

2020 Annual Report

Aspect Vern Barnett School



Inside the report

Message from the principal	5
Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing	6
Senior secondary outcomes	6
Teacher professional learning, accreditation and qualifications	6
Workforce composition	7
Student attendance, retention rates and post-school destinations in secondary schools	8
Aspect Vern Barnett School has enrolment up to year 10 in 2020. This part of the report is not relevant to the school.	8
Enrolment policy	9
Other school policies	11
School determined priority areas for improvement	12
Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility	13
Parent, student and teacher satisfaction	13
Financial information	14

Child safe statement

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is a child safe organisation committed to protecting the rights and interests of children and vulnerable people by providing them with a safe environment. This commitment extends to ensuring a culturally safe and inclusive environment that recognises and respects an individual's heritage, relationships and cultural practices.

Acknowledgment of Country

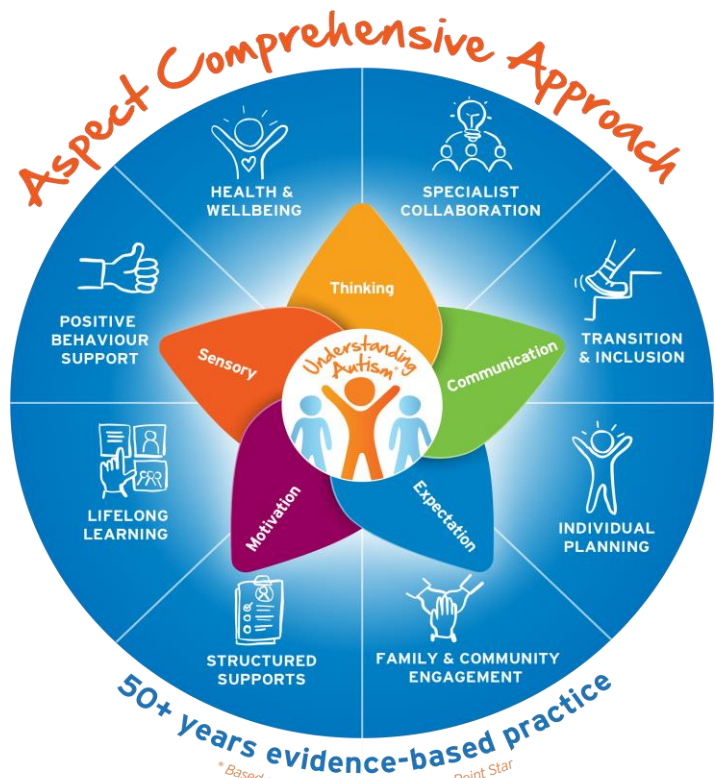
Aspect acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which we work, live and learn. We pay our respect to their elders, past present and emerging.

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is the country's largest service provider for people on the autism spectrum. Our specialised, evidence informed schools program is one of the largest in the world, with additional services that include information and advice, diagnostic assessments, behaviour support, parent and family support, and adult programs. We share evidence-informed autism practice and applied research nationwide.

Aspect schools

provide specialised evidence-informed programs for children aged 4 to 17 on the autism spectrum, who require an autism specific program.

The primary focus of the schools is to equip students with the skills to become as independent as possible and enable them to transition into more inclusive settings. This is achieved through the application of the Aspect Comprehensive Approach. At the centre of the approach is the Autism Initiatives' (UK) Five Point Star to support autism-specific person-centred planning and respectful and positive relationships between the educator and student. It also focuses on the following elements: Individual Planning; Family & Community Engagement; Learning & Participation; Positive Behaviour Support; Structured Supports; Transition & Inclusion; Specialist Collaboration; and Health & Wellbeing.



Aspect's Strategic Plan

Our purpose

Understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests and aspirations of people on the autism spectrum
- *a different brilliant®*

Our vision

The best opportunities for people on the autism spectrum.

Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023



Work in partnership with people on the autism spectrum

- Implement our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
- Work in Partnership with People on the Autism Spectrum Charter
- Employ Autistic people across a range of roles



Extend Aspect's reach and enhance people capabilities

- Well trained staff with enhanced critical skills
- Customer-centric culture
- Strong and trusted brand identity



Investment in physical and digital infrastructure

- Capital Works Program for Aspect schools
- Innovative facilities co-designed with Autistic people
- Digital platforms that facilitate collaboration and communication



Deliver best practice, evidence informed services

- Research activities prioritised to focus on the Aspect Comprehensive Approach
- Continuous improvements to our autism-specific education
- A diverse and inclusive workforce

Our strategic support

Our people who are highly trained and value diversity and inclusion

Our systems and processes which are built to enable smarter work practices and foster collaboration

Our supporters who help to create a world where no one on the autism spectrum is left behind

By 2023



6% of roles at Aspect held by Autistic people



7,000 active participants and students receiving autism-specific education and supports

1,600 employees who are proud to be working for Aspect



Message from the principal

Our aim at Aspect Vern Barnett School is to offer the best opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum. We do this by delivering evidence informed programs that are person-centred and family focused.

Our school provides specialist education for 112 students across six sites. Classes are small with a high staff to student ratio - each class of six students has a teacher and teacher's aide. Just over half of our students are enrolled at our main campus in Forestville which caters for students from K-10. The remainder of our students are enrolled in the satellite program in primary satellite units in Eastwood, Forestville, Lane Cove, Mona Vale, and St Ives.

The Aspect Comprehensive Approach underpins our educational practice. This model puts the individual student at the centre of everything we do - we follow the NSW curriculum but through a lens of Individual Planning and specialist collaboration. As a school we work closely with our in-house Aspect Learning Support Team as well as families and external therapists. We use Positive Behaviour Support which is a person-centred framework for providing support in situations where there is, or there is a risk of, behaviours of concern. The approach shows respect for diversity, promotes inclusion, increases choice and promotes equality of opportunity.

The primary focus of our school is to equip students with the skills to become as independent as possible within a safe learning environment and enable them to transition to less specialised settings. Whilst there were practical challenges in 2020 around supporting transitions, approximately one quarter of our students did transition to a less specialised setting. Our transition program is in place to support a successful transition and track the students for 12 months.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided unprecedented challenges for our school, as it did for all schools. Our staff worked efficiently and innovatively to offer a range of flexible online and home learning options which met the individual needs of our cohort and their families. High expectations were maintained around ensuring continued individualised learning and support for each student. A key focus for us throughout this period was also to maintain continued communication with families.



Anna Brady

Principal

Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing

Each student has an individual profile of characteristics that outlines strengths and interests, current levels of functioning and areas for development in the autism-specific areas of learning: social communication, social interaction, behaviours and sensory processing which are integrated into the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) mainstream. 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.

Literacy and Numeracy Assessments

As NAPLAN assessments were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19, the most recent information relates to 2019 NAPLAN results which are available on My School www.myschool.edu.au

The school administers Literacy testing across the school each year to help inform practice and monitor progress. We assess, sight words, phonemes, graphemes, spelling, reading accuracy, reading comprehension, spelling, and verbal working memory.

Senior secondary outcomes

Record of School Achievement

In 2020, the formal Record of School Achievement credential was awarded by NESA to two students.

Higher School Certificate

Aspect Vern Barnett School was not accredited for the HSC in 2020. The reporting of the HSC results is not applicable.

Teacher professional learning, accreditation and qualifications

The following professional learning activities were undertaken by teachers throughout 2020:

Description of professional learning activity	No. of teachers participating
Acknowledging and recording feedback and complaints	5
An introduction to Autism (Positive Partnerships)	1
An introduction to the Positive Behaviour Support Template (Positive Partnerships)	1
Aspect Education 2-day induction for New Staff	4
Aspect Professional Code of Conduct - face to face workshop and online module.	4
Asthma First Aid for School Staff	6
Child Protection - responsibilities related to child protection based on state/territory legislation, federal legislation and Aspect policy and procedures	25
CPR training - skills to provide Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	8
Creating Structured Learning Opportunities based on the methods of the TEACCH Autism Program (1-day program)	5
First Aid - knowledge and skills to help an ill or injured person until emergency help arrives	1
Individual Planning - creating and working with SMARTER Goals for students	19

