focus areas as needed covering topics such as online safety, and exploration of gender identity constructs. Psychoeducation sessions to our Senior Years students focussed on stress management and self-care leading into their first round of HSC exams.
- The daily breakfast program continues to provide students both a nutritious start to their day and an opportunity for informal wellbeing check-ins.

Student Learning Support

The student support team played a critical role in supporting student learning and development. The team, which includes Student Learning Assistants and Wellbeing staff, provided in-class and one-on-one support for students from Kindergarten to Class 12.

- Screening of key literacy and numeracy skills was conducted at the start, mid-point, and end of the year. Results informed targeted interventions, adjustments to teaching programs, and identified focus areas for Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- PAT testing was conducted in Term 4 for Classes 4 and 6 as part of a national research project. The data gathered will guide future teaching practices and support ongoing student development.
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were collaboratively developed with parents and students to support learning and wellbeing outcomes.
- A small group approach was implemented to support diverse ability levels and learning needs across Stage 2 and Stage 3. This enabled more targeted instruction, immediate feedback, and timely intervention, supporting increased engagement and confidence in literacy and numeracy.
- The School worked with the NSW Centre for Effective Reading to provide individualised and comprehensive reading programs for identified students.
- Assistive technology, including voice-to-text and text-to-speech tools, were utilised for students with specific learning needs, supporting greater independence and improved access to the curriculum.



Educational Programs and Curriculum

Music

Music is central to our curriculum, with students participating in a variety of activities including class music, singing, recorder, the string programme, instrumental programme and ensemble playing, fostering creativity, rhythm, and social connection.

Individual lessons were offered by a range of teachers from the community including the New England Conservatorium of Music. We continued to offer Fiddlers Club as an afterschool activity for students wanting more playing opportunities as well as a before school Choral Club.

There were a range of concerts through the year for students to share their musical journey with families and the wider school community. The opportunity to perform is a source of great joy for the students and provides them with the motivation to continue to practice and work towards mastery of their chosen instrument.



French

Classes from K-8 enjoyed weekly French lessons. In the junior years the students learnt basic French through song and games while the high school students learnt a more practical application of French through developing their grammatical skills. As the year progressed, students built on the vocabulary learnt in each lesson through the different topics:

- **Kindergarten** were exposed to the French vocabulary through nursery rhymes, singing songs, and reciting poems. There was a strong focus on movement in class instruction.
- **Class 1/2** were given an introduction of French through movement, songs, poems, storytelling and games. The language used and vocabulary taught will enable the students to develop their knowledge of greetings, expressing how they are feeling.
- **Classes 3/4** learnt more vocabulary through stories and activities. Poems and actions were repeated week to week to revise and enforce what the students have learnt. Students complemented their learning through drawing pictures with labels.
- **Class 5 and Class 6** Began applying French through collaborative dialogue and story writing, developing understanding of vocabulary and sentence patterns, including time and seasonal language, while building confidence in using French in guided classroom contexts.
- **Class 7** Developed conversational French skills including greetings, introductions, and social exchanges, while expressing personal information such as age, family, and preferences. Students built vocabulary across everyday topics and engaged in simple dialogue with increasing confidence.
- **Class 8** Developed extended conversational French through social interactions, including ordering food, making polite exchanges, and responding in everyday situations. Students developed confidence engaging in dialogue and connecting language learning to cultural experiences.

Practical Arts

Craft, textiles, and applied arts are used to help students build fine-motor skills and develop skills in perseverance. During the year students create many projects that range in complexity. Projects are selected for their purpose, age-appropriateness, and build upon their skills from year to year.

