

2020 Annual Report

Aspect Macarthur School



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Child safe statement

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is a child safe organisation committed to protecting the rights and interests of children and vulnerable people by providing them with a safe environment. This commitment extends to ensuring a culturally safe and inclusive environment that recognises and respects an individual's heritage, relationships and cultural practices.

Acknowledgment of Country

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

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is the country's largest service provider for people on the autism spectrum. Our specialised, evidence informed schools program is one of the largest in the world, with additional services that include information and advice, diagnostic assessments, behaviour support, parent and family support, and adult programs. We share evidence-informed autism practice and applied research nationwide.

Aspect schools

provide specialised evidence-informed programs for children aged 4 to 17 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.



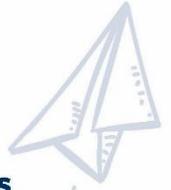
Aspect's Strategic Plan

Our purpose

Understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests and aspirations of people on the autism spectrum
- *a different brilliant*®

Our vision

The best opportunities for people on the autism spectrum.



Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023



Work in partnership with people on the autism spectrum

- Implement our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
- Work in Partnership with People on the Autism Spectrum Charter
- Employ Autistic people across a range of roles



Extend Aspect's reach and enhance people capabilities

- Well trained staff with enhanced critical skills
- Customer-centric culture
- Strong and trusted brand identity



Deliver best practice, evidence informed services

- Research activities prioritised to focus on the Aspect Comprehensive Approach
- Continuous improvements to our autism-specific education
- A diverse and inclusive workforce



Investment in physical and digital infrastructure

- Capital Works Program for Aspect schools
- Innovative facilities co-designed with Autistic people
- Digital platforms that facilitate collaboration and communication

Our strategic support

Our people who are highly trained and value diversity and inclusion

Our systems and processes which are built to enable smarter work practices and foster collaboration

Our supporters who help to create a world where no one on the autism spectrum is left behind

By 2023



6% of roles at Aspect held by Autistic people



7,000 active participants and students receiving autism-specific education and supports

1,600 employees who are proud to be working for Aspect



Message from

the Deputy National Director of Aspect Education

In presenting the 2020 annual report I would like to acknowledge the Dharawal people who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which our main site school is located.

In 2020 Aspect Macarthur School provided autism specific education to 110 students aged between 4 and 17 years (89 boys and 21 girls). The school spans from the Macarthur region where we have an administrative main site at Cobbitty to satellite sites in Campbelltown, Minto, Holsworthy, West Hoxton and all the way to the Northern Rivers region with a site in Coffs Harbour. All satellite locations offer primary education except for our West Hoxton high school site. Unfortunately, we closed our Alstonville site in 2020 but were thrilled to open a new satellite site in Airds with a specific focus on engaging Aboriginal students on the autism spectrum which is an Aspect first.

The 2020 school year presented unprecedented challenges for our entire school community, staff, students and families. As the COVID-19 pandemic escalated, schools were forced to shift to an alternate model of schooling, remote learning. Despite this great change, some wonderful stories of innovation and resilience emerged, including the new ways our dedicated staff found to make learning fun and engaging. I would like to congratulate the Macarthur school community for their dedication and commitment during this period. Working collaboratively ensured that we continued to make significant improvements in not only the quality of education provided but the relationships we have with existing and new partners.



In 2020 our school participated in the Perspectives: Your School in Focus survey involving staff, student and families sharing their experiences of our school. We were pleased with our results, that highlighted strengths in teaching and learning and inclusive practice. Several areas were identified as opportunities and these will inform our focus areas for 2021.

2020 was definitely a year like no other but on reflection the greater connections that were fostered between home and school and the way in which our staff rose to the challenges before them, proved that Macarthur is full of innovative, passionate, flexible and adaptive professionals who continue to deliver quality education.

Well done and thank you to all.

Lee Casuscelli

Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing

Each student has an individual profile of characteristics that outlines strengths and interests, current levels of functioning and areas for development in the autism-specific areas of learning: social communication, social interaction, behaviours and sensory processing which are integrated into the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) mainstream curriculum. The 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

As NAPLAN assessments were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19, the most recent information relates to 2019 NAPLAN results which are available on My School 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

Record of School Achievement

In 2020, the formal Record of School Achievement credential was awarded by NESA to one student.

