

Our School





Our Purpose

a different brilliant[®]
understanding, engaging & celebrating the
strengths, interests & aspirations
of people on the autism spectrum



Meet our Principal



Welcome to Aspect Vern Barnett

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 six 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 connect 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

Acknowledgement of Country

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) acknowledges the Guringai People as the Traditional Custodian of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

About Vern Barnett School

About Aspect Vern Barnett School

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 School Vern Barnett 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 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.

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, 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 individuals with autism. 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.¹ 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.

"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

"The IP meetings are very good. They're very structured. The information is collaborative between families and teachers... They do those quite well and I'm very impressed with that."

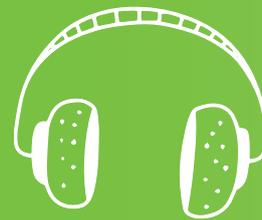
Parent

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, Nippers and gymnastics.



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





Why choose our school?

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.

We understand autism like no other school

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) has been leading the way in providing services to people with autism 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 with autism. 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 who are experiencing similar things. 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.

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

Staff member

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.

"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

"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



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 or post-school programs. 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 2021 Aspect began developing a Working in Partnership Charter to provide an overarching set of principles to guide Working in Partnership at Aspect into the future. This charter will be rolled out across the organisation to provide guidance and support to Autistic and non-Autistic staff around what working in partnership looks like.

"The teacher gives me feedback about how he's going, and I also discuss with my son afterwards. So, it's just a joint effort and everyone's on the same page"

Parent

Choose your own study option

Main site

Our main campus is located at Forestville and we have five satellite classes. We cater for children from K - 10. Our classes are small (6 students per class) and have a teacher and teacher's aide.

Students in the Junior School at our Main site are from Kindy to Year 2. The educational focus is around supporting their social and emotional development and communication needs based around their strengths. Students in the Upper Primary School are from Year 3 to 6. Growing

greater independence is key during these years. For our Senior class, building the understanding of a pathway to post school options that can include further education and employment assists students and families/carers to prepare. Curriculum is responsive to these identified goals.

Satellite class program

A satellite class is an autism-specific class operated by Aspect Schools, but located off campus in a mainstream school (either a NSW Department of Education school, a Catholic school, or an Independent school). These classes can make the transition to mainstream education easier for certain students, and the approach has proven to be incredibly successful.

Aspect School Vern Barnett has satellite classes within a NSW Department of Education School at Lane Cove Public, and Catholic Primary Schools in Mona Vale, St Ives, Eastwood and Forestville.

Distance Education

Aspect is proud to be the first school to offer distance education for students on the autism spectrum, opening up new options for students who may not have a satellite class located nearby.

Through our program, our students can learn from home by connecting with teachers via digital learning tools - plus, they take part in 15+ face-to-face days at the Aspect Hunter School in NSW each year.

"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. And 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

Your need-to-knows



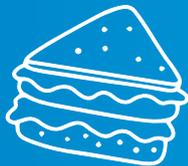
School hours

Official school hours are 9:00am to 3:00pm. Some satellite sites may vary slightly.



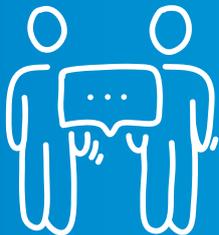
Wet weather days

On rainy days, students work and play inside their classroom, supervised at all times by Aspect staff.



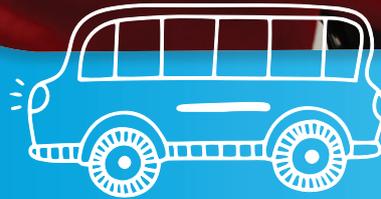
Breaks

Morning tea is between 10:45am - 11:15am and lunch from 12:45pm - 1:15pm. The students have outside play from 1:15pm - 1:45pm.



Parent info and meetings

Each term, parents will receive a copy of the class timetable as well as a term overview. 'Meet the Teacher' evenings for parents are held in term one. IP meetings are held with the teacher in term one with a review meeting in term three.



Drop off and pick up

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



What to wear

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

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 9454 8359.

How enrolment works

Come to a school info session.

Give us a call on 9454 8359 to find out when the next one will be held.



Step 1



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.

Step 2

Join the wait list.

To register a student, just fill out a registration form (you can either get this at the info session, or by contacting Aspect Vern Barnett).

Step 3



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.

Step 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).

Step 5

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.
- Have had a psychometric assessment in the last two years.

Our approach

Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA)

Aspect uses an evidence-based, comprehensive approach to support people on the autism spectrum, and their family and carers. The ACA is implemented across our whole organisation, and it reflects our 50+ years of expertise in providing services to children, young people and adults on the autism spectrum.

The ACA provides for the development of 'individualised' or 'person-centred' supports. This means really getting to know and understand our students, identifying their interests, strengths (for some, their exceptional abilities) and their aspirations, and then developing individualised supports.



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.

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?

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.

Assessments for autism across the lifespan

These are provided face-to-face in Sydney, Melbourne and Coffs Harbour, or via telehealth for people who can't get to an assessment clinic (or prefer the telehealth format).

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.

Support coordination

Our Support Coordination team can help NDIS-funded students to understand their budgets, how to start using their plans and how those plans are managed.

Adult community Services

In Sydney and Melbourne, we offer a range of individualised programs and supports for school leavers and adults on the autism spectrum. Programs are designed to be fun and engaging and help build confidence and skills.

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.

Aspect Vern Barnett School main site

41 Cook St
Forestville NSW 2087

Phone (02) 9454 8359



Any questions? We're here to help.

If you have a question or would like to chat, we would love to hear from you. Don't hesitate to get in touch.

Phone +61 1800 277 328

Email customerservice@autismspectrum.com.au

Visit autismspectrum.com.au

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