2024 core projects undertaken:

- **Class 1** embroidered name tag for chair bags, and wove recorder bags in a rainbow pattern
- **Class 2** knitted animals and hand-sewed bags
- **Class 3** crochet cushion cover
- **Class 4** cross-stitched pen pouches and pin and needle pouches with felt
- **Class 5** crafted leather compass pouches carved wooden eggs and embroidered treble recorder cases
- **Class 6** embossed leather bookcover, carved wooden egg, and embroidered playing card pouches
- **Class 7** wooden boxes, lanterns
- **Class 8** dodecahedron wooden lanterns, fabric bucket hats
- **Class 9/10** cooking (C9 only), mountain bike riding (C10 only), wooden spoon carving, watercolour, lino printing, clay full busts



Physical Education, Games and Sport

In addition to regular lunchtime activities, PDHPE lessons, and movement exercises in classrooms; all classes end the week with Friday afternoon games (in the primary) and sport. We provide a varied program that gives students exposure to unique sports and those which support the development of coordination, stamina and teamwork. We do not encourage competitive sports in the primary school, instead, we use movement to develop social skills and an embodied sense of personal capability.

Sports held this year:

- **Swimming (Terms 1 & 4)** Swimming lessons for Classes 1-4. Life Saving course for High School students.
- **Rock Climbing & Basketball (Term 3)** Classes 3-6 participated in weekly sessions at Sport UNE
- **Gymnastics (Term 3 & Term 4)** Primary (T3) High School (T4) gymnastics and ninja training at Armidale City Gym.
- **Netball (Term 4)** High School students participated in mixed netball skills and game play (with class 6 joining the last 3 weeks for student bonding).
- **PCYC (Term 4)** Class 5 & 6 learn mixed ball skills through an instructor run group of activities working on reflexed and mixed ball skills.
- **Sport UNE Recreational Gym (all year)** Senior class partake in self-regulation and movement activities in the Sport-UNE recreational gym
- **Whole-School Sporting Events-** Participation is through self-nomination and performance is and tracked for personal achievement. High School students support younger students and help to facilitate events.
 - Swimming Carnival (Term 1)
 - Cross Country (Term 2), *cancelled due to weather*
 - Athletics Carnival (Term 3)
 - End of Year Swimming Day (Term 4)

Class Plays

Class plays are an integral part of Steiner education, known as pedagogical dramas. They support both social and emotional development while deepening students’ connection to the curriculum. Plays foster class cohesion, creativity, and individual growth, with each performance carefully chosen to align with students’ developmental stages and Main Lessons.

- Class 1/2 (Term 3): **The King of Ireland’s Son**, complementing the Narrative Main Lesson.
- Class 3/4 (Term 3): **Loki the Doer of Good and Evil**, linked to Ancient Nordic World Main Lesson
- Class 5 (Term 2): **The Light of Isis and Osiris**, a follow on from Ancient Egypt in Term 1.
- Class 6 (Term 4) **Gilgamesh the Hero**, aligned with the Ancient Persia and Babylon Main Lesson
- Class 7 (Term 1): **King Arthur**, aligned to English Mythologies and stories Main Lesson.
- Class 8 (Term 2) **As You Like It**, aligned to English Art of Communication Main Lesson.
- Class 9/10 (Term 3): **Romeo & Juliet** – aligned to English Shakespearean Main Lesson, performed in the High County Theatre, students took on backstage and front-of-house roles, gaining insight into the full scope of theatrical production



Environmental Education and Gardening

A large focus of this year’s environmental education has been the implementation of the project aims of the IEU Environment Grant based around the regeneration of a section of remnant bush in the centre of the school’s car park.

The project engaged the students across the classes on many levels. Following a presentation and discussion with local ornithologist, Dr. Steve Debus, each class was allocated a bird to focus their research on. Class 1/2 looked at local seed eaters – diamond firetails and double-barred finches. Class 3/4 focused on insect eaters – the Eastern yellow robin and the superb blue wren, and Classes 5 and 6 researched nectarivores – the white-eared honey eater and the Eastern spinebill.

