



**aspect**  
Vern Barnett  
School



Every **aspect**  
of our school

a different  
**brilliant**<sup>®</sup>

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

## Acknowledgment of Country

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

We pay our respect to  
their Elders past and  
present.



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**Aspect Vern Barnett School**  
41 Cook St  
Forestville NSW 2087  
**Phone: (02) 9454 8359**



## Welcome to Aspect Vern Barnett 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



Aspect Vern Barnett is proud to be the first Aspect school, supporting families with our autism-specific educational programs for over 50 years, across Northern Sydney. We understand the uniqueness of every child, value their individual strengths, interests and aspirations, and we celebrate the 'different brilliant®' of every child.

As Principal, my main focus is to lead a school that provides education of the highest quality, through rich and varied learning experiences. At Vern Barnett, we have the additional commitment to the personal development of each child, to equip them appropriately for the future. We all aim for a harmonious and joyful school, where we celebrate our diversity and share our many achievements.

The strength of our school is the quality autism specific approaches, delivered by our highly trained team of teachers, teacher aides and therapists. Our small classes allow our teams to truly understand each student, and individualise the learning experiences for every child to thrive.

Our staff have high expectations for every child, and provide individualised support to each student to help them to reach their goals. At each of our sites, the education and therapy professionals nurture the success of the students by creating engaging and relevant learning opportunities. We embed student Individual Plan goals, which are often focused on communication and sensory regulation across the day, and work with therapists regularly. We celebrate the positive outcomes and achievements the students make and work with families and therapists to continually build on these successes.

The role of collaboration is evident across the school. Educators, therapists and families work together, leading to positive outcomes for our students. We aim to build a warm and supportive school network for families, where they can meet and build lasting connections with other families, create extended friendships for their children, and learn from each other.

We understand the importance of a smooth and seamless transition. At each point, we work closely with families to ensure they have the information they need to plan for the next steps in their child's future. Transition programs are individualised to suit each family and student, so they are fully prepared for the changes ahead.

We look forward to hearing from you and are happy to answer further questions about our wonderful and inclusive school.

Anna Brady  
School Principal

# About Vern Barnett School

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**We offer a warm, welcoming and supportive learning environment for students on the autism spectrum. Set in the leafy suburb of Forestville on the Northern Beaches, Aspect Vern Barnett School was the very first Aspect school to be established in the 1970's by its namesake Andrew Vern Barnett. Andrew had a daughter on the autism spectrum and was driven by the need to find a school that worked for her.**

Our school operates from our main site at Forestville which caters for students in both primary and secondary years. The school also has five satellite classes which are Aspect run and operated.

Our highly skilled staff are committed to continual improvement and value the importance of positive home/school relationships. We work closely with students and their families to develop confidence and skills that will support transition to less specialised settings, and inclusion into a student's local community in the future.

Aspect Vern Barnett School is committed to the provision of a contemporary and progressive education program, specifically for students on the autism spectrum. We have created a setting where the unique strengths and interests of all students are 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.

*"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

The primary focus of Aspect schools is to help students develop the skills to become as independent as possible and to enable them to succeed in the wider community. Aspect Vern Barnett School has a transition focus aimed at preparing children and young people for non-autism specific educational environments, whether this is in mainstream, supported classes or general disability classes.

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 and carers. The student's readiness for transition and the type of placement most suitable for each individual student will be discussed with their parents, and carers responsible at each student's Individual Plan (IP) meeting.

## Planning made personal

Individualised planning is the most critical consideration in educational intervention for individuals on the autism spectrum. While 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 styles.<sup>1</sup>

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 have four new classrooms, a purpose-built gym and student kitchen. All remaining classrooms have recently been refurbished with special consideration being given to the autism specific supports our students require to promote independence and success.

Aspect Vern Barnett has recently undergone major renovation works. All classrooms have been upgraded after consultation with people on the autism spectrum, to create contemporary autism friendly learning spaces such as acoustic panelling to reduce noise, natural lighting, and engaging play spaces.

