

Annual School Report

Aspect Western Sydney School

2023



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our vision

The best opportunities for people on the autism spectrum.

our values

We are passionate about people, about being positive, and about what's possible.

our mission

We work with people of all ages on the autism spectrum, delivering evidence-informed solutions that are person-centred, family focused and customer driven.

our purpose a different brilliant®

Understanding, engaging and celebrating the strengths, interests and aspirations of people on the autism spectrum.

our work

We focus on the strengths and interests of people on the autism spectrum

We work in partnership with people on the spectrum, their families and their communities

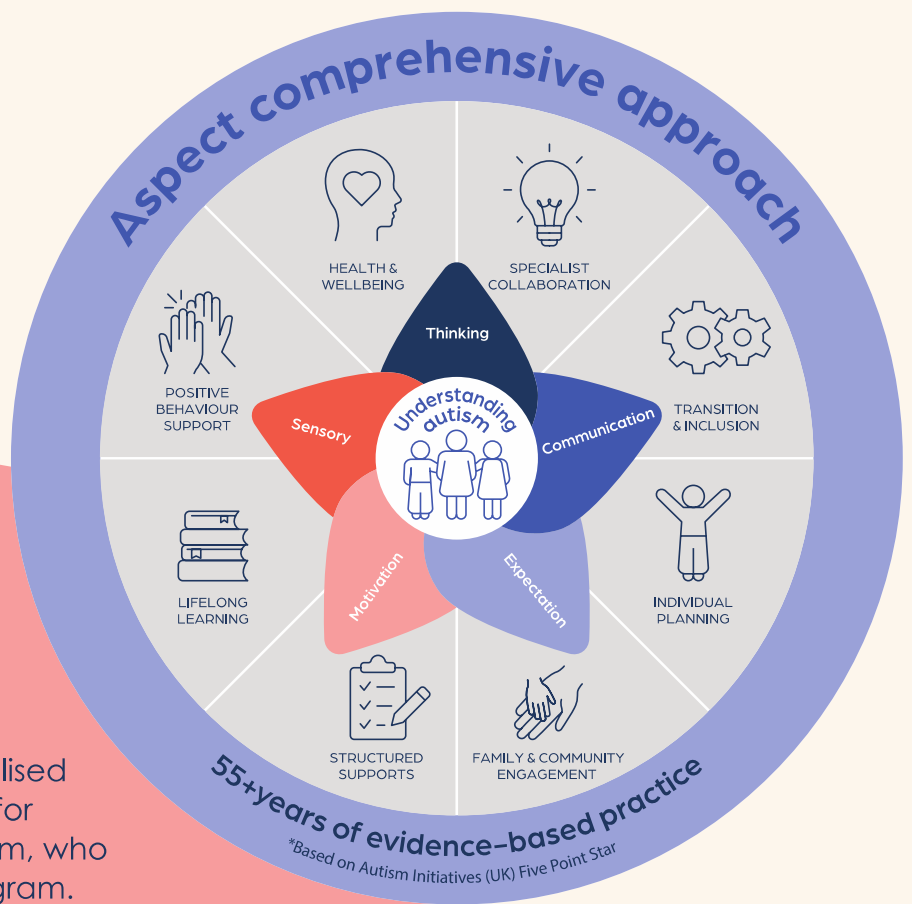
We work to understand people on the spectrum from their perspective

Our approach is autism-specific

Our research focuses on best practice

We expect positive change and progress

Together we can achieve positive outcomes.



Aspect schools provide specialised evidence-informed programs for children 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.

Message from the principal

In presenting the 2023 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 149 students (122 boys and 27 girls) on the autism spectrum across our 15 sites. Class groups are small with a high teacher to student ratio and a teacher's aide appointed to each class. In 2023, 97 primary age students were enrolled at the main school site at Wetherill Park and across our 8 primary satellite classes. Additionally, there were 52 students from years 7 to 12 attending our 6 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 2023 as our school community made significant improvements and refurbishments across our main site classes at located at Wetherill Park.