The students did beautiful work in their books and thoroughly enjoyed making bird puppets, with many students using these puppets in their games. The project encouraged a greater interest in the birds we see each day in the school grounds, with the students using the woodland bird books, donated by Local Land Services, to try to identify them. Parents and staff brought in nests they had collected over time that had fallen from trees in storms. This helped to create a very rich experience.

Community engagement with the project at the school working bee was strong, and the area benefited from

the enthusiasm and work hours. Weeds were removed, holes dug for planting, and rocks positioned to slow runoff and reduce erosion. In the week following the working bee, we decided to reposition some of the rocks, but when we lifted the first one, there was a burrowing frog underneath. A new habitat for different creatures had been created in a short time.

In consultation with the local community nursery, ‘The Armidale Tree Group’, plants were selected which would create habitat and enhance the biodiversity of the site. Students planted these over a series of planting days, and they continue to water and care for these plants to ensure their survival in a difficult site.

Through the community engagement process, a past parent came forward and worked with older students to design and create a beautiful mosaic sign for the area. Steppingstones embedded with pieces of local granite in different patterns were made with support from the maintenance team, and placed in the site to reduce pressure on the vegetation.

The project engaged students, staff, and the wider community in many ways, providing opportunities to engage with and learn from the natural world as well as meeting Learning Outcomes across the curriculum. It has been wonderful to watch the new plants grow, and to see birds using the bird baths that were installed.

Camps

Camps are a rich part of our curriculum, offering students meaningful experiences that support identity, community, and connection to the natural world. Designed to match each developmental stage, camps foster independence, collaboration, and self-reflection through hands-on learning in nature.

In Primary School, camps gradually increase in length and challenge. From a first sleepover to longer outdoor adventures, students develop resilience, class unity, and personal responsibility through shared tasks like tent setup and campfire cooking.

In High School, camps introduce greater complexity. Students take ownership of planning, gear management, and group dynamics. These experiences link academic learning with real-world skills, building confidence, adaptability, and environmental awareness.

Camps this year:

- **Class 1/2** (Term 3): Early in the term the class had a sleepover in the library, followed by a camp at Green valley Farm later in the term.
- **Class 3/4** (Term 2) Three-day music camp at Thalgarrah. (Term 3) A four-day farm camp at a range of local farms.
- **Class 5** (Term 1) Camp to Illaroo and Dorrigo National Parks studying botany & (Term 2) Casuarina Strings camp.
- **Class 6** (Term 1) Camp to Gibraltar National Park and Station Creek, observing landscapes and environmental studies. (Term 4) Canberra Camp, exploring the federation of Australia in the Capital.
- **Class 7** (Term 1) HSIE Mapping camp, Thungutti Campground, (Term 3) hiking camp along the Yuraygir Coastal walk observing landscapes and botany.
- **Class 8** (Term 1) HSIE Mapping camp, Thungutti Campground, (Term 4) Warrumbungles remote hiking camp.
- **Class 9/10** (Term 4) Myall Lakes Canoeing Camp (Term 2) Great North Walk
- **Senior Years (Class 11/12)** (Term 1) Bundjalung National Park study camp with Sheerwater Steiner School



Professional Development

Staff had many opportunities to engage with professional development. We host dedicated professional development days every term, as well funding regular professional development opportunities throughout the year as required.

- Whole School professional development:**
- NCCD and Disability legislation training (Term 1)
 - Bothmer Gymnastics with Drank Stanley & Louise Swanson (Term 1)
 - Armidale Fire and Safety, Fire Training with Brian (Term 2)
 - Shelley Davidow, Steiner Education as a transformative Journey (Term 2)
 - Andrew Hill, Classroom Management and The first 100-years of Steiner Education (Term 3)
 - Internal Facilitation, School management system training (Term 3)
 - David Liknaitzky (Term 4)
 - First Aid/CPR/Anaphylaxis Training (Term 4)
 - Child Protection Training, AIS Identifying and Responding to Children and Young People at Risk (Online throughout year)