We take part in a range of community activities, such as swimming, Nippers and gymnastics.

We have an on-site swimming pool to support water safety and swimming confidence.



*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

*"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

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

– PARENT

**Our purpose-built school located on the Northern Beaches of Sydney is the ideal location to start your child's education journey in a close-knit, caring community.**

# Why choose our school?

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## **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 Australian 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.

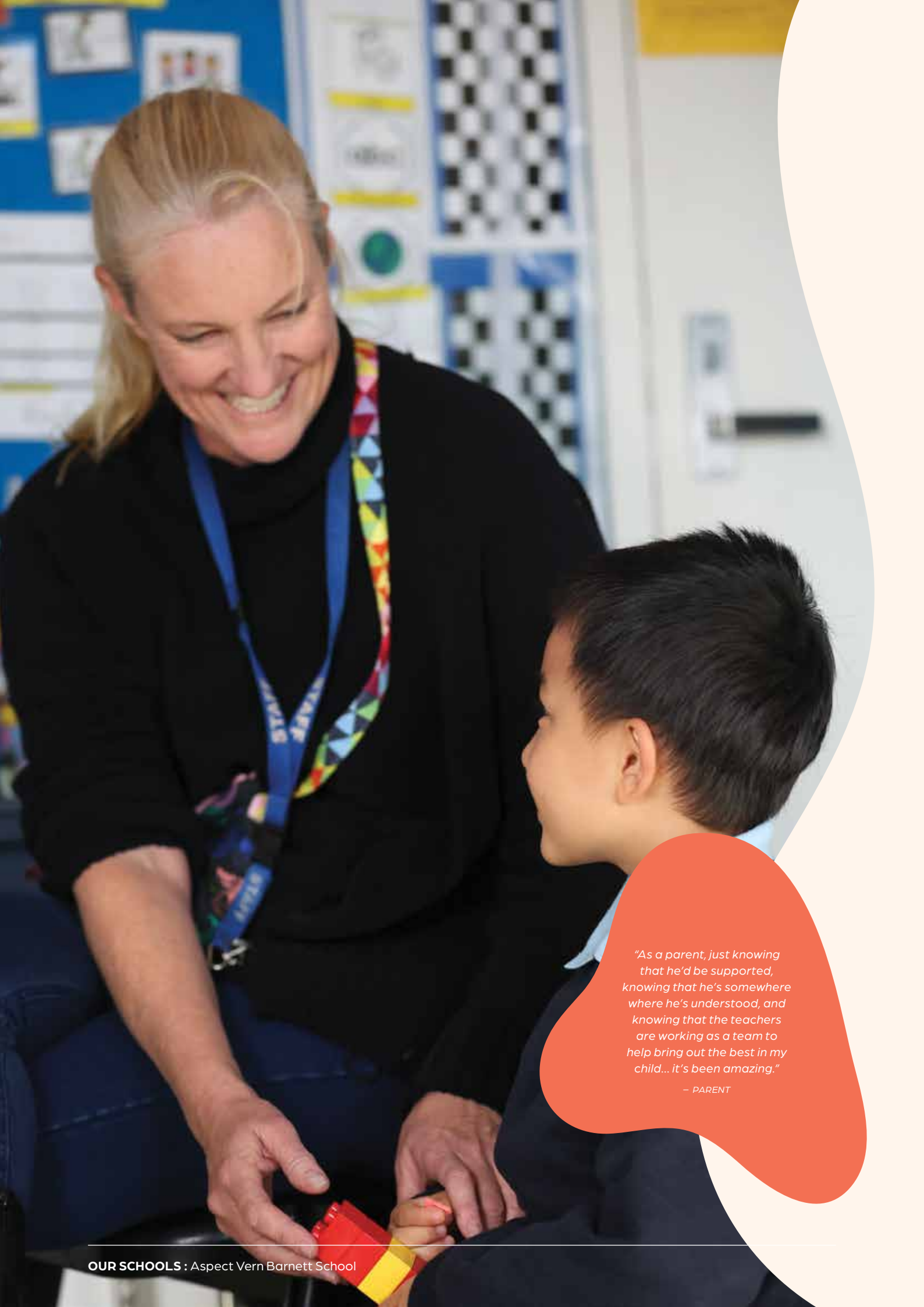
## **The journey doesn't end with us**

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

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## School hours

Official school hours are 9:00am to 2:50pm. Students arrive at school in the morning between 8:50am – 9:10am and depart between 2:50pm – 3:00pm.



