# 2021 Annual Report Aspect Macarthur School





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#### 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.

Autism Spectrum Australia offers one of the best quality autism-specific education programs in the nation. We have over 50 years of experience and provide dynamic autism specific support in purpose-built classrooms. We utilise the strengths and interests of students as a gateway to learning through quality autism-specific, tailored programs that focus on the individual learning needs of each child.

## 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 &

Thinking

POSITIVE
BEHAVIOUR
SUPPORT

Senson

LIFELONG
LEARNING

STRUCTURED
SUPPORTS

STRUCTURED
SUPPORTS

FAMILY & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT

Inclusion; Specialist Collaboration; and Heath & Wellbeing.

# Aspect's Strategic Plan



# Our purpose

Understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths,

- a different brilliant®

interests and aspirations of

people on the autism spectrum



### 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



Deliver best practice, evidence informed services

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



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





# 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



of roles at
Aspect held by
Autistic people



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



# Message from the Principal

In presenting the 2021 annual report I would like to acknowledge the Dharawal people who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which our campuses are located.

Aspect Macarthur demonstrated resilience, adaptability and consistency in designing and programming quality teaching and learning opportunities throughout 2021. The school successfully transitioned between face to face and online learning as we managed our way through Covid-19.

The teachers, students and parent/carers adapted well to new technologies, using Google Classroom and Zoom to continue to develop students learning capacity across all Key Learning Areas (KLAs). We were able to recognise the many strengths and talents of our students as they learnt new ways of demonstrating their understanding and communicating to their peers and teachers. We found some students were more comfortable communicating via these platforms and have been able to bring these into the classroom environment as we returned to face to face learning in Term 4.

At Aspect Macarthur we follow the NESA NSW Curriculum in all KLAs in our K-6 schools while creating adjustments to ensure that our students continue to develop in all areas. Teaching and learning is supported through the use of the Aspect Comprehensive Approach Framework that is based on evidence-based teaching and learning practices for students on the autism spectrum. Across our classrooms you can see structured supports and the use of positive behaviour support to keep our students motivated. Each student has an Individualised Learning Plan with personalised learning goals that are developed in collaboration with parents and carers and regularly reviewed and evaluated.

Aspect Macarthur had 112 students enrolled in 2021 – 89 boys and 23 girls. The main campus site is located at Cobbitty and caters to 42 students from K-6. Class composition is based on many factors, including learning levels, age, social and emotional and behavioural skills. The classes are not always year or stage-based as we review the individual learning profile of each student.

Beyond Main-site we have a number of satellite classes ranging from K-10. The students will transition from Main-site into a satellite class when they are ready to begin to integrate into the mainstream school. This gives students the opportunity to transition into a mainstream environment while maintaining small class sizes and



In 2021 we had a number of students successfully transition into a mainstream school and farewelled our Year 6 students to a variety of high school settings, including SSP, Mainstream and Aspect High School satellite. We had five Year 10 students complete their educational journey with Aspect Macarthur. Three have transitioned successfully into the workplace while two students are working towards their Higher School Certificate, studying Year 11.

In 2021 Aspect Macarthur developed the new School Improvement Plan with a strong focus in 2022 on Reading Development, Formative and Summative Assessment and implementing a clear Positive Behaviour Support plan across all school sites.

Natasha Eaton

**Principal** 

# Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing

Each student has an individual profile that outlines their strengths and interests as well as information about how to provide effective support. The profile includes areas for development, particularly related to autism-specific areas of learning: social communication, social interaction, behaviours and sensory processing which are integrated into the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) mainstream curriculum - the Key Learning Areas (KLAs). The school has a multi-disciplinary team approach which sees teachers, support staff and therapists 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**

For NAPLAN results, please refer to My School website www.myschool.edu.au

The most up to date results available on the site are from 2018. NAPLAN did not go ahead in 2020 due to COVID and in 2021 families chose to exempt the small number of children who were eligible to participate.

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 and verbal working memory.

# Senior secondary outcomes

#### **Record of School Achievement**

The formal Record of School Achievement credential was awarded by NESA to three students.

