

# 2021 Annual Report

## Aspect Vern Barnett 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 school 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 offers one of the best quality autism-specific education programs in Australia. 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, 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.

The primary focus of our schools is to equip students with skills to become as independent as possible and 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 includes 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



### 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



### 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



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

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

Aspect schools all share Aspect's vision to offer the best opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum, through the delivery of evidence-informed programs which are person-centred and family focused.

In 2021 Aspect Vern Barnett School celebrated our 50th birthday. In 1971 the school was opened as a state of the art, purpose-built school by a group of dedicated parents. 50 years later and the school has grown and flourished. Our team prides itself on our work with families, students and professionals to create an individualised learning program for each and every student.

Aspect Vern Barnett School caters for 110 students between the ages of 4 and 16 across our six sites. Our enrolment is comprised of 95 boys and 15 girls. The school operates from a main site at Forestville which consists of an administration office, nine primary classes and one senior class. The school also has satellite classes located within a NSW Department of Education primary school at Lane Cove, and Catholic primary schools in Eastwood, Forestville, St Ives and Mona Vale.

Our aim is to equip our students with skills to become as independent as possible, within a safe learning environment, and provide them with a range of rich and meaningful learning experiences. We do this through focusing on their strengths and interests, and valuing that each student is a different brilliant®. We support our students to develop the necessary skills to experience successful transition and inclusion in their next educational setting and within their local community. We provide support to students, families and schools with a robust transition program.



I would like to sincerely thank all staff for their enormous contributions in 2021. It is the school's purpose to seek continual improvement, whilst maintaining a perspective on meaningful learning outcomes for our students. Despite the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, staff continued to provide quality education, ensuring that our students continued to thrive and enjoy a successful year. 2021 was a year that staff went above and beyond in all matters educational, demonstrating resilience and agility. In term three, teachers quickly adapted again to our online learning platforms, and for students who found online learning more difficult, staff worked hard to produce work packages that were engaging and provided effective learning. All staff were committed to their core responsibility of providing the best educational opportunities for our students.

Aspect Vern Barnett School would like to thank the local community for their ongoing support throughout the year. While a number of whole school community planned events were held remotely via zoom, we were able to hold our school graduation, where we celebrated and embraced Aspect's values of 'we are passionate about people, about being positive and about what's possible'. We would like to thank everyone who supported the school by donating or volunteering their time. This has allowed us to enrich our students' experiences and provide more of the specialised resources our students need.

**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 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.

## Literacy and Numeracy Assessments

For NAPLAN results, please refer to My School website [www.myschool.edu.au](http://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 and verbal working memory.

## Senior secondary outcomes

### Record of School Achievement

Aspect Vern Barnett School did not have any students that required the award of a Record of School Achievement.

### Higher School Certificate

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

# 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	29
Disability Standards for Education - overview of the Disability Standards for Education (2005) and the legal obligations of all education providers	29
CPR training – skills to provide Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	29
Asthma Australia Training	29
Positive Partnerships' Introduction to autism	6
Feedback & Complaints Handling	4
Anaphylaxis	5

## Teacher accreditation

Level of accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	0
Provisional	2
Proficient Teacher	27
Highly Accomplished Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Total number of teachers	29

## 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

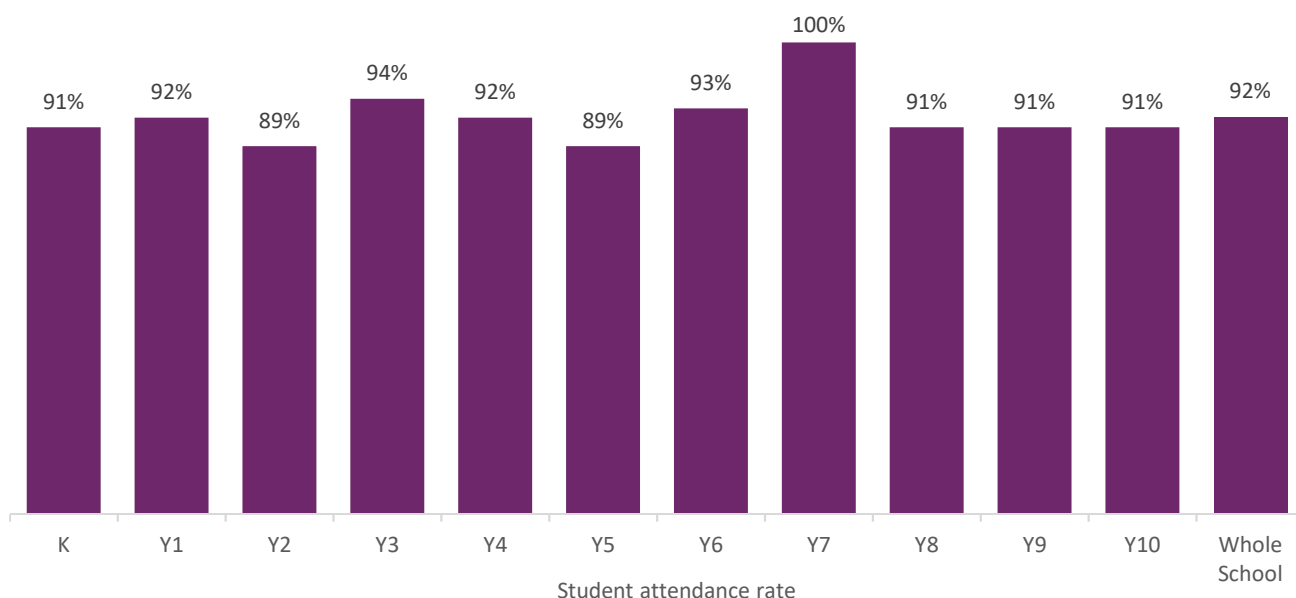
Composition of Aspect Vern Barnett School staff is documented on the My School website [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)

