



Annual School Report

Aspect Vern Barnett 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

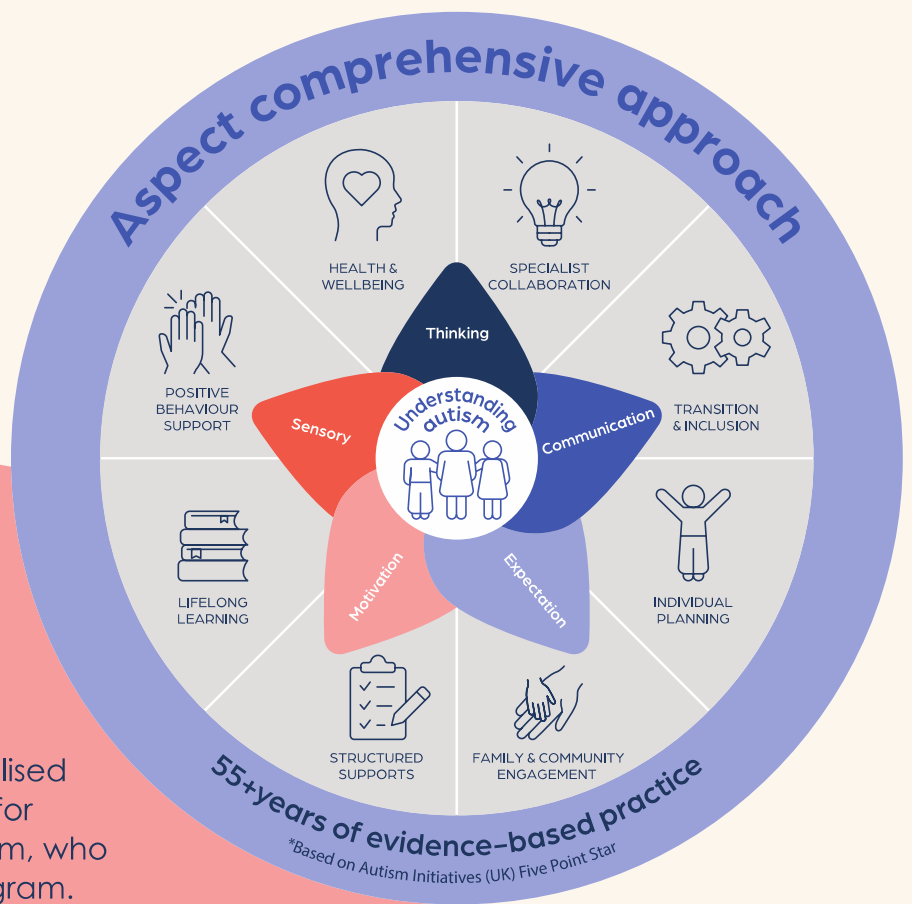
We work to understand people on the spectrum from their perspective

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 Gurigal people who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which our six 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 1971, Andrew Vern Barnett founded Aspect with a small group of parents who opened the first school as a purpose-built school to meet the needs of their children. More than 5 decades later Aspect Vern Barnett school has expanded and flourished. The school facilities have recently undergone extensive renovations to now be a state of the art, purpose built and modern education facility. Aspect Vern Barnett School catered for 86 students between the ages of 4 and 16 across our six sites in 2023. Our enrolment for 2023 comprised of 76 boys and 10 girls. The school operates from a main site at Forestville which consists of an administration office, eight primary classes and one senior class. Forty-two of our enrolments were placed in our satellite classes located within a 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 throughout their journey with a robust transition program.

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 school team prides itself on our work with families, students and professionals to create an individualised learning program for each and every student. I would like to sincerely thank all staff for their enormous contributions in 2023, and their dedication to ensuring every student meet their potential.

Aspect Vern Barnett School would like to thank the local community for their ongoing support throughout the year. 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 such as a music therapy and technology resources for learning.



Anna Brady
Principal

Student outcomes

Student outcomes in standardised literacy and numeracy testing

Each student at Aspect Vern Barnett School 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) 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.

Aspect Vern Barnett School understands the importance of core Literacy and Numeracy skills for all students. To support best practice in teaching and learning, teachers utilise 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. For numeracy, a range of suitable assessments are utilised, to inform our teaching, and monitor student progress.

Senior secondary outcomes

Aspect Vern Barnett School did not have any students that required the award of Record of School Achievement in 2023.

Aspect Vern Barnett School was not accredited for the HSC in 2023. Aspect Vern Barnett School is registered up to Year 10 only. The reporting of the HSC is not applicable.

