



Every **aspect**
of our school

a different
brilliant[®]

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

Acknowledgment of Country

Aspect (Autism
Spectrum Australia)
acknowledges the
Traditional Custodians
of the lands on which
we work and live.

We pay our respect to
their Elders past and
present.



aspect
Hunter
School

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Welcome to Aspect Hunter School.

We understand the uniqueness of every child, value their individual strengths, interests and aspirations and we celebrate the 'different brilliant' of everyone.

Meet our Principal



Dear Community Members,

I am thrilled to share with you the unique and impactful work happening at Aspect Hunter School. We are dedicated to serving students on the autism spectrum and we take immense pride in our mission to provide personalised learning experiences that empower each student to reach their full potential.

At our school, we recognize that every student is an individual with unique abilities, interests, and challenges. Our approach is centred around personalised learning, which means tailoring education to meet each child's specific needs. Whether it's adapting the curriculum, providing additional support, or fostering independence, we are committed to ensuring that every student thrives.

Our cornerstone is the Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA), drawing upon more than 50 years of expertise in providing services to children, young people, and adults on the autism spectrum. The ACA aims to provide individualised education that caters to the unique needs, strengths, and interests of each student. It recognises that every child on the autism spectrum is different, and we tailor interventions accordingly. This evidence-based approach focuses on creating a supportive and nurturing environment where challenging behaviours are addressed proactively.

As a school, we are deeply connected to our community. We value collaboration, transparency and open communication. Our doors are always open, and we encourage parents, caregivers, and community members to actively participate in our journey.

Our vision extends beyond the classroom. We aspire to prepare our students not only for academic success but also for meaningful lives as contributing members of society. Together, we celebrate diversity, embrace neurodiversity, and champion inclusion.

I invite you to visit our school, meet our dedicated staff, and witness the incredible progress our students make every day.

Let's continue to build a community where everyone thrives.

Craig McNee, School Principal

About our school

We offer a warm, welcoming and supportive learning environment for students on the autism spectrum. Our school operates from our main site at Thornton, NSW. We also have seven satellite classes that are specialised autism-specific classes located within mainstream Department of Education and Catholic schools. These satellite classes are located across Newcastle, the Hunter region and Port Macquarie. Aspect Hunter School also offers a Distance Education program.

Our school caters for approximately 250 students from Kindergarten through to Year 12 and deliver a mainstream school curriculum with embedded deliverable goals relating to each child's individual learning areas.

We work with a student's special interest areas to be able to motivate them to achieve their personal best. We have created a setting where the unique strengths and interests of all students is used to drive their learning. We are a vibrant school that thrives on personalising learning and using evidence based and informed best practice in autism. Students are encouraged to become self-determined learners through the provision of individualised and tailored learning programs.

Our highly skilled staff are committed to continual improvement and value the importance of positive home and school relationships.

"The transition was unbelievable. They came and did a home visit. Aspect was just so incredibly holistic and supportive from the get-go. We shared with them some of our experiences and some of the things that we were feeling uncomfortable about, and how they would manage my son's needs and behaviour. And they just reassured us every step of the way." – PARENT

Focusing on transitions

Aspect regards transition as a necessary part of every student's educational journey. The primary focus of our school is to act as a transitional setting that builds on student's skills and independence enabling them to transition to less specialised settings with comprehensive and personalised support. Approximately twenty percent of our students successfully transition each year.

Future planning and transition from an Aspect school into a non-autism specific education setting or into a post school program is part of the Individual Plan (IP) process for each student and their parents, guardians or the person responsible. The student's readiness for transition and the type of placement most suitable for each individual student will be discussed with their parents, guardians or the person responsible at each student's Individual Plan (IP) meeting.

Planning made personal

Individualised planning is the most critical consideration in educational intervention for Autistic individuals. Whilst all children on the autism spectrum share many common traits, each individual child possesses his or her own unique profile of strengths, difficulties and learning styles¹. It follows that a 'one size fits all' approach will never meet the needs of all students at all times. Rather, Aspect recognises the importance of individualised planning in promoting the potential of every learner.

Individualised Plans (IP) form the cornerstone of the approach adopted in Aspect schools. IPs are developed collaboratively with parents and students and are based on developmental and/or functional assessment.

The individual planning process is ongoing and dynamic.

1. Le Roux et al., 1998; Siegel, 2003.



Inside our classrooms

Typically, classes are small, with around six students, so everyone gets more intensive individual support.

The classroom environment is purpose-built and carefully structured, with clearly defined work stations and autism-specific supports and strategies – such as calming spaces, key visuals and established routines.


We take part in a range of community activities such as swimming and outings to parks, zoos, supermarkets and museums.

We offer recently upgraded facilities including new classrooms, a library, new playgrounds,

multipurpose hall, sensory room, Technology Hub, music centre and coffee shop.

A high school program that includes work education, work experience and travel training opportunities.

