



Hunter School for Children with Autism 2005 Annual Report

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) operates six schools located in the Sydney Metropolitan area, the Hunter region, the Central Coast and the South Coast. These schools cater for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) who require specialised education programs.

The primary focus of the schools is to equip students with the skills to enable them to integrate into the wider community and to become as independent as is possible. In recognition of the special needs of students with ASDs, the ratio of staff to students is low. Aspect schools provide educational services for children aged 4 to 16 years. Aspect has a policy of transitioning students with ASDs into more inclusive settings. These settings include mainstream, support classes or special schools. The decision to transition a student is based on the student's ability to cope in a less specialised setting and is made by both families/carers and staff as part of the Individual Education Plan.

All Aspect schools comprise a base school/administrative centre and a range of satellite classes. A satellite class is an autism specific support class operated by an Aspect base school but which is located in either a NSW Department of Education & Training or Catholic Education Office mainstream school. Satellite classes are an important step in the transition of students with ASDs into wider educational settings.

The Hunter School for Children with Autism caters for students from a wide geographical area encompassing Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and the Lower Hunter Valley.

Lake Macquarie — a double satellite class is located at St Kevin's Primary School, Cardiff

Newcastle — the base/administration centre is located at Shortland, with four classes.

Lower Hunter — double satellite classes are located at Our Lady of Lourdes, Tarro and Holy Spirit, Abermain.

The school provides a specialised curriculum and community integration programs, supported by a multidisciplinary team comprising a speech pathologist and school counsellor.

1. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN STATEWIDE TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS

Every student has an individual program developed in consultation with families, after careful assessment of their strengths and needs in all environments. The schools' curriculum is based on the core competencies of autism including social, communication, sensory and behavioural needs which are integrated into the NSW Board of Studies mainstream curriculum — the Key Learning Areas (KLAs). The school uses a multi-disciplinary team approach, working collaboratively with families to develop the best possible outcomes for the students. The school provides information and training workshops to families to help them support their child.

No Year 3, Year 5 or Year 7 students participated in the Basic Skills Test (BST), i.e. the Primary Writing Assessment (PWA) or English Literacy & Language Assessment (ELLA). In 2005 1 student of Year 3 age, no students of Year 5 age and no students of Year 7 age attended the Hunter School. To protect the student's identities the area of Individual Student Achievement has not been reported.

2. TEACHER STANDARDS

The school employs fifteen teachers in permanent and part time positions. All teachers have teaching qualifications awarded from a higher education institution within Australia.

3. RETENTION RATES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Years compared	Year 7 total enrolment on census date 2002	Year 10 enrolment on census date 2005	Year 7 enrolment at census date remaining in Year 10 on census date	Apparent retention rate	Actual retention rate
2002/2005	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

As for all of Aspect's schools, the Hunter School for Children with Autism has a policy of transitioning students with autism spectrum disorders into more inclusive settings. The decision to transition a student is based on the student's ability to cope in a less specialised setting and is made by families/carers and staff as part of the Individual Education Plan. The success of the schools' transition programs reflects the small number of students years 7-10 continuing their education at Aspect Schools. The Hunter School for Children with Autism currently does not cater to secondary age students.

4. ENROLMENT POLICIES AND PROFILES

STANDARD 1: SERVICE ACCESS

1.1: SERVICE ENTRY

1.1.2 Service Entry: Schools

Children with an autism spectrum disorder who require specialised educational placement in an Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) school and who meet the criteria

for enrolment can access the enrolment process based on relative need and subject to the availability of a suitable placement.

Aspect recognises that children with an autism spectrum disorder have the right to access and equity of services regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity, religion, or language. As a service provider Aspect will respond appropriately and sensitively to the needs of the entire community, including people from indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds within the limit of available resources.

When to use

When parents or carers are seeking placement for a child with an autism spectrum disorder in an Aspect school.

Guidelines

Eligibility for enrolment in an Aspect school requires a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder by either a paediatrician or psychiatrist and a recent cognitive assessment by a psychologist.

Procedures

Application Process

An application for school placement can be made for a child from 3.9 years to 15 years of age by parents or carers. Application forms are available from the office of the Director, Education & Research and each Aspect school.

As part of the application process the parents or carers agree, in writing, to the release of information from other agencies where appropriate (note: such information is only sought in order to assist the Eligibility Committee to establish eligibility for services in consultation with the family).

A current psychological assessment (no more than 12 months old) and a report from a paediatrician or psychiatrist diagnosing an autism spectrum disorder must accompany the application.

An application processing fee is to be paid at the time of the application.