- Teacher-focussed professional development:**
- Early Childhood Intensives at Samford Valley Steiner School Queensland
 - Child Development studies – Steiner Teacher Curriculum Intensives
 - Maths joy of Numbers at the Sydney Rudolph Steiner College
 - Primary Creative intensives at the Sydney Rudolph Steiner College
 - Arts Integration – Steiner Teacher Curriculum Intensives
 - Curriculum Studies – Steiner Teacher Curriculum Intensives
 - Classroom Practice – Steiner Teacher Curriculum Intensives
 - Experience in the kindergarten class “mentor training”
 - Steiner Teaching Foundations
 - January High School intensives at Newcastle Steiner School
 - STANSW Conference and ½ day PD at PLC (Highschool)
 - EBE Business Studies PD (Highschool)
 - Wellbeing course at the AIS (Highschool)
 - PD around Networks (New HSC topic) (Highschool)
 - Reading The Anxious Generation by Jonothan Haidt (Highschool)

External Compliance

- We had a total of 19 students sitting NAPLAN this year. Five from class 3, four students from class 5, six from class 7, and three from Class 9.
- NCCD (National Consistent Collection of Data) The school completed its yearly submission entering data on disabilities and student’s needs.
- Child Protection. All staff undertook child protection training during the year in the form of the AIS Identifying and Responding to Children and Young People at Risk Online Course.
- Report Writing. The Armidale Waldorf School sends out two formal reports to parents; one mid-year and one at the end of the year. This is supplemented by parent-teacher meetings offered twice a year.

Conclusion

“Receive the children in reverence, educate them in love, and send them forth in freedom.”
Rudolf Steiner.

In 2025 we saw our first Senior year class complete their first-year sitting the HSC exams along with all other students in the region. We are all so proud of their results along with their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

Moving into the Learning support centre allowed for a great sense of unity as students, staff, parents and external providers came together in this new space.

Our teaching, education, and wellbeing support staff did an amazing job of supporting students throughout the year offering many rich educational experiences. In the school setting, we acknowledge and have deep gratitude for the traditional lands on which we work, learn and play – the cultural richness that surrounds us and the beautiful bush setting that nourishes the children, the adults guiding them and to all those that visit our school.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Board Chair, Mattias Grasselli, and the incoming Chair, Susanne Hermesch and to the whole Board, for their guidance and support; Will Winter (Business Manager), Rosy McGrath (Early Childhood Coordinator), Michelle Hollands (Head of Primary), and Chris O’Neill (Head of Secondary) for working so strongly as a leadership team; the College of Teachers for their commitment to inner work, and their work with child study; all the teaching staff for their dedication to teaching and love of the children; the administration staff for their behind-the-scenes support of the children, parents/carers, teachers and Leadership team.

We are indeed very lucky with all those that gather here in a space where we acknowledge the strengths and gifts one another bring to our school community. It is the children, the parents and carers, the teachers, the support staff, and the Board all working together that allows the school to continue to grow, rise to the challenges presented and provide the richness of a Steiner education – for all the children in our care now and into the future.

Zana Clarke
Principal

Summary of Financial Information

Financial Performance

The school continued to grow in 2025, with enrolments increasing by 10.1% year-on-year, supported by the introduction of the Senior Years (Class 11 and 12) and our focus on providing individualised education across all stages of childhood development. This growth led to higher income from tuition fees, levies and Federal Government funding. Looking ahead, the school is focused on stabilising its financial position through steady enrolment growth and a shift toward refining operations under the new educational offering model, in support of long-term sustainability.

Capital Works and Maintenance

In early 2025, we completed construction of the Teaching and Learning Centre, increasing space for learning support, administration and wellbeing. This included upgrades to surrounding outdoor areas, with improvements to landscaping, fencing, and water management across the carpark and access road.