Our Distance Education enables students to learn from home by connecting them with teachers via a range of digital learning tools. The program is available for students on the autism spectrum in Years 3 to 12 and living in New South Wales. Students participate in at least 15 days of face to face learning at the Aspect Hunter School main site each year and 1 to 2 excursions each term.



We run coffee mornings, parent groups, grandparent groups and things like that so parents can support each other. We've had parents connect as Facebook groups and do play dates."

– STAFF MEMBER

"The teachers communicate with me whenever something happens, both positive and negative. I have found that it's been really good. It made me realise that I have made the right decision."

– PARENT

"They transitioned him from the main site at the end of the year last year, and he went to satellite class at the beginning of year 2. He was really nervous about another move. So, they did a lot of work to help him establish a sense of safety, give him all of the information about what he could expect, give him options, and what he could do when he's feeling overwhelmed.

He was really into Harry Potter then. The teacher at the satellite class actually sent a letter in the school holidays to my son saying that he has been accepted into the School of Witchcraft and Wizardry."

– PARENT

Our purpose-built school located in the Newcastle region is the ideal location to start your child's education journey in a close-knit, caring community.

Why choose our school?

We understand autism like no other school

Aspect has been leading the way in providing services to people on the autism spectrum for 50+ years – and we offer the largest autism-specific education program in Australia. Our students benefit from decades of experience and research into how to best support people on the autism spectrum. Everything we do is evidence-informed and aims to give students the best opportunities possible throughout their lives.

Get a great education, tailored to you

Aspect is a registered and accredited school with highly trained, capable teachers who are passionate about what they do. We follow the NSW Curriculum and we carefully adapt learning and development based on each individual student's strengths and interests. Every student therefore has a positive experience that is personalised for them.

A community where you'll feel right at home

We're more than a school – we're a close-knit, caring community of families and carers with similar experiences. When you join us, you'll have an instant support network to share your journey with Aspect and beyond. Together, we share experiences and advice and celebrate milestones and achievements.

The conversation is always open

Communication is a key part of a student's education to make sure we're on the same page – and at Aspect, we're open, honest and supportive at all times. We encourage ongoing two-way conversations with every family, so it's never hard to bring up an issue or ask a question. After all, we're here to help.

The journey doesn't end with us

A student's education journey usually has a few key transition points, and at Aspect, we are here to support you through these times of change.

That includes coming into our school, and going out of our school into other educational environments. We also support students for up to 12 months after they've transitioned out of an Aspect school.

We work in partnership with the 'home team'

In 2022 Aspect finalised our Working in Partnership Charter which provides an overarching set of principles to guide Working in Partnership at Aspect. This charter has been rolled out across the organisation and provides guidance and support to Autistic and non-Autistic staff around what working in partnership looks like.



"As a parent, just knowing that he'd be supported, knowing that he's somewhere where he's understood, and knowing that the teachers are working as a team to help bring out the best in my child... it's been amazing."

— PARENT

Your need-to-knows



School hours

Official school hours are 9:00am to 2:45pm. Students arrive at school in the morning between 9:00am and 9:30am.



Wet weather days

In the event of wet weather, students will work and play inside their classroom, supervised at all times by Aspect staff.



Timetable

Each term parents will receive a copy of the class timetable as well as a term overview.



Parent info and meetings

Each term parents will receive a copy of the class timetable as well as a term overview.

'Meet the Teacher' events for parents are held in term one as well as open classrooms throughout the year.

Individual Planning meetings are held with the teacher and any external therapists in term one with a review in term three



What to wear

Aspect students are encouraged to wear the full Aspect Hunter School uniform at all times. Please contact the school directly regarding uniforms.



Drop off and pick up

Students are transported to and from school via parents and special transport.



Staying in touch

TASS Parent Lounge is our official administrative communication system. This is used to report student absences, changes of address and important updates. Teachers and parents can also liaise using the See-Saw app for day to day updates. If there are any important forms or notes that need to be completed and returned, they'll be sent home through TASS Parent Lounge. If there's ever an urgent matter you need to discuss, just call the school office on (02) 4922 5900.



How our enrolment works:

1.

Come to a school info session

Give us a call on (02) 4922 5900 to find out when the next one will be held.

2.

Join the wait list

To register a student, just fill out a registration form and pay a \$200 registration fee. You can get the form at the school info session or by contacting the school.

3.

A spot opens up

When a position becomes available at the school, the School Enrolment Committee considers all the students on the waitlist. This decision is made based on a number of factors – it's not simply on a 'first come, first served' basis.

4.

Family interview

Before a student is officially offered a place, they may be invited to meet with our team (together with family or carers).

5.