Approval Process

Eligibility is determined by Aspect's Eligibility Committee which meets once a term.

Applicants deemed **eligible for services:**

If deemed eligible the child may either be offered services or placed on a waitlist for services, depending on availability. After the Eligibility Committee meeting, the referral information is sent to the relevant Aspect school principal. A letter stating the outcome of the school application is forwarded to families or carers by the Director, Education & Research. An offer of placement in an Aspect school, and the type of class offered (base or satellite class) is subject to the availability of an appropriate place and is based upon the learning and developmental needs of the child as determined by the Principal.

Applicants **not eligible for services:**

If deemed not eligible for services then the Director, Education & Research will write to the family, carer or guardian providing reasons and where possible make recommendations to other services that may be more appropriate.

Student Population

All students enrolled at the Hunter School for Children with Autism have been approved for enrolment by the Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) Eligibility Committee, which determined they have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The Hunter School enrolment for 2005 was 51 students (4 girls and 47 boys).

5. POLICIES

Policies tabled below cover:

- A. Student welfare
- B. Discipline
- C. Reporting complaints and resolving grievances

Parents/caregivers may request a copy of policies by contacting the school office.

The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment which:

- Minimises risk of harm and ensures students feel secure
- Supports the physical, social, academic and emotional development of students
- Provides students welfare policies and programs that develop a sense of self-worth and foster personal development

A. Student welfare

To ensure that all aspects of the school's mission for providing for a student's welfare are implemented, the following policies and procedures were in place (or being developed) during 2005.

Policy	Changes in 2005	Access to full text
Child Care and Protection encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation requirements • Definitions • Guidelines • Procedures • Responding to allegations against employees • Investigation processes • Documentation 	No changes	Issued to all staff <i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and personal behaviour • Confidentiality and privacy • Conflict of interest • Copyright • Acceptance of gifts or benefits • Personal presentation • Public statements • Complaints handling • Legislation 	No changes	Issued to all staff on commencement of employment <i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office

Policy	Changes in 2005	Access to full text
<p>Community Access encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • Procedures — staff requirements • Supervision • Risk assessment • Documentation 	No changes	<p>Abbreviated text in Parent IEP Handbook</p> <p><i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office</p>
<p>Communication — Protocol encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and informal mechanisms in place for facilitating communication between the school and those with an interest in the student's education and well-being • Guidelines for all communication in Aspect • Access to decision making within Aspect 	No changes	<p>Text of class communication in Parent IEP Handbook</p> <p><i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office</p>
<p>Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles • Definitions • Guidelines 	No changes	<p><i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office</p>
<p>Comprehensive Education Approach encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning characteristics of people with ASD • Assessment • Features of educational programs for people with autism • Transition • Training and consultancy 	Reviewed June 05	<p>Full text in Parent IEP Handbook</p> <p><i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office</p>
<p>Emergency Procedures encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • Procedures and Contingency Planning • Legislation 	Reviewed June 05	<p>Full text in <i>Our People — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office</p>
<p>Working with Families encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • Process 	Revised August 05	<p>Full text in Parent IEP Handbook</p> <p><i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office</p>

Policy	Changes in 2005	Access to full text
Individual Educational Plan encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • Process • Structure 	No changes	Full text in Parent IEP Handbook <i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Incidents/Critical Incidents encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition • Guidelines • Investigation guidelines • Procedures • Documentation 	Approved Feb 05	<i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Medication and Illness encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of the unwell person • Procedure • Administering children's medication • Asthma plan • Epilepsy management • Documentation 	No changes	Abbreviated text in Parent IEP Handbook <i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Missing Client encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background • Protocol • Prevention • Documentation 	Approved June 05	<i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Positive Behaviour Support for Challenging Behaviour encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition • Legislation • Individual planning and support • Assessment • Prohibited/restricted practices • Crisis intervention 	No changes	Full text in Parent IEP Handbook <i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
OH&S encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation OH&S Act 2000 and OH&S Regulations 2001 • Consultation • Induction and training • Incident and accident reporting • Personal protective equipment 	No changes	Full text in <i>Our People — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office

Policy	Changes in 2005	Access to full text
PRN Medication encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • Procedures 	Approved June 05	<i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Safe and Supportive Environment encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child protection • Support • Security • Supervision • Conduct • Complaints • Pastoral care • Communication 	Approved Sept 05	<i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Student Attendance encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • Procedures 	Approved June 05	<i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Sun Smart encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • Procedures 	No changes	<i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Swimming encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • Procedures 	No changes	<i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office
Visual Support encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles • Guidelines 	No changes	Full text in Parent IEP Handbook <i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office

B. Discipline

Policy	Changes in 2005	Access to full text
Positive Behaviour Support for Challenging Behaviour encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition • Legislation • Individual planning and support • Assessment • Prohibited/restricted practices • Crisis intervention 	No changes	Full text in Parent IEP Handbook <i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office

Policy	Changes in 2005	Access to full text
Discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines 	No changes	<i>Our Management — Policies, Guidelines & Procedures</i> policy folder in administrative office

C. Reporting complaints and resolving grievances

The school’s policy for dealing with complaints and grievances includes processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by parents, students and staff. These processes incorporate, as appropriate, principles of procedural fairness.