Individual Plans (IP) for students and the IP Process at Aspect	18
Leadership training courses - covering subjects including Bud to Boss, difficult conversations, emotional intelligence, performance management, situational leadership and staff development.	2
Literacy & Numeracy Learning Progressions	30
Management of Actual or Potential Aggression (foundation and refresher courses)	4
Manual Handling	27
Organisational induction online modules and new starter webinar series	3
Positive Behaviour Support in Schools	23
Recognising Restrictive Practices	3
Supporting People to Stay Infection Free	2
The SAFE Files - Anti-discrimination and Equal Opportunity 7.0 (AU)	1
Workplace Bullying Prevention for staff	4

Teacher accreditation

Level of accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	1
Provisional	7
Proficient Teacher	27
Highly Accomplished Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Total number of teachers	35

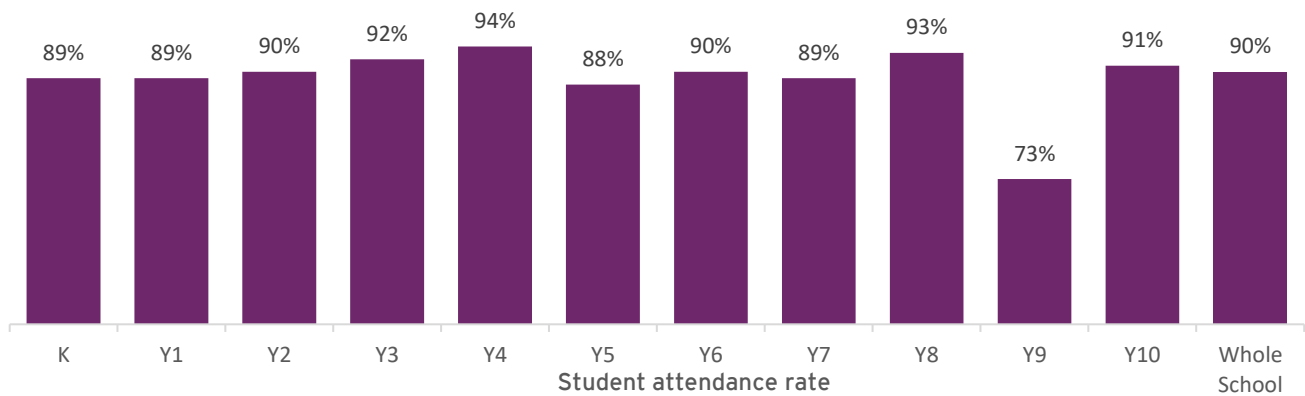
Teacher qualifications

All teachers have teacher education qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines.

Workforce composition

Composition of Aspect Central Coast School staff is documented on the My School website www.myschool.edu.au

There were no staff member who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island origin.



Student attendance, retention rates and post-school destinations in secondary schools

Student attendance rates

Kinder	89%	Year 7	89%
Year 1	89%	Year 8	93%
Year 2	90%	Year 9	73%
Year 3	92%	Year 10	91%
Year 4	94%		
Year 5	88%	Whole School	90%
Year 6	90%		

Management of non-attendance

Aspect Education has a work instruction to ensure compliance of the Aspect schools with school attendance requirements for compulsory school-aged students as outlined by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) or the South Australia Education Board.

Unexplained absence will be followed up by the class teacher with the parent/guardian. Repeated unexplained absence or absence of concern may need to be reported to Family and Community Services.

Where unsatisfactory attendance is identified, a student attendance improvement plan is formulated in collaboration with the student and their parent/guardian. The plan is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Retention of Year 10 to Year 12

Aspect Vern Barnett School has enrolment up to year 10 in 2020. This part of the report is not relevant to the school.

Enrolment policy

Aspect provides autism-specific educational services for eligible school-aged children on the autism spectrum, to prepare them for transition to environments that are not autism specific.

Aspect recognises that children on the autism spectrum have the right to access and equity of services regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity, religion or language.

An application is made for an Aspect school rather than a specific class. Our school's professional staff decide in consultation with the family which class is best suited to the educational needs of the student. Each school is responsible for managing its own application, intake and waiting lists process, which is managed by the school principal.

When vacancies arise in the school, the decision about how to fill them is made based on whether the type of vacancy available would be appropriate for the child. Factors taken into consideration include the type of vacancy available, the child's age, the length of time a child has been on the waiting list, the availability of alternative placements and the family situation.