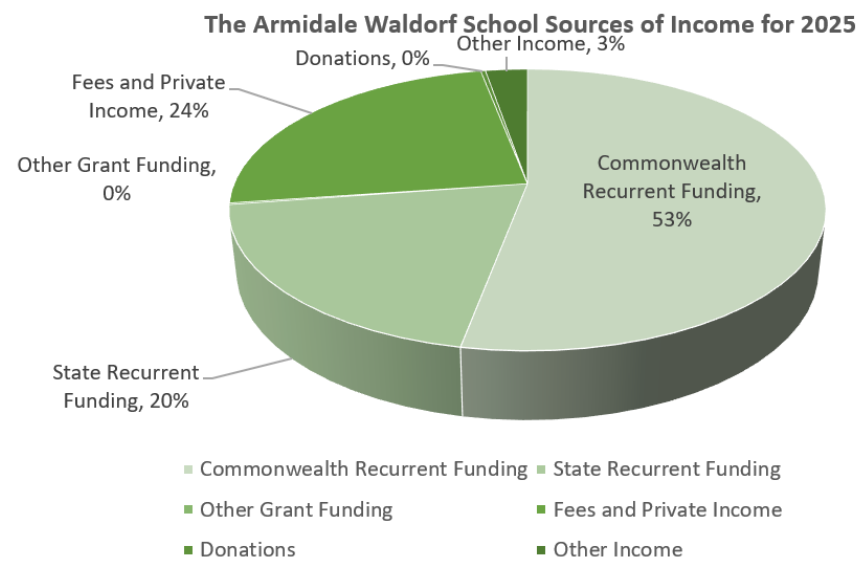
A key outcome of the project is the expanded outdoor space, now shared by our Playtime group and High School wellbeing team. The ‘Zen Garden’ provides shaded grassed areas and a calm environment for student recreation, as well as a peaceful setting for individual learning and wellbeing support.

Continuing our commitment to outdoor education, we commenced construction of the Primary Outdoor Classroom, due for completion in 2026, and expanded the Agriculture Plot with the planting of citrus and fruit trees. These, along with maturing herb and vegetable beds, will provide long-term benefit to the school community.

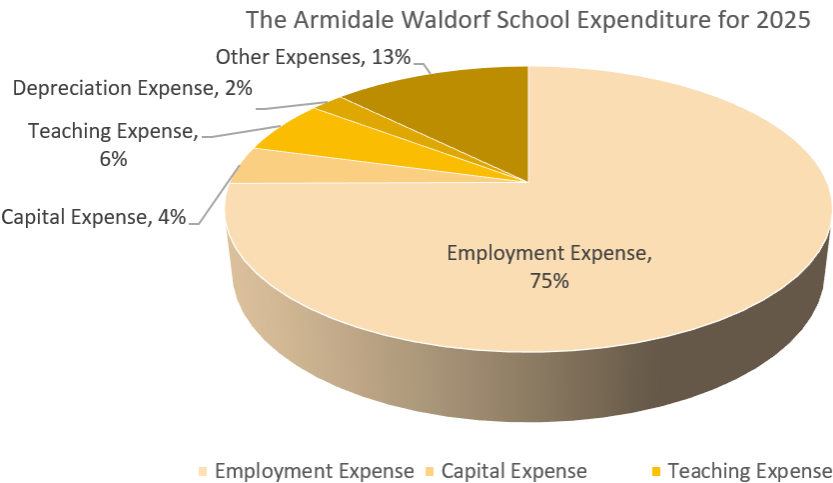
Operating Costs

Strategic expansion has driven increased expenditure across staffing, resourcing and support structures, while continued investment in specialist programmes has strengthened the breadth and quality of the school’s offering. Although these initiatives have contributed to higher short-term costs, they remain aligned with the school’s long-term strategic priorities to enhance educational outcomes and support sustainable growth.

Graph 1. Sources of Income



Graph 2. Expenditure





The Armidale
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