Higher School Certificate

The 2020 enrolment of Aspect Macarthur School was up to Year 10 only. The reporting of the HSC results is not applicable.

Teacher professional learning, accreditation and qualifications

The following professional learning activities were undertaken by teachers throughout 2020:

Description of professional learning activity	No. of teachers participating
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inclusion and Cultural Safety 2.0 (AU)	11
ACA Family Engagement (literature review)	1
Acknowledging and recording feedback and complaints	13
An introduction to Autism (Positive Partnerships)	7
An introduction to the Positive Behaviour Support Template (Positive Partnerships)	2
ASCIA Anaphylaxis e-Training	18
Aspect Child Protection	8
Aspect Code of Conduct	6
Aspect LEAD Program - Feedback and Courageous Conversations	1
Aspect LEAD Program - Performance Management (Education edition)	2
Aspect LEAD Program Module 11 - Managing Remote Workers (Education edition)	1
Aspect LEAD Program Module 12 - Budgets 2020 (Education Edition)	1
Aspect LEAD Program Module 13 - Workers Compensation	1

Aspect LEAD Program Module 9 - Education as a Business 2020 (Education edition)	2
Child Protection Legislative Update (2020)	1
Child Safe Organisations	1
Compliance Essentials Australia - Privacy for the Private Sector 7.0 (AU)	1
Disability Awareness in the Workplace 2.0	13
Fire Warden Responsibilities 1.0 (AU)	1
Individual Plans (IP) and the IP Process	1
Induction Checklist - New Employee	1
Living the Code of Conduct (2019)	3
Manual Handling (Assess & Learn) 1.0 (AU)	17
Manual Handling 6.0 (AU)	5
New Starters Day	1
New Starters Day (Webinar Series)	1
Organisational Induction Program	6
Playground Routine and Operational Checklist	1
Safety Leadership Bundle	2
Supporting people on the autism spectrum using the 5 point star (module)	1
Supporting people on the autism spectrum using the 5 point star (online program)	17
Supporting People to Stay Infection Free	25
Teachers & Teacher's Assistants - Dynamic teams that support students on the spectrum (Positive Partnerships)	1
Understanding workplace behaviour through DISC for Leaders	1
Workplace Bullying Prevention for staff	7

Teacher accreditation

Level of accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	6
Provisional	2
Proficient Teacher	24
Highly Accomplished Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Total number of teachers	32

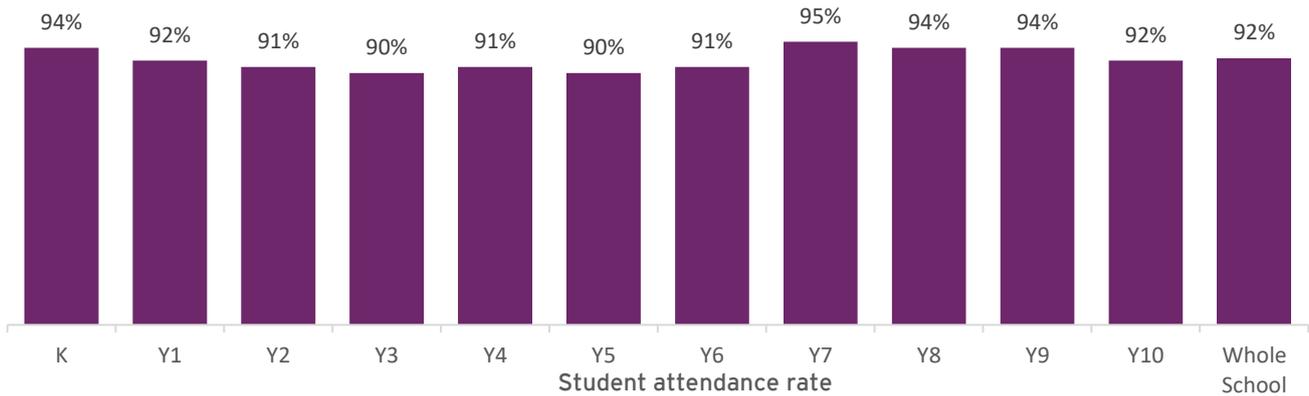
Teacher qualifications

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 Macarthur School staff is documented on the My School website www.myschool.edu.au

There were two staff members who are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island origin.



