



School Annual Report 2015

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

The *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (the Act) Section 423 (1)* provides that the Minister may approve a policy about the publication by a state school principal and non-state school governing body of an annual report containing information on the school, its policies and data on the student outcomes for all persons enrolled at the school in the previous year. State school principals and non-state schools' governing bodies must comply with the approved policy.

The policy, which is presented as a checklist of all Queensland and Australian Government requirements, has been approved by the Minister and sets out the annual reporting requirements for all state and non-state schools. By publishing this information, Queensland schools will meet the reporting obligations required by both the Queensland and the Australian Governments.

Autism Queensland runs two Education and Therapy Centres in Brisbane at Brighton and Sunnybank Hills that operate as an accredited independent special school.

School sector:

Independent.

School address:

Sunnybank Campus
437 Hellowell Road
Sunnybank Hills Qld 4109
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sunnybankschool@autismqld.com.au

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136 North Road
Brighton Qld 4017
Ph: 07 3631 6300
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brighton@autismqld.com.au

Contact: Cae Ashton – Principal.

Website: www.autismqld.com.au

Total enrolments for 2015:

An average of 112 students attended part-time placements (60 at Sunnybank campus and 52 at Brighton). The average attendance rate in 2015 for the whole school was 89.86% (92.47% for Sunnybank; 88.03% for Brighton).

Year levels offered:

Both campuses provide a range of group placement options for children diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) from Prep to Year 12.

Co-educational or single sex:

Co-educational.

Distinctive curriculum offerings:

The Autism Queensland School's goal is for all students to develop skills to participate to their fullest extent in their home, school and local community. The school program promotes an inclusive program that supports students' maintaining and improving their participation in their local school setting. The majority of school aged program options are one, two or three day placements so that students attend the Autism Queensland School part-time, whilst continuing to attend their local "home" school setting for a period of 12 months to two years. The part-time format is specifically designed to:

- enable students to maintain connection with their peer group and local school
- continue social connection with their local community
- assist students to develop and practice specific skills for generalisation in a mainstream setting
- actively observe, collect and analyse data across environments, and
- share expertise among key stakeholders.

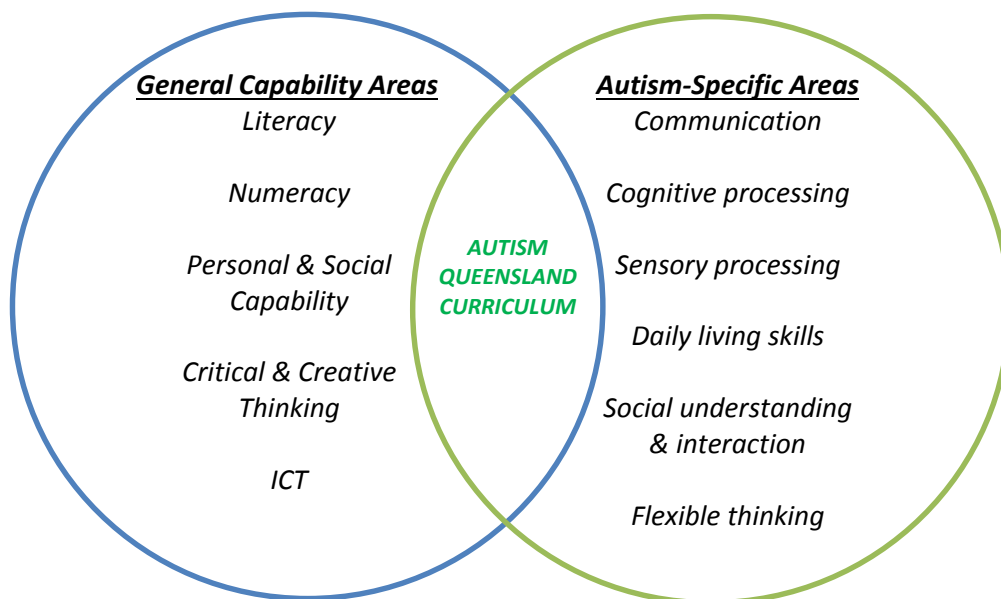
Students are grouped according to age, ability and needs with a maximum of six students per class group. Each class is staffed by a group teacher and at least one teacher aide with additional support from allied health professionals, featuring:

- Individualised programs, tailored to the students’ developmental needs and strengths
- A multidisciplinary team approach including parents, home school staff, Autism Queensland teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, and other associated professionals
- Consultancy support to students’ home schools
- Structured learning and skill building based upon positive behaviour support techniques
- Focus on functional life skills development
- Environmental modifications and supports
- Emphasis on generalisation to home and other educational settings
- Supported transition
- Parent education and training.