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	All
Aspect Professional Code of Conduct	All
Berry Street Training: trauma informed approaches to improve student and staff wellbeing	All
Child Protection – responsibilities related to child protection based on NSW and 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
Positive Behaviour Support Training – knowledge and skills to support students	All
Use of Augmentative and Additional Communication systems (AAC) – knowledge and skills to support students to communicate	All
So Safe Training – knowledge and skills to develop Protective Behaviours and support wellbeing	All
Incident Response and Reporting	33
Supporting people on the autism spectrum using the 5-point star	25
Workplace bullying prevention for staff	12
ASCIA Anaphylaxis e-Training	12
Organisational Induction Program	9
First Aid	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	1
Provisional	0
Proficient Teacher	30
Highly Accomplished Teacher or Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditations)	0
Total number of teachers	31

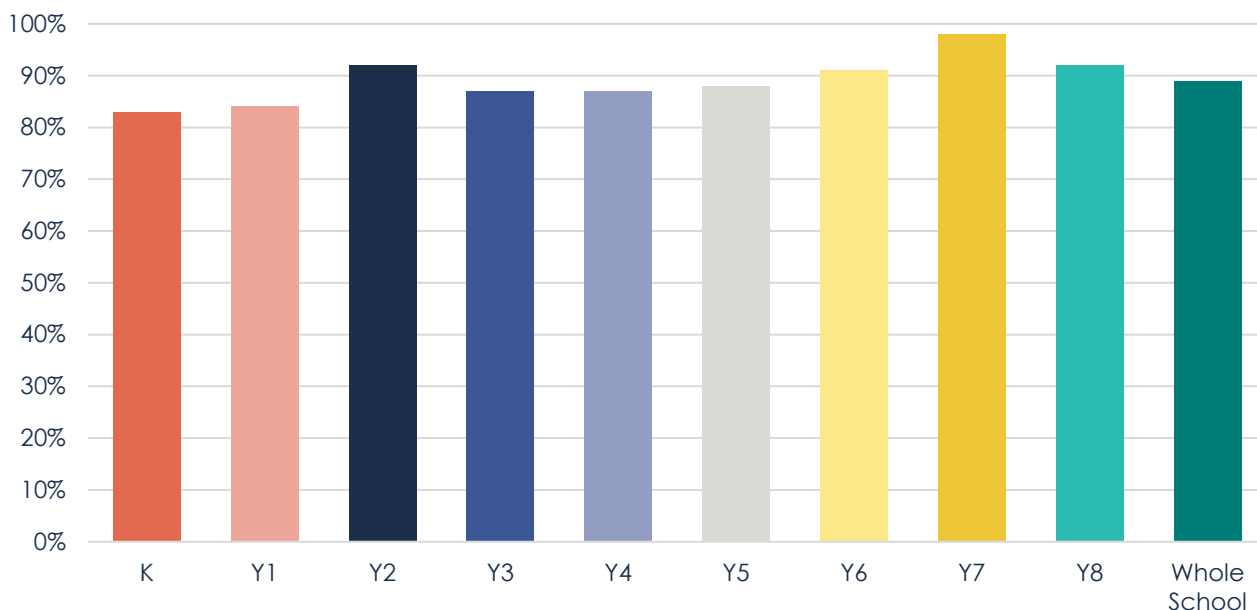
Teacher qualifications

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.

Workforce composition

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

Student attendance, retention rates and post-school destinations



Student attendance rates

Kinder	83%	Year 5	88%
Year 1	84%	Year 6	91%
Year 2	92%	Year 7	98%
Year 3	87%	Year 8	92%
Year 4	87%	Whole School	88%

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 administration team with the parent/guardian. Repeated unexplained absence or absence of concern may need to be reported to Family and Community Services.

Aspect Vern Barnett School has an automated SMS messaging service that advises parents/guardians if their child is absent and they have not notified the school of the absence. The school executive hold attendance meetings to review data and collaborate with the learning support team and external allied health professionals to support attendance improvement plans and tracking. 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

This is not applicable to 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 (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](http://www.aspect.org.au/about-<u>aspect/policies</u>)

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](http://www.aspect.org.au/feedback-and-<u>complaints</u>)

The Feedback and Complaints brochure can be downloaded from our website

[www.aspect.org.au/uploads/docume-nts/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure.pdf](http://www.aspect.org.au/uploads/docume-<u>nts/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure.pdf</u>)