## Wet weather days

In the event of wet weather, students will work and play inside their classroom or the gym, 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

IP meetings are held with the teacher in Term 1 and a review meeting in Term 3.

Teachers, Student Support Officers and families have the opportunity to meet with each other in the first two days of the school year. During this time, the Five Point Star is discussed.



## What to wear

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



## Drop off and pick up

Students are dropped off and picked up from school by parents.



## Staying in touch

The See-Saw app is used as the communication method for students and families at Aspect Vern Barnett School. The teacher will correspond via the app approximately three times per week. Administrative information is communicated via TASS which is Aspect's school management system. If there is an urgent matter, please call the school office on (02) 9454 8359.



# How our enrolment works:

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1.

## Come to a school info session.

Give us a call on (02) 9454 8359 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.

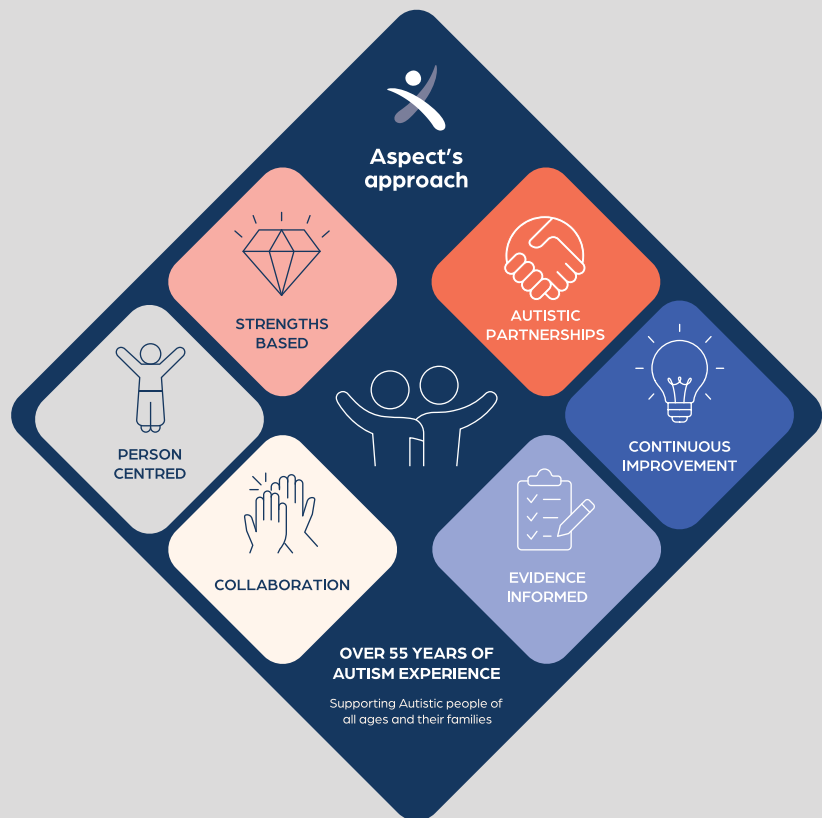
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## Who is eligible?

### 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.

# What else does Aspect offer?

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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.

Services include:

- Assessments for autism across the lifespan
- Therapy
- Support coordination
- Adult Community Services
- Workshops

For the full range of Aspect services, please scan the QR code or visit [aspect.org.au](https://aspect.org.au)



[aspect.org.au](https://aspect.org.au)  
+61 1800 277 328  
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