#### **Higher School Certificate**

Aspect Macarthur School is registered up to Year 10 only. The reporting of the HSC results is not applicable.

# Workforce composition

Composition of Aspect Macarthur School staff is documented on the My School website <a href="www.myschool.edu.au">www.myschool.edu.au</a>
Two staff members are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background.

# Teacher professional learning, accreditation and qualifications

The following professional learning activities were undertaken by staff throughout 2021:

Description of professional learning activity	No. of staff participating
Child Protection - responsibilities related to child protection based on state/territory legislation, federal legislation and Aspect policy and procedures	AII
Disability Standards for Education - overview of the Disability Standards for Education (2005) and the legal obligations of all education providers	12
Aspect Professional Code of Conduct	AII
CPR training – skills to provide Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	6
CPI Safety Intervention – trauma informed and person-centred training to prevent, de-escalate and safely respond to crisis situations	6
First Aid – knowledge and skills to help an ill or injured person until emergency help arrives	6
MultiLit: Making up lost time in literacy course	8
Supporting People Using the Five Point Star	5
Aspect Comprehensive Approach: Individual Planning	1

#### **Teacher accreditation**

Level of accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	4
Provisional	2
Proficient Teacher	25
Highly Accomplished Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Total number of teachers	31

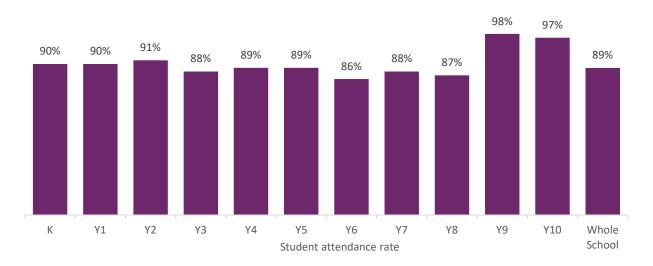
#### **Teacher qualifications**

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.

# Student attendance, retention rates and postschool destinations in secondary schools

#### Student attendance rates

Kinder	90%	Year 6	86%
Year 1	90%	Year 7	88%
Year 2	91%	Year 8	87%
Year 3	88%	Year 9	98%
Year 4	89%	Year 10	97%
Year 5	89%	Whole School	89%



#### Management of non-attendance

Aspect Education has policies and procedures in place to ensure compliance of Aspect schools with school attendance requirements for compulsory school-aged students as outlined by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

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. In 2021 Aspect Macarthur implemented weekly monitoring of attendance rates at leadership meetings.

#### Retention of Year 10 to Year 12

Aspect Macarthur is a Kindergarten to Year 10 school. We do, however track students post Year 10. In 2021, five students graduated from Aspect Macarthur in Year 10 with three going into employment and two continuing study in Year 11 with the commitment to complete their HSC year in 2023.

# **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 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-111, 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 2021	Access to full text
The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment to support the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of students through the following policies:  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  Risk Management Framework – identifies risks and defines criteria for the assessment of consequence of those risks  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.  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	Nil	The following policies can be accessed from Aspect's website https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies  Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status  Risk Management Framework  Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk  Safeguarding the People we support
Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools The Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA), including the use of the Five Point Star, drives aspect's guiding principles for pastoral care.  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.  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.	Nil	The full text of the Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools procedure can be accessed by request from the school principal.  The following related policies can be accessed from Aspect's website https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies  Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA)  Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk  Embracing Diversity  Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status  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.  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.	Nil	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 <a href="https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies">https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</a>
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.  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.	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  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 improvement areas