No staff member is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background.

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

## Student attendance rates

Kinder	91%	Year 6	93%
Year 1	92%	Year 7	100%
Year 2	89%	Year 8	91%
Year 3	94%	Year 9	91%
Year 4	92%	Year 10	91%
Year 5	89%	Whole School	92%



## 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.

## Retention of Year 10 to Year 12

Not applicable at Aspect Vern Barnett 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-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.

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
<p><b>Student welfare</b> 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>	Nil	<p>The following policies 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></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status</li> <li>• Risk Management Framework</li> <li>• Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk</li> <li>• Safeguarding the People We Support</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools</b> 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>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.</p>	Nil	<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  <a href="https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies">https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA)</li> <li>• Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk</li> <li>• Embracing Diversity</li> <li>• Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status</li> <li>• Safeguarding the People We Support</li> <li>• Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback</li> </ul>
<p><b>Discipline</b> 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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Nil	<p>The full text of the Discipline in Schools work instruction can be accessed by request from the school principal.</p> <p>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></p>
<p><b>Complaints and grievances resolution</b> Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) values complaints about the quality of its service and communications to support the continuous improvement of services and management.</p> <p>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.</p>	Nil	<p>The full text of the Complaints Management Process can be accessed by request from Aspect's website  <a href="https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/feedback-and-complaints">https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/feedback-and-complaints</a></p> <p>The Feedback and Complaints brochure can be downloaded from our website  <a href="https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/documents/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure.pdf">https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/documents/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure.pdf</a></p>

## School determined improvement areas

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Teaching and learning	All teachers will be given training and resources to deliver quality literacy lessons, utilising Initialit training resources as appropriate for the cohort.	All education staff at Aspect Vern Barnett improved their capability in understanding and delivery Initialit through adjustments suitable to their cohorts.
Staff development	Coordinators will develop their leadership skills through being trained in GROWTH Coaching approach and will utilise this when supporting teachers.	Coordinators learnt the GROWTH Coaching approach and had opportunities to put this into practice in teacher support and development.
Facilities and Resources	Liaise and consult with other Aspect Property stakeholders to plan the 2022 renovation schedule.	A range of collaborative sessions were held with staff to get input into classroom designs. Families were also updated on the plans and invited to discuss at P&F meetings.
Student achievement	All teachers will use data from consistent Literacy and Numeracy Assessment systems to inform teaching and staff development.	All teachers were trained in the use of the school Literacy and Numeracy Achievement tracking system and how to utilise data to inform future planning.

## Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

Aspect Vern Barnett School 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.

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.

