

KidsXpress Position on Thriving Kids



Creating the conditions for early recognition, engagement and participation

KidsXpress is strongly aligned with the direction of Thriving Kids, delivering early, place-based support embedded within schools and community settings for children with developmental delay, emerging neurodevelopmental differences (including autism), and trauma-related behavioural and emotional challenges.

Supporting children to participate and engage in everyday environments

Our model supports children in early childhood and primary school settings, with a **strong focus on the early years**, to develop the behavioural, emotional and social capabilities required to participate in everyday environments, including school, home and community settings. Through integrated expressive therapy and trauma-informed practice, we work directly with children while also **strengthening the capability of the adults and systems** around them.

Independent evaluation of the KidsXpress School Partnership Program by the University of Sydney's Matilda Centre (2025) demonstrates statistically significant improvements in children's wellbeing (CORS +4.79, $p < .001$), alongside improved school attendance and increased educator confidence in supporting students with behavioural and emotional needs. These outcomes reflect **meaningful improvements in children's ability to engage in learning and function** within their everyday environments.

Building capability within schools, families and communities

KidsXpress **delivers both targeted intervention and system-wide capability building**.

We provide individual and group support for children with additional needs, while working alongside educators, parents and carers to embed consistent, effective responses across classrooms, homes and care settings. This ensures that gains in regulation, behaviour and engagement are sustained beyond individual sessions.

This capability-building approach **strengthens workforce** confidence and supports more consistent, trauma-informed responses across the environments where children live and learn.

Enabling early recognition and reaching children who would otherwise miss out

KidsXpress' School Partnership Program supports early recognition of emerging needs and timely referral for further assessment where appropriate, including for children with neurodevelopmental differences such as autism and developmental delay.

By embedding within schools over multiple years, KidsXpress becomes a trusted part of the school community. This sustained presence allows therapists to build relationships with students, educators and families, creating the conditions where emerging needs can be recognised early, particularly where barriers such as cost, language, stigma or delayed help-seeking may otherwise prevent access to support.

Through a **combination of universal and targeted supports**, including teacher training, classroom observation, structured playground-based group programs, parent engagement and kindergarten transition programs, KidsXpress is able to observe children across multiple settings and over time. This enables **early identification of behavioural, emotional and developmental needs** that may not yet be formally recognised.

Importantly, KidsXpress' **use of expressive, non-verbal modalities** provides developmentally appropriate pathways for children to communicate and engage, particularly for those who may struggle to articulate their experiences. This approach supports earlier engagement and more accurate understanding of children's needs.

This embedded, relational model allows KidsXpress to reach children who may otherwise remain unseen by traditional service models, and to provide early support that can reduce escalation and the need for more intensive and higher-cost services over time.

Delivering across diverse settings

KidsXpress delivers this model across diverse settings, including long-term school partnerships in NSW, community-based delivery through the Canterbury Medicare Mental Health Centre, and centre-based services at Macquarie Park and in Tumut in regional NSW.

Through multi-year school partnerships, KidsXpress works with eight primary schools, reaching over 2,500 children annually while embedding targeted student support and whole-school capability building. In community and health settings, including the Canterbury Medicare Mental Health Centre, KidsXpress provides accessible entry points for families who may otherwise not engage with services. In regions such as the Snowy Valleys, where access to early support for children is extremely limited, KidsXpress plays a critical role in **reaching children who may otherwise miss out entirely**.

Contributing to effective place-based models

As Thriving Kids shifts toward more integrated and standardised approaches, place-based and hub models will play an important role in improving access and coordination. However, models that focus solely on access and coordination will not achieve the intended outcomes without **embedded, evidence-informed intervention** that supports both children and the systems around them.

KidsXpress is well positioned to contribute to this model as a delivery partner, bringing a proven, school-based intervention model, demonstrated impact on children's participation, engagement and behaviour, expertise in working with children with trauma-related and neurodevelopmental needs, and a capability-building approach that strengthens both workforce and parent confidence, supporting more sustainable outcomes over time.

We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the design and delivery of Thriving Kids, particularly in embedding effective intervention and capability-building within place-based models.