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

Student attendance rates

Kinder	86%	Year 7	83%
Year 1	77%	Year 8	82%
Year 2	78%	Year 9	86%
Year 3	86%	Year 10	44%
Year 4	80%		
Year 5	84%	Whole School	80%
Year 6	89%		

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) or the South Australia Education Board.

Unexplained absence will be followed up by the class teacher 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.

Retention of Year 10 to Year 12

One hundred percent of the Aspect Central Coast School 2018 Year 10 cohort transitioned to a mainstream school setting and completed Year 12 in 2020.

Most students who left school at the end of Year 12 following the completion of their school education have pursued post-school transition to work programmes (67%) and the remaining (33%) have enrolled in university access programmes.

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-III, 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 2020	Access to full text
<p>Student welfare</p> <p>The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment to support the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of students through the following policies:</p> <p>Person Centred Approach and Recognition of Values - define and work towards achieving individual's goals and personal lifestyle choices with support and input from those who care about them</p> <p>Risk Management Framework - identifies risks and defines criteria for the assessment of consequence of those risks</p> <p>Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk - ensures that staff understand and implement the principles of Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk, recognising the rights of the people we support to make informed choices and take calculated risks. It is essential that each individual's dignity of risk is respected and supported in their decision-making processes. Aspect facilitates each student's meaningful choice and control to maximise their independence; and minimises the risk to the individual or others wherever possible.</p> <p>Safeguarding the People We Support - Aspect is committed to appropriately responding to and preventing incidents of abuse, injury, neglect and exploitation of the people we support, in both participation with Aspect, and as a partner of the broader community</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>The following policies can be accessed from Aspect's website https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status• Risk Management Framework• Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk• Safeguarding the People we support
<p>Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools</p> <p>The Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA), including the use of the Five Point Star, drives aspect's guiding principles for pastoral care.</p> <p>Aspect is required and seeks to exercise due diligence in all of its duty of care responsibilities towards students, staff and the school community. Leaders of the school endorse activities and plan for the safety and maintenance of good mental and physical health and well-being of the students, staff and parents involved. Schools seek to accommodate and make provision for particular needs of individuals who require special arrangements to secure safety and avoid discomfort or threat to their health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>New</p>	<p>The full text of the Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools procedure can be accessed by request from the school principal.</p> <p>The following related policies can be accessed from Aspect's website https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA)• Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk• Embracing Diversity• Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status

Therefore, bullying or harassment is not tolerated in any form. All members of our community are committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment which promotes personal growth and fosters positive self-esteem for all. Aspect Schools aim to maintain a setting in which everyone feels valued and respected and where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted and encourages the reporting of complaints and feedback.

- Safeguarding the People We Support
- Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback

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.

New

The full text of the Discipline in Schools work instruction can be accessed by request from the school principal.

The Aspect Positive Behaviour Support policy can be accessed from Aspect's website <https://www.autismspectrum.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

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/feedback-and-complaints>

The Feedback and Complaints brochure can be downloaded from our website

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/documents/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure.pdf>