Entry criteria

Aspect schools are funded in part by the Commonwealth and state governments, which have specific criteria for placement. To be eligible for placement in one of Aspect's schools, prospective students must satisfy the following criteria:

Citizenship and visa status - a child must:

- be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia or holds an eligible visa (refer to guide to checking citizenship and visa status for enrolment).
- be aged between 4 and 17 years.

Diagnosis - a child must:

- in both NSW and South Australia, have a current diagnosis which is not more than twelve (12) months old as being on the autism spectrum from a specialist medical practitioner, child psychiatrist or clinical psychologist with the necessary training and experience to be able to undertake a diagnostic assessment;
- in South Australia, a second report from a psychologist or speech pathologist that confirms the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder that is not more than two (2) years old; and
- in both NSW and South Australia, have a current standardised cognitive or developmental assessment (e.g. IQ testing, Griffiths, WISC-IV, WPPSI-III, Stanford Binet V) which is not more than two (2) years old.

Registration to school waitlist

Expression of interest in Aspect schools may be made in the following ways:

- direct enquiry to the Aspect school by telephone or email;
- telephone or email to Aspect Customer Service, who will direct the enquiry to the school;
- general enquiry via the Contact Us page on the Aspect website, which will be directed to the school.

The registration form can be obtained from the following processes:

- families who are interested in enrolling their child to an Aspect school are asked to attend a School Information Session. Aspect principals or their delegate are responsible for organising a school information session once per school term, in line with the School Information Session work instruction, for prospective parents or guardians who would like to enrol their child. This information session outlines the Aspect education program and the registration and enrolment process. The school registration form is obtained after attending this session.
- families who are unable to attend a School Information Session can obtain a registration form directly from an Aspect school. A School Enrolment Committee representative will provide them with information about the Aspect education program and the registration and enrolment process, before sending them the registration form.

A non-refundable processing fee is required for each application submitted.

Application to more than one Aspect School

When a family wants to place their child on the waitlist of more than one Aspect school, they first apply to their preferred Aspect school and indicate which other Aspect schools they will consider enrolment. The preferred Aspect school is responsible for processing the application, inform the other Aspect school/s to place the student on their school's active waitlist and share the application documents.

Aspect School Enrolment Committee

School principals are responsible for convening the Aspect School Enrolment Committee (comprised of school principal, psychologist and selected school coordinators) which meets once per school term, following the information session, to review registrations received. This committee determines if a child is eligible for placement in an Aspect school.

Eligible/Not Eligible for service

Citizenship and age criteria

If the citizenship or age criteria is not met, a school representative will inform the parents or guardians that their child is not eligible for enrolment due to citizenship or age criteria not being met. If the parents or guardians are not satisfied with the result, they can make a complaint to Aspect (refer to Aspect's Complaints Management procedure).

Diagnosis criteria

If the child has been deemed eligible by the Aspect School Enrolment Committee, the principal will inform the parents or guardians that, based on the diagnostic information provided, their child has been deemed eligible for the program (Letter - Confirmation of diagnosis) and their child's name has been placed on the school waitlist.

The principal is responsible for referring the application to the Aspect Eligibility Committee if the diagnosis needs clarification. Parents/Carers will be informed, in writing (Letter - Application sent to full eligibility committee), that their case has been sent to the Committee for review.

If further information is required by the Committee, the principal is responsible for writing to the parents requesting updated information (Letter - Request for updated Psychological reports).

Aspect Eligibility Committee

The National Director, Aspect Education is responsible for:

- convening the Aspect Eligibility Committee once per school term to review any registrations that require clarification, and
- reporting to Aspect principals the results of the Aspect Eligibility Committee, so that they can inform the parents of the outcomes.

The principal will inform the parents or guardians (Letter - Confirmation of diagnosis) that based on the diagnostic information provided their child has been deemed eligible for the program or not and, if confirmed, the child's name is placed on the school's waitlist.

Vacancy Management

If a vacancy arises, students on the waitlist who can potentially fill the vacancy will be considered. The principal or delegate interviews families whose child might fill the vacancy regarding accommodations/ adjustments for their child following the interview pro forma.

