

2021 Annual Report

Aspect Western Sydney 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

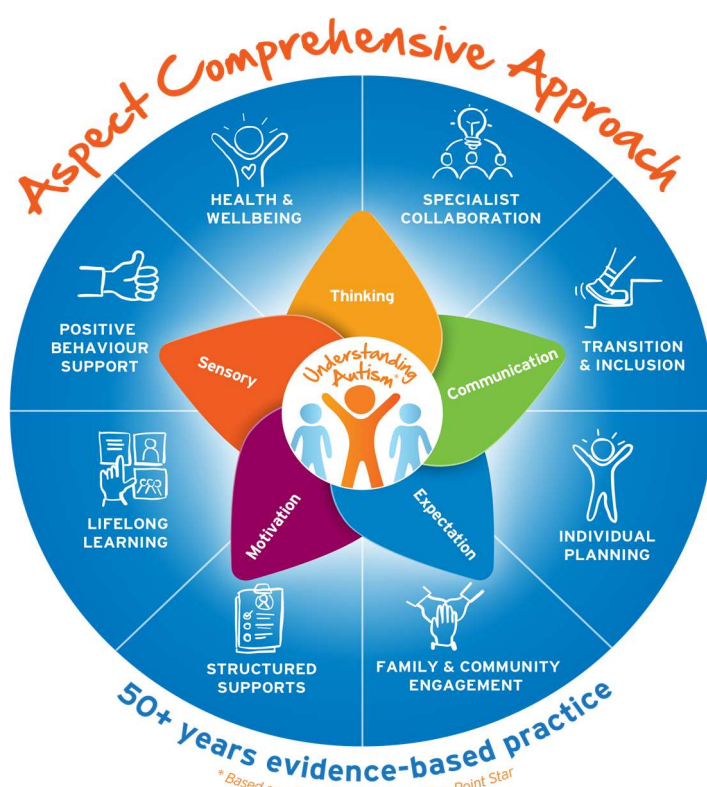
Aspect acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which we work, live and learn. We pay our respect to their elders, past present and emerging.

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 Dharug people who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which our campuses are located.

Aspect Western Sydney School provides education for 161 students (135 boys and 26 girls) on the autism spectrum across our six sites. Class groups are small with a high teacher to student ratio and a teacher's aide appointed to each class. In 2021 101 primary age students were enrolled at the main school site at Wetherill Park and across our 8 primary satellite classes. Additionally, there were 60 students from years 7 to 12 attending our 5 high school satellites classes located in mainstream secondary schools across Greater Western Sydney.

I would like to congratulate the Aspect Western Sydney School community for their resilience, determination and support in 2021 in spite of the unprecedented events of a continuing pandemic. Our school community made significant improvements in the quality of education and relationships with existing and new supporters and community groups. Aspect Western Sydney School particularly appreciates the close working relationship with our colleagues in the local Catholic Education and Department of Education Schools.

Despite the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, staff continued to provide a quality education, ensuring that our students continued to thrive and enjoy a successful year. Staff went above and beyond, demonstrating resilience and agility. Teachers quickly adapted to new online learning platforms, and for students who found online learning more difficult, staff worked hard to produce engaging work packages. I would like to sincerely thank all staff for their enormous contributions in 2021.

In 2021 the Perspectives survey enabled collaboration for the development of the 2021-2023 school improvement plan. This feedback will inform planning in the areas of leadership, teaching and learning and well-being.



Our school proudly adopts a comprehensive approach to education for students on the autism spectrum known as the Aspect Comprehensive Approach. This approach is person-centred therefore the focus is on meeting individual needs. Our education programs engage, celebrate and utilise the strengths, interests and aspirations of our students.

Our staff are committed to continual improvement and we work closely with families and the wider community to support students. I would like to acknowledge the dedication, passion and care that the staff at Aspect Western Sydney School demonstrate every day in the pursuit of quality education for our school community.

Shane Morris

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

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 five students.

Higher School Certificate

In 2021 6 students graduated from Year 12 (100%). The School offered six Stage 6 Life Skills NESA-Developed courses. 6 students completed the Certificate II Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways course at TAFE. All students attended Work Experience 3 hours per week for the entire year. All students were successful in gaining School Leavers' Employment Support funding via the NDIS.