School determined priority areas for improvement

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Teaching and learning	Improve the quality of the curriculum programs across the school by conducting a review of the scope and sequence, units of work, assessments and reporting processes in place.	With advice and guidance from NESA review was conducted and a range of recommendations implemented. Exemplary examples created and regular review dates implemented.
Family Engagement	Maintain family engagement and support during COVID-19.	Established processes for maintaining contact with parents/carers during COVID-19 while students were learning from home. Weekly parent lounges on Google classroom provided opportunities for families to connect with the school and other families. Home learning packages were delivered to families.
	Conduct Perspectives Survey with parents, carers, staff and key stakeholders to provide data for the school plan.	Used Perspectives Survey analysis to inform strategic directions for school improvement including a family engagement strategy.
	Introduce a new form of home / school communication to strengthen family engagement.	SeeSaw implemented across the school.
Staff development	Work with the ACA team to implement changes to the Individual Planning process and update all documentation and strengthen Positive Behaviour Support processes.	Professional learning conducted in Term one and two.
	Develop leadership knowledge and capabilities.	One school coordinator and Principal participated in the Aspect Education Leaders program.
	Staff will participate in cultural competency training in preparation for a new partnership with a new satellite.	Training conducted in Term three.
	By November Aspect Macarthur will have six staff complete the Secret Agent Society (SAS) training.	Seven staff were trained in the Secret Agency Society (SAS) program.
Facilities and Resources	Establish a new Primary satellite class.	The Briar Rd satellite class partnership was formed in Term 3 and approved by NESA in Term 4. Furniture, technology and resources purchased for the new class in Term four.
	Improve the facilities at the Aspect Macarthur main site.	Improvements completed included a bell system, remodelled meeting room, staff lockers, playground repairs and resources to create a sensory room, library space and student kitchen.
Student achievement	Increase student involvement in individual planning and reflection on learning.	Students involved in completing their personal Five Point Star and IP meetings and students included a reflection on learning in student reports.
	Establish a Student Representative Council made up of student representatives from all classes and sites across the school.	Student representative council plans were impacted by COVID-19 situation therefore plans were not fully completed.

Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

Aspect Macarthur School wants all students to recognise that they are valued and an integral part of the school community, with parents and staff providing care and support that promotes self-esteem, mutual respect and responsibility.

The structure of the school's satellite program provides opportunities for students to participate in classes and cultural activities with host school students, particularly during Harmony week, National Reconciliation week and NAIDOC week.

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

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

Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

During 2020, Aspect Macarthur School surveyed families using the AIS School Improvement Survey - 'Perspectives'. The school scored a commendable return score of 66.10% in this survey. Positive feedback from parents at Macarthur focused mostly on the inclusive culture of the school and the fact that student support is individualised and caters to a range of needs.

Perspectives survey comments included -

'Aspect staff and teachers are brilliant. I'm so happy my son attends this school'

'The staff go above and beyond to help my child'

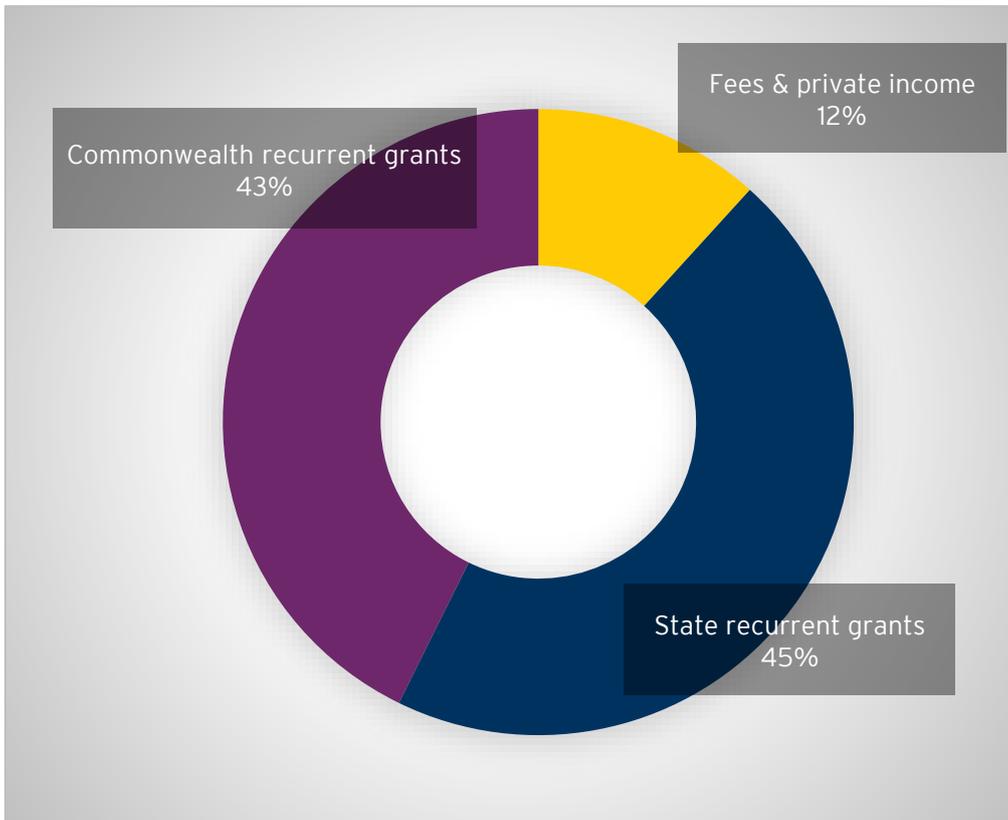
'Brilliant school, don't know what I would have done without these teachers'