If a student being considered for enrolment is not an Australian citizen, the principal or their delegate must check that the visa is still valid and eligible for enrolment.

Following completion of the interview, the principal, or their delegate will complete the Risk Management Plan pro forma, to assist with decision making.

Following the interview process, the school will inform the family if a child has been offered a placement (Letter - Enrolment Contract/Acceptance of Offer) or (Letter - Placement to Satellite Class) or will be retained on the school's waitlist.

Principals are responsible for forwarding parents the relevant enrolment package and liaising with them throughout the process.

Enrolment Package

When a family is offered a placement, in addition to the enrolment contract, they will be sent documents based on the enrolment acceptance checklist.

A family can decline an enrolment offer and inform Aspect school if they want to be placed in the school's active waitlist.

To secure enrolment, the family must pay a non-refundable enrolment fee as published in the Aspect School fees schedule (NSW or SA).

When a family informs the Aspect school of their decision to withdraw their child from enrolment before commencing, they must also inform the Aspect school if they wish to be placed in the school's active waitlist.

Other school policies

Summary of policy	Changes in 2020	Access to full text
<p>Student welfare</p> <p>The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment to support the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of students through the following policies:</p> <p>Person Centred Approach and Recognition of Values - define and work towards achieving individual's goals and personal lifestyle choices with support and input from those who care about them</p> <p>Risk Management Framework - identifies risks and defines criteria for the assessment of consequence of those risks</p> <p>Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk - ensures that staff understand and implement the principles of Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk, recognising the rights of the people we support to make informed choices and take calculated risks. It is essential that each individual's dignity of risk is respected and supported in their decision-making processes. Aspect facilitates each student's meaningful choice and control to maximise their independence; and minimises the risk to the individual or others wherever possible.</p> <p>Safeguarding the People We Support - Aspect is committed to appropriately responding to and preventing incidents of abuse, injury, neglect and exploitation of the people we support, in both participation with Aspect, and as a partner of the broader community</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>The following policies can be accessed from Aspect's website https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status• Risk Management Framework• Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk• Safeguarding the People we support
<p>Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools</p> <p>The Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA), including the use of the Five Point Star, drives aspect's guiding principles for pastoral care.</p> <p>Aspect is required and seeks to exercise due diligence in all of its duty of care responsibilities towards students, staff and the school community. Leaders of the school endorse activities and plan for the safety and maintenance of good mental and physical health and well-being of the students, staff and parents involved. Schools seek to accommodate and make provision for particular needs of individuals who require special arrangements to secure safety and avoid discomfort or threat to their health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>New</p>	<p>The full text of the Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools procedure can be accessed by request from the school principal.</p> <p>The following related policies can be accessed from Aspect's website https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA)• Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk• Embracing Diversity• Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status

Therefore, bullying or harassment is not tolerated in any form. All members of our community are committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment which promotes personal growth and fosters positive self-esteem for all. Aspect Schools aim to maintain a setting in which everyone feels valued and respected and where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted and encourages the reporting of complaints and feedback.

- Safeguarding the People We Support
- Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback

Discipline

Aspect adopts a positive behaviour support (PBS) approach when working with children on the autism spectrum ranging from strategies for all students through to more intensive strategies for students who may exhibit more challenging behaviours as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Support policy.

New

The full text of the Discipline in Schools work instruction can be accessed by request from the school principal.

The Aspect Positive Behaviour Support policy can be accessed from Aspect's website
<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies>

Aspect follows a PBS approach but when behaviours occur that put the safety of any stakeholder at risk, the school will be required to implement appropriate procedures to safeguard all stakeholders' safety. All staff have responsibilities in relation to implementing discipline in Aspect Schools.

Complaints and grievances resolution

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) values complaints about the quality of its service and communications to support the continuous improvement of services and management.

Nil

The full text of the Complaints Management Process can be accessed by request from Aspect's website

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/feedback-and-complaints>

Aspect's complaints management process provides a transparent framework for promptly and sensitively addressing and resolving complaints and disputes that may arise from complaints having regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality and privacy.