The quality of education and relationships with existing and new supporters and community groups has also contributed to increased opportunities that we have provided for our students across 2023. Aspect Western Sydney School particularly appreciates and acknowledges the close working relationship with our colleagues in the local Catholic Schools Diocese of Parramatta and Department of Education Schools. Feedback gathered through the school Perspectives survey undertaken in 2020 and again in 2022 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.

It is the school's purpose to seek continual improvement, whilst maintaining a perspective on meaningful learning outcomes for our students. All staff were committed to their core responsibility of providing the best educational opportunities for our students. This year, members of our school attended nine professional learning days as part of a Learning

Collaborative across all nine Aspect Schools. The professional learning was facilitated by Dr Lyn Sharratt, a leading education expert and published researcher who works with schools to improve learning outcomes for students. It was an exciting opportunity for Aspect staff to deep dive into Dr Lyn Sharratt's 14 Parameters to support School Improvement, and consider how this framework can be applied in our Autism Specific context. The whole school approach will ensure the most effective evidence-based teaching methods are used across the school and teaching and learning programs are adjusted to address individual student needs. This will ensure that all students are challenged and all adjustments lead to improved learning. This framework, has enabled school leaders to work towards building collaborative and quality learning cultures across the school, which utilise data to foster student growth.

The school maintained a deliberate focus on the social and emotional learning needs of our students which was enhanced through all staff being trained in the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM). The BSEM focuses on supporting students' self-regulation, strengthening student-teacher relationships and implementing strengths-based practices. The practical, classroom-based strategies aim to increase engagement, thereby improving academic achievement for all 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

Student outcomes in standardised 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, spelling, and verbal working memory.

Senior secondary outcomes

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

In 2023 four students graduated from Year 12 (100%).

The school offered six Stage 6 Life Skills NESA-Developed courses. Four students (100%) completed Work and the Community Life Skills course. All four students attended Work Experience for a minimum 3 hours per week for the entire year in 2023. Three students were successful in gaining School Leavers' Employment Support funding via the NDIS.

Record of School Achievement

10

Higher School Certificate

4

Teacher professional learning, accreditation, qualifications and workforce composition

The following professional learning activities were undertaken by staff throughout 2023:

Description of professional learning activity	No. of staff participating
Aspect Learning Improvement Collaborative: introduction to Dr Lyn Sharratt's 14 Parameters & Case Management Day	All
Child Protection – responsibilities related to child protection based on state/territory legislation, federal legislation and Aspect policy and procedures	All
CPI Safety Intervention – trauma informed and person-centred training to prevent, de-escalate, and safely respond to crisis situations.	All
CPR training – skills to provide Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	All
Disability Standards for Education – overview of the Disability Standards for Education and the legal obligations of all education providers	All
First Aid – knowledge and skills to help an ill or injured person until emergency help arrives	All
Individual Plans and the IP Process	All
Supporting people on the autism spectrum using the 5 Point Star	All
ASCIA Anaphylaxis e-Training	All
ALS Wellbeing: Whole School Practice	65
Berry Street Training: Trauma informed practice	65
Initial Lit training	60
Understanding the implementation of the New Curriculum (AIS NSW)	45
EduInfluencers: Leadership Professional Practise – 6 days	7
CLARITY: What matters most in learning, teaching, and leading. Presented by Dr Lyn Sharratt	5

Teacher accreditation

Level of accreditation	No. of teachers
Conditional	4
Provisional	5
Proficient Teacher	36
Highly Accomplished Teacher or Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditations)	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

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



Student attendance rates

Kinder	87%	Year 7	84%
Year 1	81%	Year 8	88%
Year 2	84%	Year 9	87%
Year 3	85%	Year 10	85%
Year 4	86%	Year 11	86%
Year 5	86%	Year 12	93%
Year 6	83%	Whole School	86%

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).