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Teaching and learning	Aspect Comprehensive Approach implemented effectively across all classes	Staff participated in professional learning on ACA with a focus on Structured Supports, all classes effectively embed structured supports
	Growth in reading across Aspect Macarthur	The staff assessed and reviewed reading instruction across the school and agreed to implement the sweep of the MultiLit resources in 2022 to drive school improvement. A number of staff were trained in the MultiLit programs ready to embed in 2022
	An Inclusive Approach for all students	All students were assessed using the 5-point star and their strengths in developing individual learning plans for each staff member
Family engagement	Engage parent/carers in the school vision and direction	The creation of a Parents and Friends (P&F) to formalise family engagement
	Qualitative and quantitative data collections developed	Parent/carers were given a number of opportunities to provide feedback to the school in formulating the 2022 School Improvement Plan
Staff development	Staff developed in strengths and operating styles in understanding how best to collaborate as a staff	The leadership team participated in five sessions with executive central to unpack strengths and operating styles in how to best work together
	The MultiLit Reading Programs	Staff attended professional learning on the teaching of reading with a school-wide approach to be implemented in 2022
Student achievement	Transition to Mainstream schools	10% of Aspect Macarthur students successfully transitioned into a mainstream school environment
	Students successfully transitioned to online learning and back to face to face learning	100% of teachers reported that students effectively engaged in online learning and returned to face to face learning successfully

## Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

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

Students have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities such as Harmony Day, National Reconciliation week and NAIDOC week and Wear it Purple Day.

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.

In 2021, Aspect Macarthur ensured that students were made aware of the impact of their digital footprint and staying safe on-line. The school was proactive in this space as it transitioned to online learning in ensuring that students remained safe online and that online bullying behaviour did not become an issue at Aspect Macarthur. The school monitored online communication between students and those interactions were overwhelming positive and it is clear our students understood the impact that any negativity online can cause to another student.

## Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

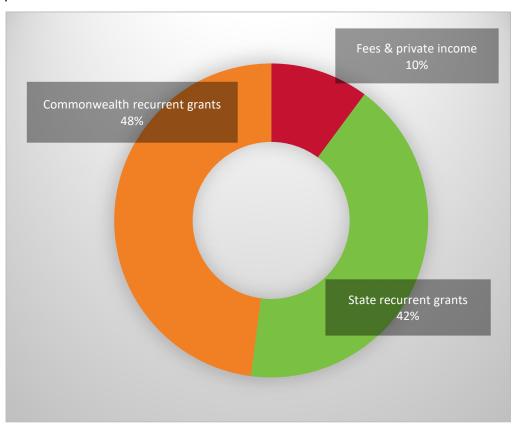
In 2021, the students participated in the NPS Survey and the principal met with the Student Representative Council to understand their thoughts on the school. In both the qualitative and quantitative data, the students rated the school outstanding in creating an inclusive environment that was safe for the students to be their authentic self.

In 2021, the staff participated in a number of qualitative and quantitative opportunities through staff meetings, online surveys and discussions. The staff felt the school was outstanding in providing opportunities to be included in decision making and driving decisions on school directions and professional learning. In 2022 there will be a stronger focus on in-class support from the leadership team, hands-on resources and professional learning in the teaching and learning of English and Mathematics in-line with the release of the new English and Mathematics Syllabus documents.

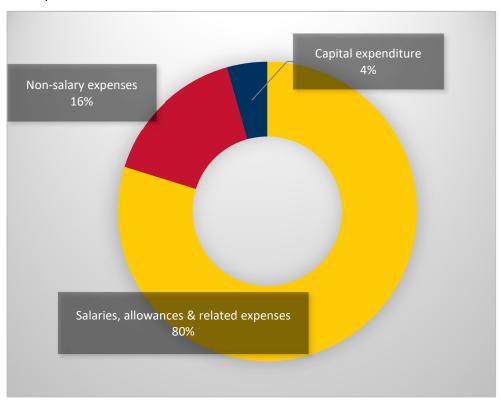
In 2021, parents rated the school high in communication in regards to their child's learning with the use of tools such as see-saw and wanted to see improvement in overall school communication. In reviewing this data, Aspect Macarthur implemented school-zine with a fortnightly newsletter and calendar and in 2022 parent/carers will gain access to TASS Parent lounge. In 2021, the school introduced a Parents and Citizen committee to give parent/carers a voice and in 2022 plan on introducing 'Coffee and Connect' sessions for parent/carers.

# **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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