The Feedback and Complaints brochure can be downloaded from our website
<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/documents/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure.pdf>

School determined priority areas for improvement

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Teaching and learning	Improved access for every child to quality teaching and learning that meets their individual needs. COVID 19 added to this, creating opportunities for online collaboration for IPs	The school improved Individual Planning systems, and families were involved in collaboration and review through online meetings
Family Engagement	Improve collaboration between families, therapists and school teams. Response to COVID19 included online collaboration.	COVID19 created opportunities for online collaboration, such as family network meetings, run by therapists and professionals and sharing learning through Google Classrooms.

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Staff development	Positive Behaviour Support - Improve team understanding of PBS, and systems to support implementation to improve student wellbeing	Staff developed their understanding of Positive Behaviour support, and ways to work with the Learning Support Team and families to collaborate to support students.
Facilities and Resources	Strategic Planning for Capital Works for 2021-2022 to ensure students have access to the most suitable and innovative learning environments.	Plans in place to improve the Forestville Facilities, and ensure students have access to the most current and innovative facilities.
Student achievement	Build upon the current Reporting Systems to ensure families have clear communication about student achievement.	Aspect implemented an improved end of Semester Report, to ensure high quality information is shared between schools and families.

Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

Aspect Vern Barnett School wants all students to recognise that they are valued and an integral part of the school community, with parents and staff providing care and support that promotes self-esteem, mutual respect and responsibility.

The structure of the school's satellite program provides opportunities for students to participate in classes and cultural activities with host school students, particularly during Harmony week, National Reconciliation week and NAIDOC week.

Aspect's Purpose of "understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests & aspirations of people on the autism spectrum" and Aspect's Value of "we are passionate about people, about being positive and about what's possible" mirror the nine recommended values of the National Framework for Values in Education.

Aspect has a commitment to ensuring all team members know and embrace our core values to ensure they are reflected in interactions and relationships with stakeholders. Aspect recognises that in order to achieve this it is important to share information with staff and the community so that Aspect is known not only for the work that we do but also for the values we uphold.

Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

Student Individual Plans

Every student at Aspect Vern Barnett School has an Individual Plan (IP). The IP is developed in collaboration with each student and their family. It incorporates a student's strengths, interests, goals and aspirations. Students, parents and teachers work as a team to achieve the goals.

Family & Student Feedback

There are other formal and informal opportunities to provide feedback to the school. One opportunity is an annual customer satisfaction survey sent to all families. Just under two thirds of respondents indicated they would recommend Aspect Vern Barnett School. Comments included that Aspect Vern Barnett is an "excellent school".

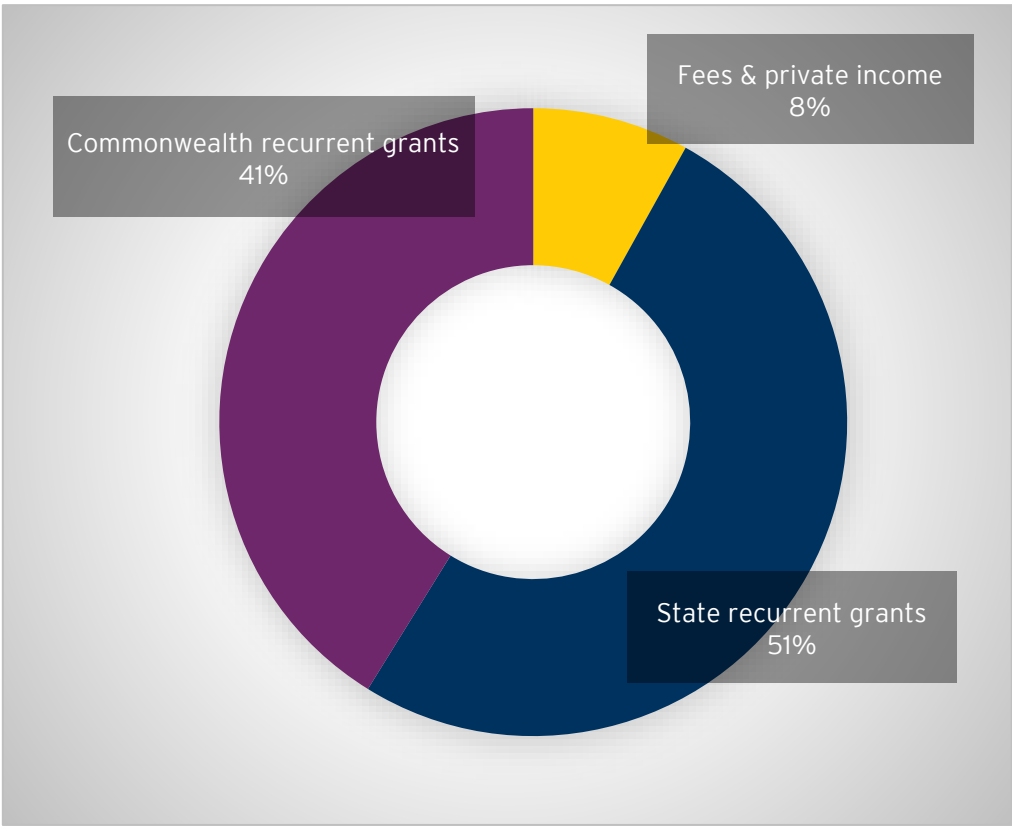
Informal feedback from families is received by email, in person and by letter throughout the year. These are well summarised by a comment from one parent about the "outstanding support" her son had received at Aspect Vern Barnett particularly mentioning the dedication of the teachers.