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

[www.aspect.org.au/about-aspect/policies](http://www.aspect.org.au/about-<u>aspect/policies</u>)

School determined priority areas for improvement

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Quality Teaching and Learning	For leaders and teachers to engage in improved systems to collaboratively plan, assess, reflect and review teaching practices to improve individual student writing outcomes.	All staff collaborated to assess all student writing samples, which led to an improvement in accurate use of learning data to inform teaching.
Wellbeing	Students requiring a Positive Behaviour Support Response Plan will be supported with individual and appropriate strategies, through improved school systems for PBS support.	All staff attended PBS training, leading to improved understanding of PBS approach and systems. All PBS plans were audited and showed high quality in understanding the student, and strategies to support. Reduction in challenging behaviours, due to appropriate PBS response plans.
Leadership	All staff will engage in the process to identify an area of Professional Development, using the ACA Matrix, to improve their teaching and learning skills and knowledge.	All staff self-identified strengths and areas for their Professional Development, and reported growth in these skills and knowledge areas across the year.
Safeguarding	All staff will develop their skills and knowledge of trauma informed practices, through taking part in the Berry Street Education Model Training.	All staff reported an improved knowledge and confidence in supporting with trauma informed practices.
Capital Works	All renovation works will be completed to support with autism-specific learning spaces.	All capital works were completed in October 2023, with improved classrooms, playgrounds and furniture to support student learning.

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. Our new school site was opening in 2023, with a smoking ceremony, and Welcome to Country as part of the opening.

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

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

Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

Student Individual Plans

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

Family & Student Feedback

There are many formal and informal opportunities to provide feedback to the school. In a survey at the end of 2023, all families who responded rated the school an 8 or higher out of 10. All respondents indicated they would strongly recommend Aspect Vern Barnett School. Comments included that "Our family feels accepted, the aspect community is lovely."

Informal feedback from families is received by email, in person and by letter throughout the year. These are well summarised by a comment from one parent "They are knowledgeable and flexible to cater to my son's needs. My son loves the school, staff and all the activities."

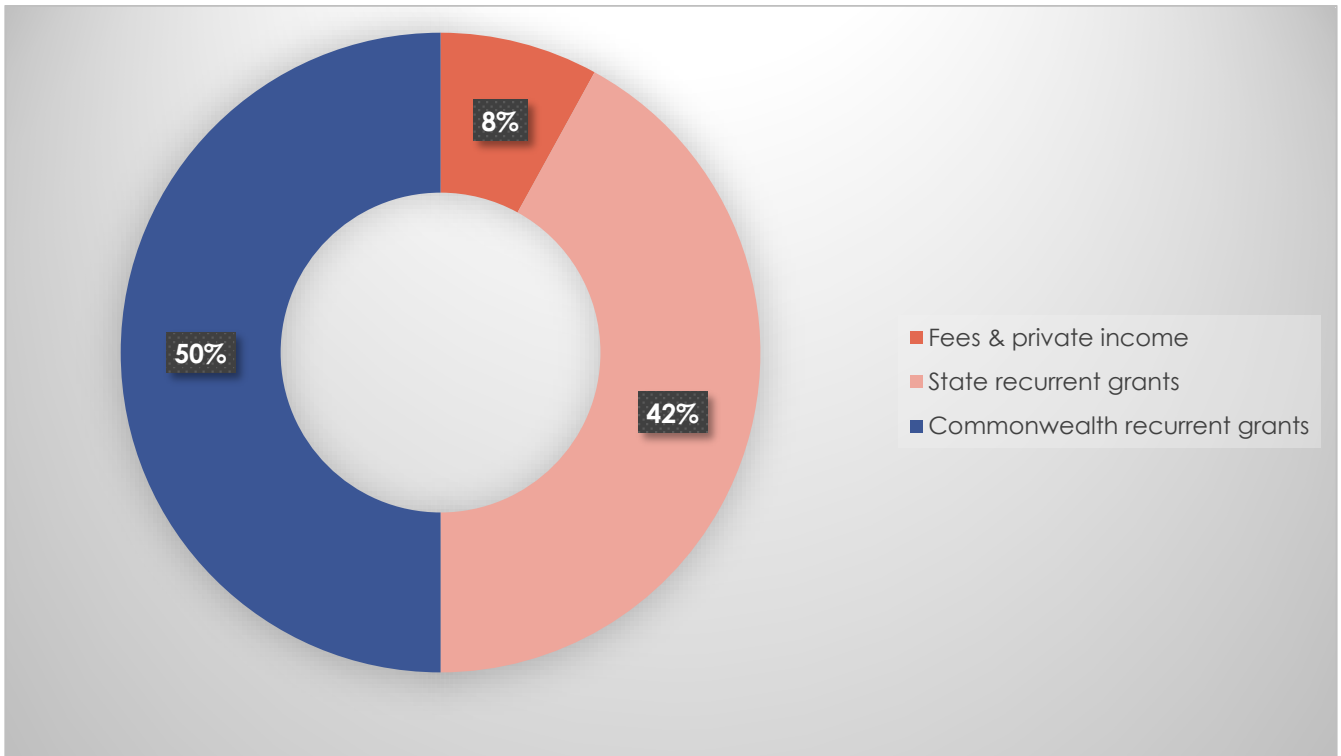
The average net promoter score for schools in general is between 47 – 84. Aspect schools average net promoter score was 68.9. This score places Aspect schools in the high range suggesting that our schools are highly recommended and that overall satisfaction with the service provided is very high.