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	45
Disability Standards for Education - overview of the Disability Standards for Education (2005) and the legal obligations of all education providers	45
CPR training – skills to provide Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	45
First Aid – knowledge and skills to help an ill or injured person until emergency help arrives	45
Aspect Professional Code of Conduct – face to face workshop and online module	45
Supporting people on the autism spectrum using the 5 Point Star (adapted from Autism Initiatives UK) person-centred framework	5
Positive Behaviour Support and Supporting Students with Complex Situations	23
Aspect Comprehensive Approach: Individual Planning	5
SAS Training: Aspect SAS Transition Session 1	5
Sharing Pedagogical Context Knowledge Masterclasses	43
An introduction to the literacy and numeracy learning progressions Exploring the Literacy Learning progressions, AIS NSW	45
Promoting and Protecting Student Wellbeing and Mental Health AIS NSW	35
Your Health Matters Workshop, Aspect RTW Manager	41

Teacher accreditation

Level of accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	3
Provisional	1
Proficient Teacher	41
Highly Accomplished Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Total number of teachers	45

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

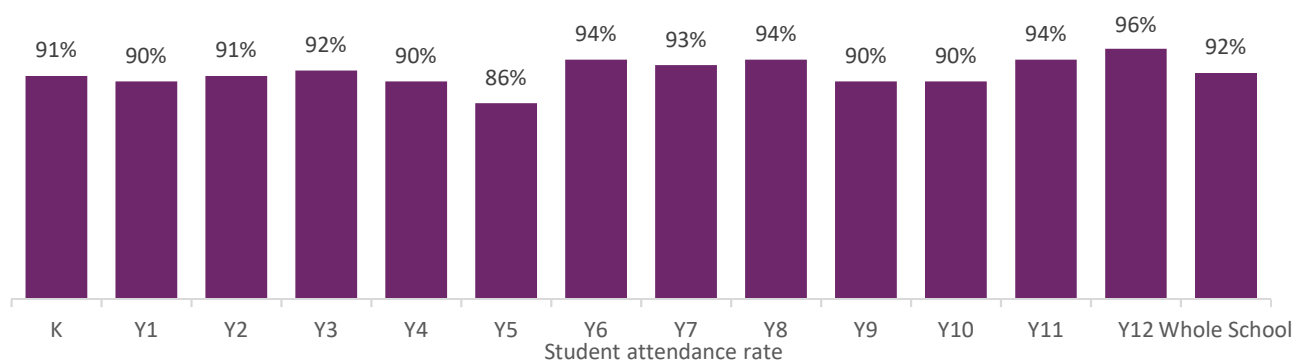
Composition of Aspect Western Sydney School staff is documented on the My School website www.myschool.edu.au

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 7	93%
Year 1	90%	Year 8	94%
Year 2	91%	Year 9	90%
Year 3	92%	Year 10	90%
Year 4	90%	Year 11	94%
Year 5	86%	Year 12	96%
Year 6	94%	Whole School	92%



Management of non-attendance

Aspect has developed a work instruction to ensure all Aspect schools comply with school attendance requirements for compulsory school-aged students as outlined by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

Unexplained absences are followed up by the class teacher with the parent/guardian as well by the school administration team using a variety of methods. 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

67% of the 2019 Year 10 cohort completed Year 12 in 2021. The retention rates over the past two years has been increasing. Based on the information provided to the school when students leave it appears that many of the students who leave the school at the end of Year 10 or during Year 11 do so because of family circumstances or to pursue employment or vocational training. Most students who left school at the end of Year 12 following the completion of their school education continued to enrolled in TAFE (2%) or pursued full-time employment (64%), with a further 1% to other destinations.