Enrolment offer

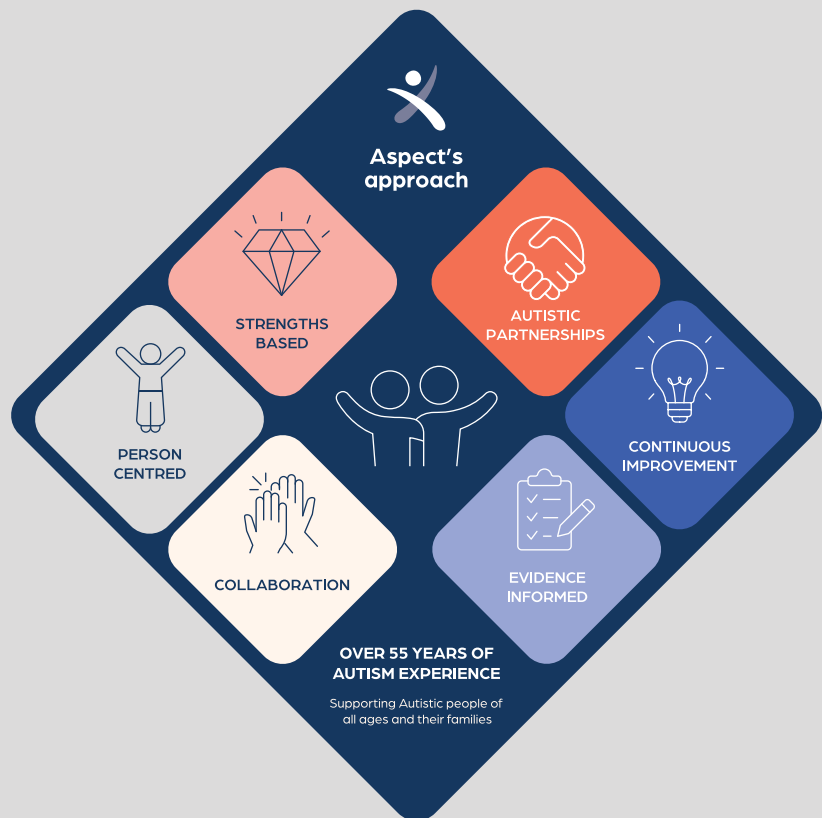
Once there's a place available, we'll send a formal letter of offer and an Enrolment Contract to the student's parents or guardians. You'll need to accept the offer by signing and returning the Enrolment Contract and paying the non-refundable enrolment fee.

Who is eligible?

Eligible students:

- Are Australian citizens, permanent residents of Australia or hold an eligible Australian visa.
- Have had a formal diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder in the last two years.

When a child is deemed eligible, they will be registered on the school's waiting list. The order of placement on the waiting list does not determine the order of an enrolment offer.



Aspect's approach

Aspect's approach draws on 55 years of expertise in supporting Autistic people of all ages and their families. It outlines the key principles that guide how we provide best practice supports and services to Autistic participants, students, and their families or carers. We take the time to understand how each Autistic person experiences the world, using their strengths, interests, and aspirations to shape individualised supports. Our practices are underpinned by the latest evidence, informed by the individual and their support networks, and are continuously adapted to meet each person's unique needs.

The Five Point Star

The Five Point Star is our relationship-based approach to understanding and supporting students on the autism spectrum. The approach recognises the strengths of Autistic students – and also that Autistic students and non-Autistic people need to work together to understand each other, and to adapt to meet each other's preferences and needs. Aspect staff collaborate with students to develop their Five Point Star profiles, which are used to guide positive empathetic trusting relationships.

Every individual on the autism spectrum has the right to be an active participant in the community and to make choices about things that matter to them.

Our guiding principles

- We focus on the strengths and interests of each student.
- We work in partnership with students, their families and their communities.
- We work to understand students 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.

Our values

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

Aside from our educational program, Aspect provides a number of services that may come in handy for students and families, now or down the track.

What else does Aspect offer?

Assessments

Aspect offers autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and cognitive assessments in person and via telehealth. Children diagnosed early can access services that will significantly improve their prospects for a meaningful life. An assessment provides teachers and schools with information that will allow them to more effectively support your child, and you will gain a better understanding of how your child processes the world.

Aspect also offers review assessments for those already diagnosed. These assessments provide updated information about their strengths and differences, and include recommendations to assist with support planning. Such an assessment can be useful at times of transition (e.g. when commencing primary school, high school or postschool planning) or to assist in applications for funding for autism (e.g. NDIS, Disability Support Pension, school supports, etc.).

Therapy

Aspect Therapy is a registered NDIS provider with a large team of allied health professionals (speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers) and educators.

Together, we develop and deliver individualised and small group autism-specific therapy and positive behaviour support.

Workshops

Aspect offers a broad range of autism-related workshops and webinars for parents, carers, educators and health professionals. We deliver practical, real-world solutions to benefit families, communities, professionals and organisations.



For the full range of Aspect services, please scan the QR code or visit aspect.org.au



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