Unexplained absence will be followed up by the school 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.

The School monitors student attendance daily and the School Leadership Team review attendance patterns and where required the principal implements measures and supports to formally setup a student's attendance plan in collaboration with parents and carers to improve the students access and participation in their schooling.

Post-school destinations

Eighty percent of the 2021 Year 10 cohort completed Year 12 in 2023. The retention rate over the past two years has increased. 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. Students who left school at the end of Year 12 following the completion of their school education continued enrolled in TAFE (80%) or pursued full-time employment (20%) in 2023.

Retention of Year 10 to Year 12

80%

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 (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 2023

Access to full text

Student welfare

The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment to support the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of students through the following policies:

Customer Experience and Service Innovation Policy – defines the way Aspect works in collaboration with students and families to achieve their goals.

Strategy and Risk Management – 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 recognise the rights of the people we support to make informed choices and take calculated risks. 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

Strategy and Risk Management was reviewed & updated in 2023.

Safeguarding the People we Support was reviewed and updated in 2023 to update language and match legislation.

The following policies can be accessed from Aspect's website www.aspect.org.au/about-aspect/policies

Customer

Strategy and Risk Management

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.

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 aside from changes listed above.

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 www.aspect.org.au/about-aspect/policies

Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA)

Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk

Embracing Diversity

Feedback, Complaints and Incidents

Safeguarding the People We Support

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 Positive Behaviour Support policy (PBS) can be accessed from Aspect's website

www.aspect.org.au/about-aspect/policies

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

www.aspect.org.au/feedback-and-complaints

The Feedback and Complaints brochure can be downloaded from our website

www.aspect.org.au/uploads/documents/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure.pdf

The Feedback, Complaints and Incidents policy can be accessed on Aspect's website

www.aspect.org.au/about-aspect/policies

School determined priority areas for improvement

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Teaching and learning	To improve teacher assessment so that teachers can accurately support students to develop their reading independence, consolidating and spelling skills while developing fluency, comprehension, grammar and vocabulary.	Teachers participated in targeted professional learning to embed and implement InitialLit across Kindergarten to Year 6 classes. As a result, fifty six percent of students made growth and progress across 2023. This was represented on our School Data Wall which focused on a range of data sets gathered through assessments.
Wellbeing	To investigate and implement the five wellbeing programs which are authentically aligned to specific classes and curriculum so that students develop strategies to support their individual wellbeing.	The School Improvement Planning Wellbeing working party reviewed and piloted So Safe (across main site), Worrymoo (across satellites), Secret Agent Society (4 th year program at three satellites), Westmead Feelings program (across five High School satellites). The feedback from students and staff surveys administered demonstrated the effectiveness of these programs in building student connectedness to their own wellbeing and provided instructional parameters for staff to support students through various activities and strategies.
Capital Works	To prepare and implement the phases of refurbishment planned for Wetherill Park main site for 2023 and beyond so that our learning environments are engaging and safe.	In 2023, four out of six classrooms had undergone refurbishment across our Wetherill Park main site as part of Phase one and two of the refurbishment master plan. Our classrooms were transformed into contemporary and purposeful spaces which supported our students' strengths and interests. The redesign of our administration and multipurpose spaces also enhanced our contemporary school environment. Our school environment has become more engaging as a result for our students and a safer place to learn and grow academically and socially.
Safeguarding	To build partnerships with parents, families, and community organisations (including allied health, family support, counselling and rehabilitation services) to improve opportunities and outcomes for students.	We achieved this by engaging with a Social Worker at the school who was employed three days a week. The role of the Social Worker was to engage with the Learning Support Team and families so that a more sustainable level of support and networked opportunities were available to support student wellbeing and safety, with a particular focus on allied health providers. The success of this program was evident in the number of families and student referrals we engaged which increased by thirty percent from previous years.
Leadership	To build our capacity and capabilities as Instructional Leaders by strengthening our leadership vision and collaborative leadership practices and supports across the school so that we are consistent in the development and support of others.	As a school leadership team, we have been engaging with EduInfluencers through bespoke coaching sessions and team workshops that strengthened our leadership team cohesiveness focusing on professional trust, team commitment, accountability and demonstrating evidence of impacts/results. We have been successful in this work as we have an agreed and shared-responsibility in leading this work and building the capacity of our staff and students. We have collected purposeful data and created a student data wall focus on reading comprehension and levels of intervention required to enable student growth and progress. As a team, we have provided opportunities for teachers to inform, shape and lead some of these initiatives.