The full text of the school’s policy and processes for complaints, “*Complaints by People with ASD and/or their families*” (revised Sept 05), is provided in the *Our Management —Policies, Guidelines & Procedures* policy folder in the administration office.

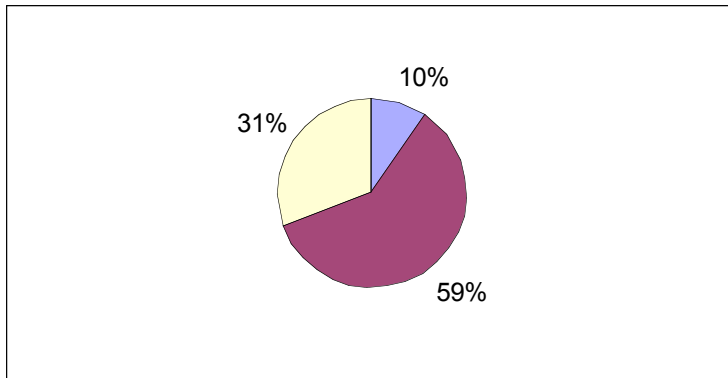
6. SCHOOL DETERMINED IMPROVEMENT TARGETS

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linking class programs to IEP goals Further training in sensory integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class programs include outcomes and indicators and provide for individual students needs. Teachers trained in curriculum links and integrating the curriculum Teachers trained in sensory integration and practiced techniques, under the guidance of an occupational therapist
Family support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support provided to 169 families 4 parent information workshops held 4 “Coffee Morning” parent support group meetings held with information and support from the School Counsellor 4 information mornings held Family networking functions held, such as Working Bee and Trivia Night

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Staff development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in mandatory reporting guidelines • Training in identifying and enhancing communication opportunities with colleagues, parents and students • Training in integrating music across the curriculum • Training in Behaviour Support Core Competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff trained • Staff identified opportunities and worked toward achieving them • All staff participated in a practical workshop • All staff participated
OH&S compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessment training • Manual handling training with occupational therapist • 4 day Safety Representative training • Non Violent Crisis Intervention training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff participated • All staff trained • Second staff member trained • Coordinator completed "Train the Trainer" certificate
Continuous Improvement Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism Program Quality Indicators • Transition survey to parents and receiving school for those students who left in 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey completed — The survey has enabled school to identify areas for improvement in 2006 • Survey completed — 90% of students still in same setting
Student achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition students with ASD to more inclusive setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17.6% of student population transitioned in 2005 as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 students transitioned to a mainstream setting - 3 students transitioned to a support setting - 1 student transitioned to a school for specific purposes
Extend services to reach more students with autism spectrum disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One additional class commenced

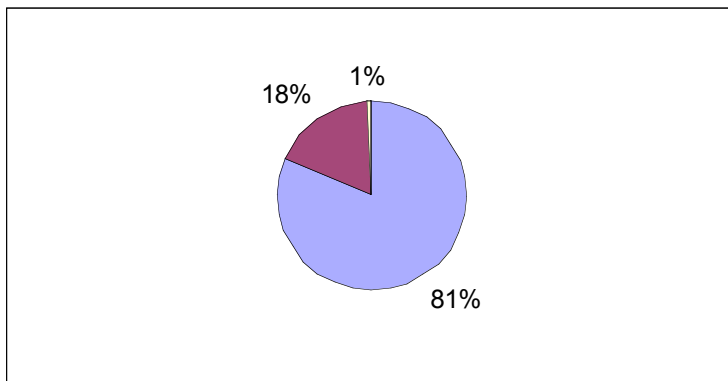
7. SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

1) *Recurrent/Capital Income represented by a pie chart*



10% Fees and private income
31% Commonwealth recurrent grants
59% State recurrent grants

2) *Recurrent/Capital expenditure represented by a pie chart*



1% Capital expenditure
18% Non-salary expenses
81% Salaries, allowances and related expenses