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>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>	Nil	<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>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 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 • Safeguarding the People We Support • Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback
<p>Discipline</p> <p>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 https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</p>
<p>Complaints and grievances resolution</p> <p>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 https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/feedback-and-complaints</p> <p>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</p>

School determined improvement areas

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Teaching and learning	Involve approximately 80% of students in their individual plan (IP) meetings and contribute to developing and monitoring their IP goals	A majority of IP meetings were held via Zoom videoconferencing due to COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, few students were involved in their IP meetings. Students were involved in monitoring their goals as they returned to face to face learning.
	All teachers will be utilising professional learning days to provide feedback to the each other to improve practice and master program writing as part of their reflective practice.	All teachers reviewed and provided teacher feedback to master programmers and detailed recommendations and further supports that would best meet the specific needs of our students. A review was completed at the end of the year based on this teacher feedback and master teaching programs were changed to reflect this review process. Teachers successfully extended their own pedagogical content knowledge as part of this review process across our school.
Family engagement	Continue to support families by providing networking opportunities and information sessions.	There were minimal parent information sessions held during 2021 due to NSW Health restrictions. The Learning Support Team offered online support for families via the Parent Lounge in Google Classroom. We successfully completed all our interviews for high school placement via zoom to support or existing and new families.
Staff development	Aspect Western Sydney School staff will participate in training with Education Consultants from the NSW Association of Independent Schools and Aspect Western Sydney leadership team in relation to using data and the Learning Progressions to inform our School Improvement Plan.	All 45-teaching staff, participated successfully participated in workshops based on the Learning Progressions. The recommendations from the staff was to commence individual tracking of student progress and informed by teacher professional judgement and moderation considerations.
Facilities and Resources	Ensure the planning, resourcing and approval of an additional online resource to support classroom practice.	We successfully implemented the use of Twinkl and other multimodal resources to support student engagement and increase teacher resources to support teacher planning.
	Aspect Western Sydney teachers were equipped with tools for trade to enable them to access, prepare and participate in learning to support student learning and increase their engagement with parent/carers as part of the learning partnership.	All teaching classes were successfully provided with laptops and iPads to enhance and support their access and successful participation in professional learning online and improved connectedness with parents/carers and students.
Student achievement	All students will work towards their own IP goals that have been established in collaboration with their carers, parents and teachers.	All goals were set with an increase focus on the ACA and students' achievement towards each goal was closely monitored.

Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

Aspect Western Sydney 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

In 2021 the Aspect Western Sydney School surveyed families to provide valuable feedback from staff, parents and students.

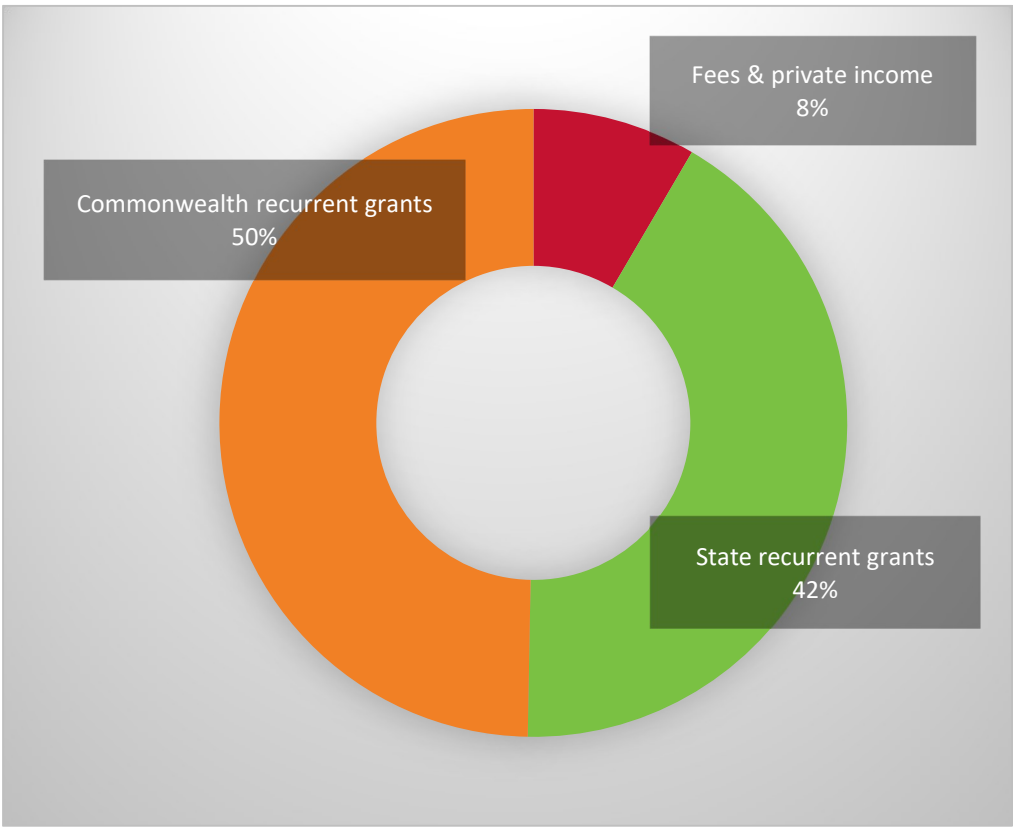
The feedback we have obtained from students and staff also highlights the positive satisfaction that was experienced in 2021. The data highlights that students feel supported in their learning and are being authentically supported by the staff at Aspect Western Sydney School.