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 hold.

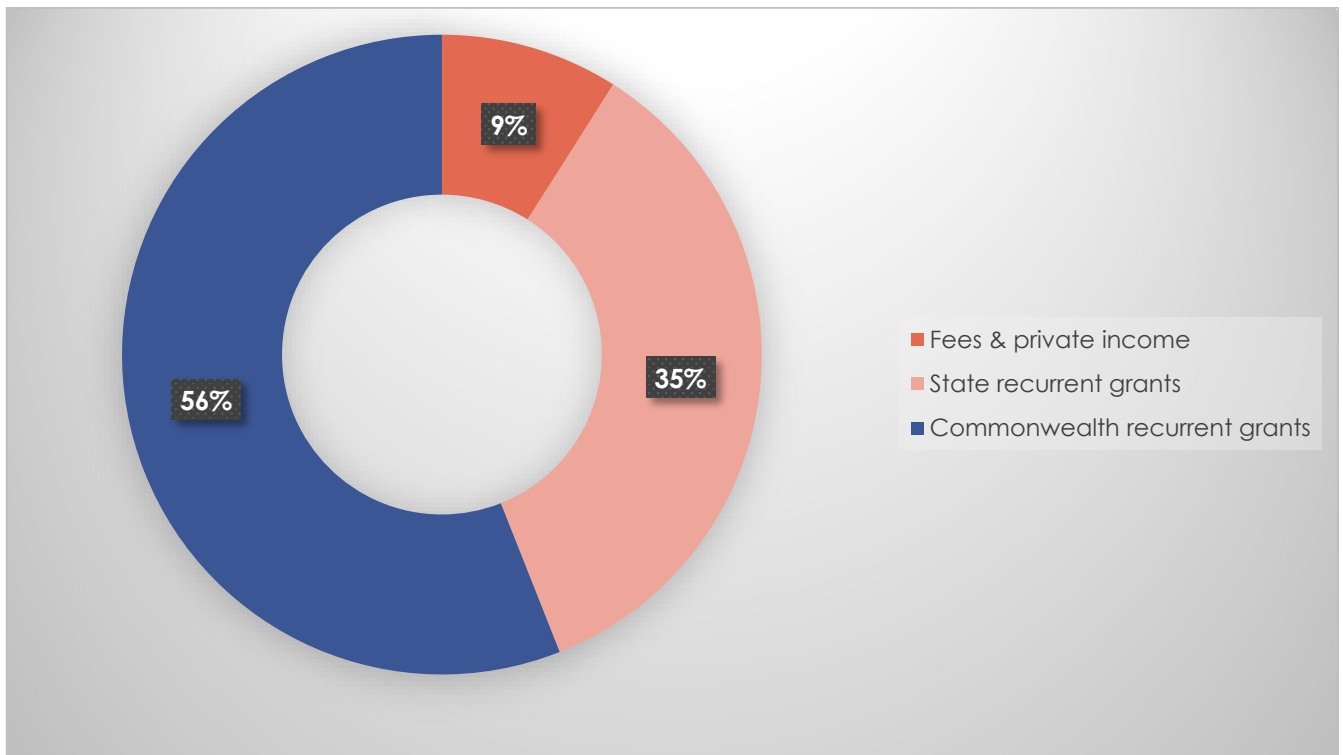
Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

In 2023 the Aspect Western Sydney School surveyed families to provided valuable feedback from staff, parents and students. The Net Promoter Score (NPS) feedback we have obtained from students and staff also highlights the positive satisfaction that at was experienced in 2023. The data highlights that parents feel that their child is supported in their learning and are being authentically supported by the staff at Aspect Western Sydney School.