Employee Survey

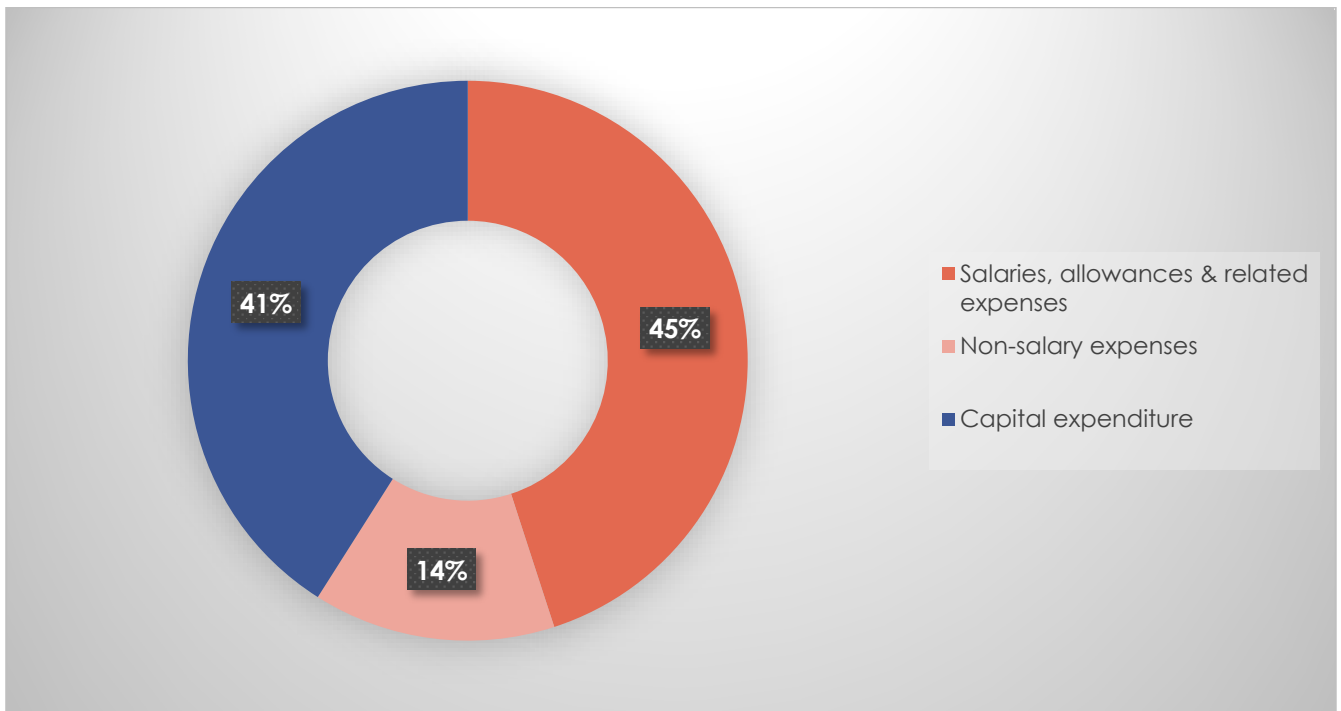
Aspect Education holds a biennial Perspectives Survey, and Aspect also survey staff annually through the Culture Dashboard. The results of these surveys support whole school initiatives, and company improvements, to ensure all staff are developing in their professional knowledge, practices, and engagement to best support the team, families and students.

Financial information

Income including recurrent funding



Expenditure





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