Parents also completed a parent engagement survey as a follow to the previous year. Results identified a need for more regular communication using a variety of formats. This led to the introduction of Seesaw in place of communication books. This approach was extremely well received and the regular updates and images directly from classrooms to home strengthened relationships and improved communication quite quickly.

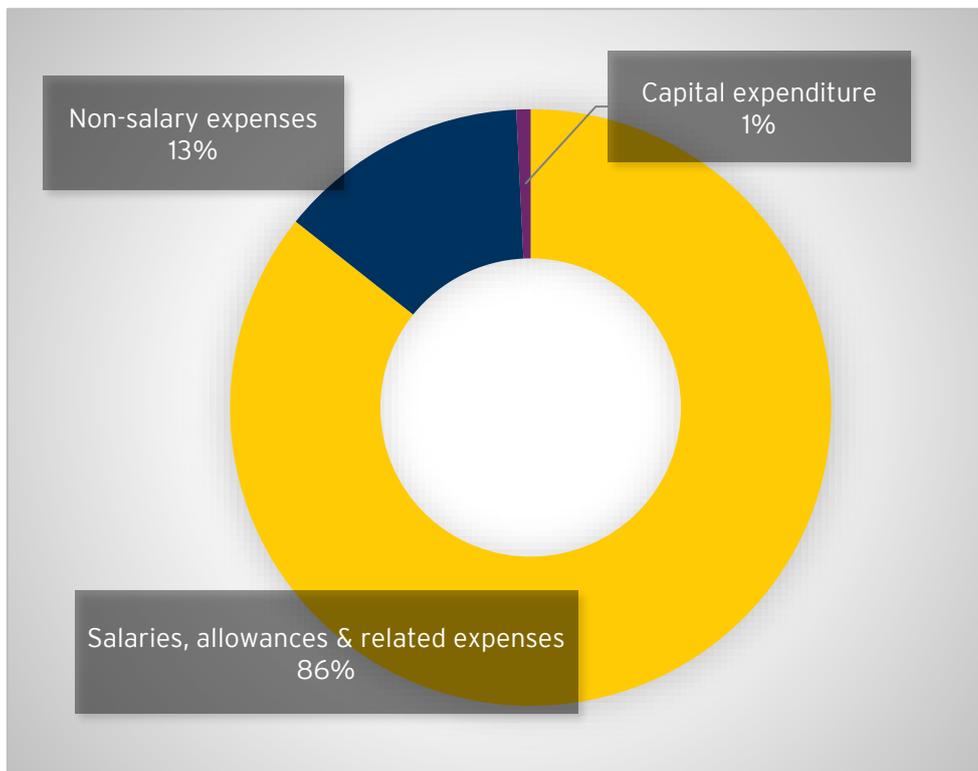
In addition, the school continued to grow the use a closed Facebook group for staff and parents and engagement in this group continued to be regular, positive and encouraging.

Financial information

Recurrent/capital income



Recurrent/capital expenditure





a different brilliant®

understanding, engaging & celebrating the
strengths, interests & aspirations
of people on the autism spectrum

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