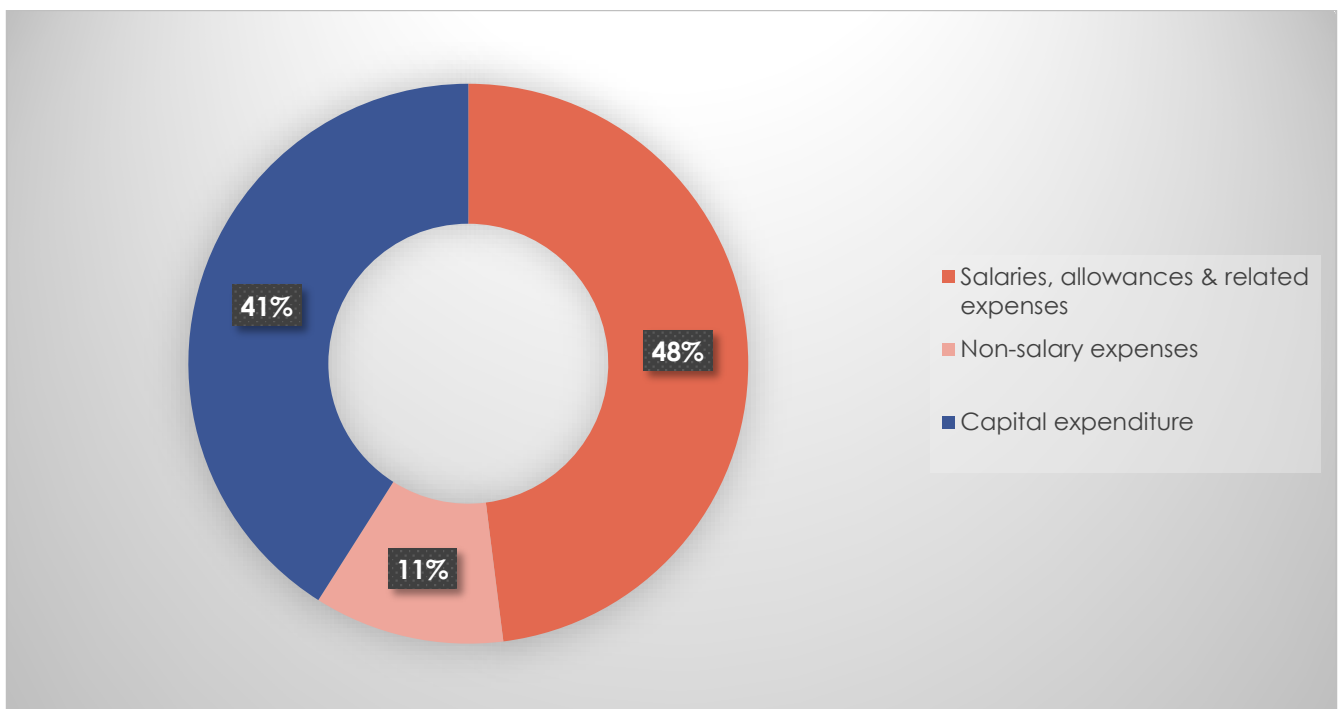
The staff satisfaction data from various internal surveys in 2023 also highlighted the recognition that the investment in their own professional learning and supports being offered by the School has created a positive experience for staff in their professional working lives as part of the school. Staff 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

Income



Expenditure





aspect.org.au | 1800 277 328 | customerservice@aspect.org.au