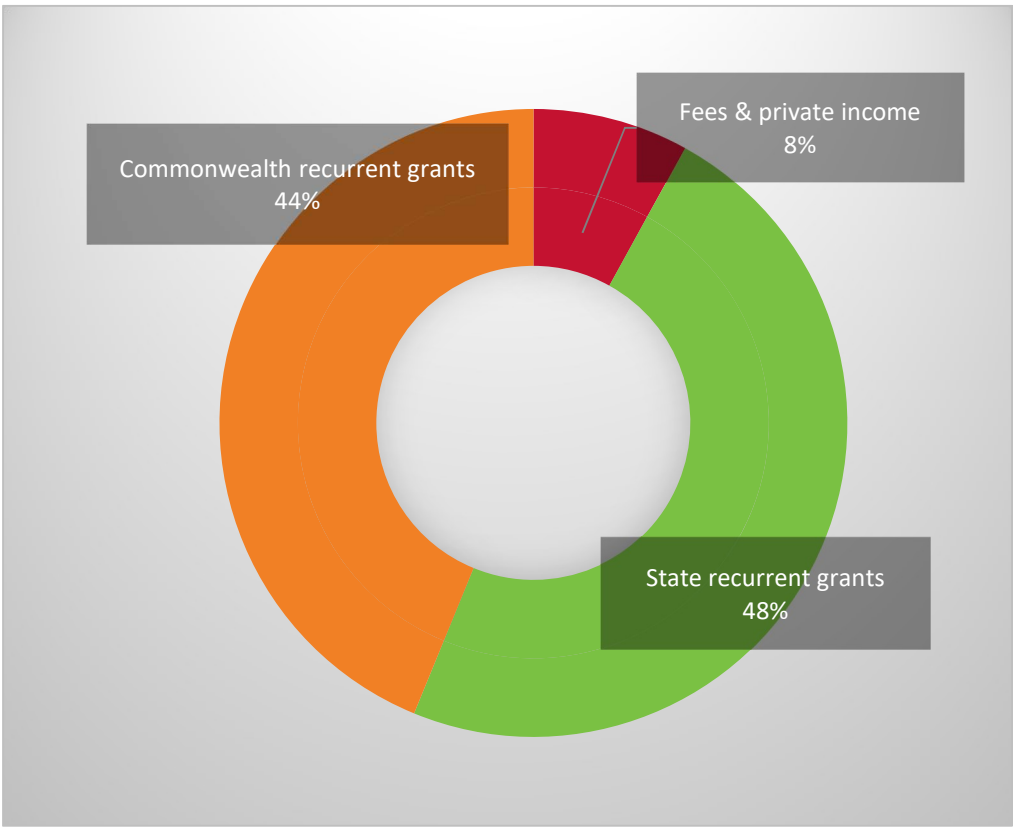
## Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

The Aspect Vern Barnett School welcome staff, student and parent opinions, which highlight the positive aspects of the school and identifies any areas for improvement. Feedback is collected in a variety of forums including student enrolment and exit surveys, Net Promoter Scores, parent testimonials along with family engagement in school events. In 2020 Aspect Vern Barnett School community participated in a school-wide survey to gather insights and perspective from four important stakeholder groups (staff, students, parents/guardians and leaders) which highlighted strengths and achievements but also identified opportunities for growth and development. The data collected from the Perspectives: Your School in Focus survey, was used to inform future priorities, goals and targets, so we could better meet the needs of the whole school community. In 2021, school staff were invited to take part in the Aspect Voice survey, to identify areas of strength and growth across the school and Aspect. In 2022 stakeholders will again be invited to respond to the Perspectives: Your School in Focus to review priorities.

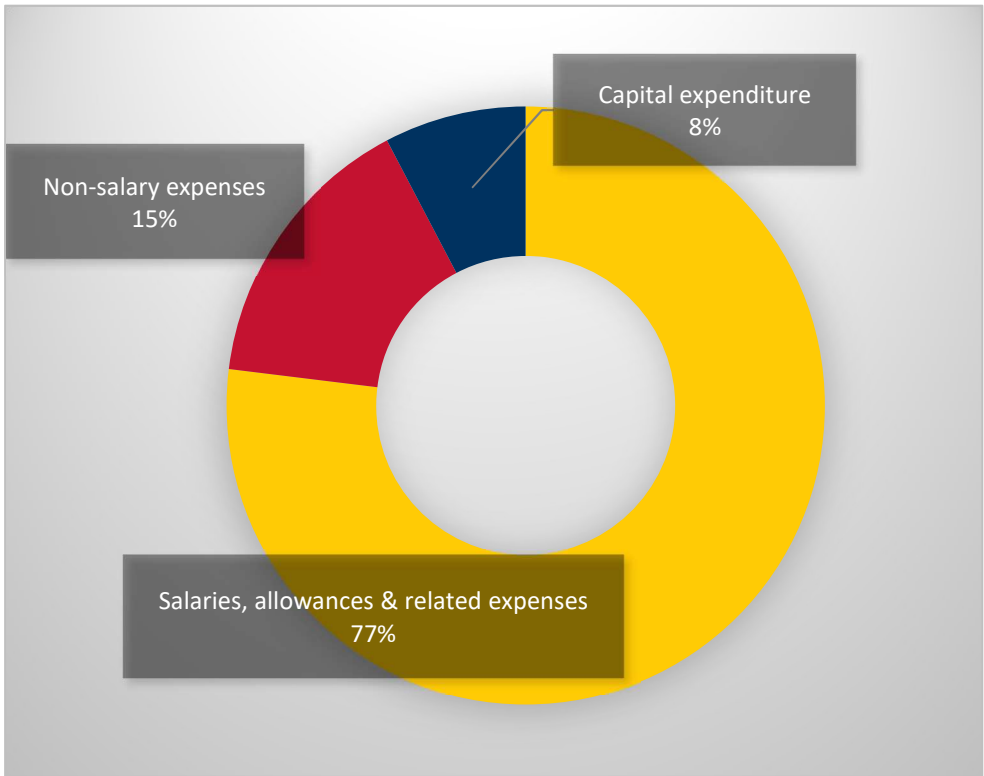


# Financial information

## 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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