Employee Engagement Survey

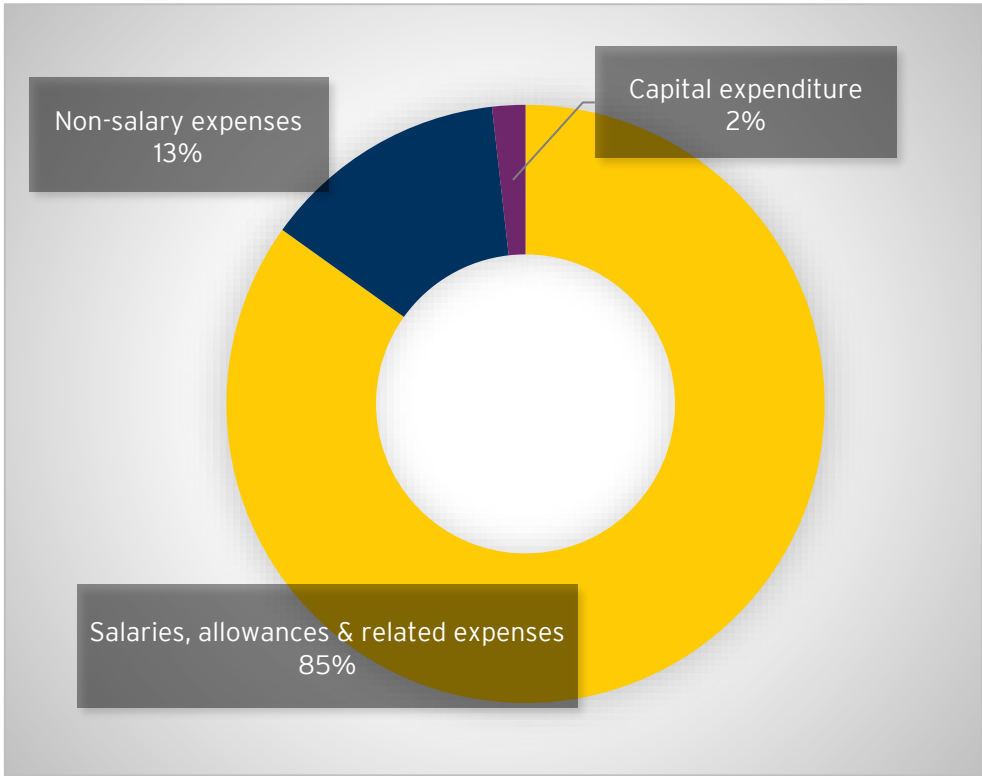
Aspect holds a biennial Employee Engagement Survey - that latest survey being held in 2019. Some areas of note from that survey was that 98% of Aspect Vern Barnett School staff felt supported by their colleagues and 98% were passionate supporters of Aspect's A Different Brilliant vision.

Financial information

Recurrent/capital income



Recurrent/capital expenditure





a different brilliant®

understanding, engaging & celebrating the
strengths, interests & aspirations
of people on the autism spectrum

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