The staff satisfaction data from these surveys also highlighted the recognition that the investment in their own professional learning and supports being offered has created a positive experience for staff in their professional working lives as part of the school. Staff also highlighted that the vision, mission and purpose of Autism Spectrum Australia are alive and well in all that we say, do and action across our School.

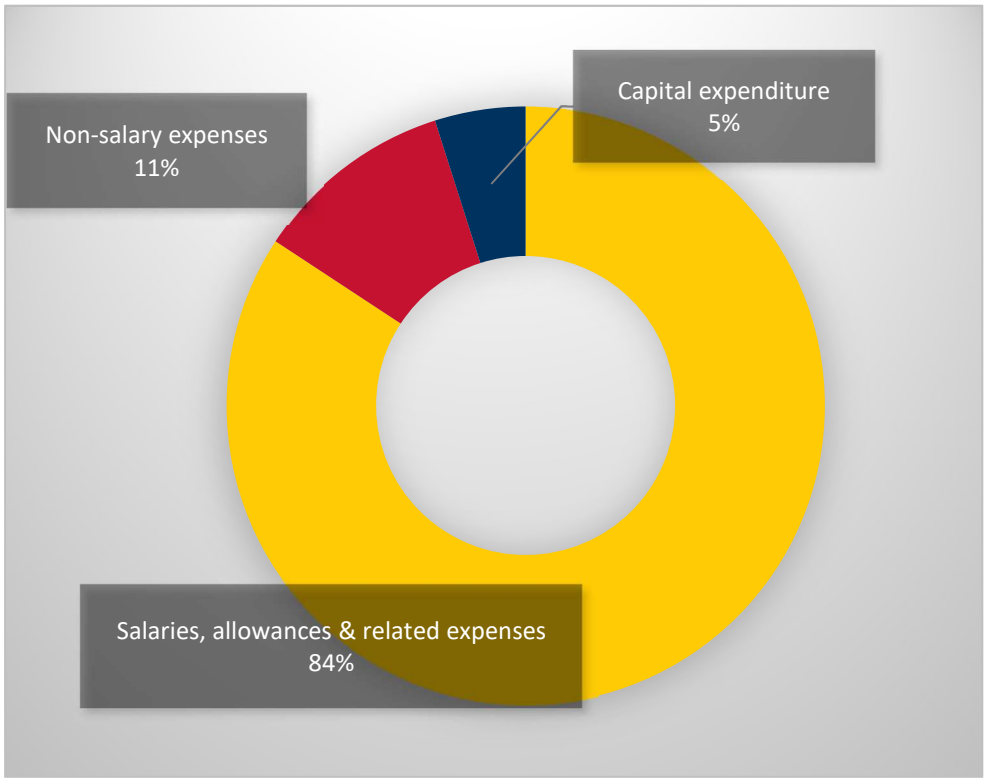
The data collected from these surveys was used to inform future priorities, goals and targets, so we could better meet the needs of the whole school community.

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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