Autism Queensland’s educational approach for school-aged students focuses on the development of core characteristics of ASD:

- Social Skills
- Communication
- Sensory Information Processing
- Adaptive Behaviour
- Stress Management
- Daily Living Skills
- Community Access
- Play and Recreation Skills
- Academics (school performance and skills for learning).

Timetables for all Autism Queensland School groups have an allocation of time for academic work, with activities and focus areas selected to match individual student needs, in close collaboration with each student’s home school. Autism Queensland School programs explicitly address the Australian Curriculum’s General Capabilities, in combination with six Autism-specific areas (see below). Literacy goals included in student individualised plans are based on results from a comprehensive literacy assessment.



Extra-curricular activities offered at Autism Queensland:

- Community Access
- Parenting Programs
- Sibling programs and activities
- Annual Go Blue For Autism fundraising and awareness campaign
- Sports Day/s
- End of year Concert and Markets
- Holiday Programs

Social climate:

A full range of professionals comprising teachers, occupational therapists, psychologists, speech pathologists and teacher aides work collaboratively with parents and care givers to develop appropriate individualised plans to meet the needs of students with ASD. Regular contact with home school staff, through school visits, emails and phone calls, ensures that the targeted skills remain relevant for the student during their placement at Autism Queensland. There is a strong emphasis on informed practice that meets the specific needs of clients with ASD in every aspect of service delivery:

Our Vision

A life of participation, opportunity and choice for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Our Mission

To support people living with Autism Disorder through responsive, evidence-informed practice and advocacy.

Our Values

- Excellence
- Innovation
- Equity
- Person-centred
- Consumer-driven

Key Drivers



ENABLING
PARTICIPATION



ENHANCING
CHOICE



CREATING
OPPORTUNITY

Parental involvement:

Collaboration with parents regarding issues experienced at home or when participating in family or community activities makes up the basis of community access. Home school staff are invited to visit students to see them 'in action' at Autism Queensland, and parents are scheduled for parent contact sessions each term. The objective of such processes is to enhance the generalisation of skills between settings, to share ASD knowledge and strategies, and to gain regular feedback that programs and placements continue to meet student needs. In recent years, the Autism Queensland School introduced goal based home/school communication books to track daily progress towards individualised goals and ongoing programming needs.

Parents are involved in school life through various activities and initiatives such as:

- Parent Information Sessions
- Parent Contact Sessions

- Students' Individualised Plans, Parent-Staff meetings
- Volunteer Work/Fundraising.

Parent, teacher and student satisfaction within the school:

A parent opinion survey was completed in 2015 by 22 respondents across both campuses (70% Sunnybank, 30% Brighton). It should be noted that this is a very small response rate (5.45% of all families) and therefore cannot be considered a true representation of parent attitudes about the school.

From those who responded, feedback was excellent: 100% parents felt that their child was happy, safe and well supported in the Autism Queensland School environment and that their child's placement was meeting their major concerns.

Parents reported ASD specific curriculum areas of greatest priority for their child to be: 1. social skills (90%); 2. communication (85%) and 3. sensory issues & stress management (both 65%), which is consistent with Autism Queensland methodology's target areas for intervention. Reports by parents indicated that during 2015 they felt their child's participation and performance had improved at their home school as a result of the Autism Queensland placement (Yes – 80%; No-20%). When asked would they recommend Autism Queensland School to other families of a child with ASD, 100% responded "Yes".

School income broken down by funding source:

Autism Queensland School funding breakdown for both campuses can be viewed on the *Autism Queensland Education and Therapy Centre, Sunnybank Hills* page of the My School website: <http://www.myschool.edu.au>

Staffing:

Staff Composition, including Indigenous Staff:

Total number of full-time school staff	8
Total number of part-time school staff	51
Total number of teaching staff	17
Total number of non-teaching staff	42
Total number of part-time teaching staff	13
Total number of full-time teaching staff	4
Total number of full-time non-teaching staff	4
Total number of part-time non-teaching staff	38
Total number of indigenous staff	0
Total number of school staff:	59

Qualifications of all teachers:

Qualification	Either detail the number or the percentage of classroom teachers and school leaders at the school who hold this qualification
Doctorate or higher	0%
Masters	12%
Bachelor Degree	88%
Diploma	0%
Certificate	0%

Proportion of teaching staff retained from the previous year:

Number of permanent teaching staff at end of previous year	Number of these staff retained in the following year (the program year)	% retention rate
16	14	87.50%

Due to the high proportion of part-time staff and differentiated class configurations for part-time student enrolments, it was not possible to accurately determine the attendance rate of staff across campuses and accordingly staff attendance rates has not been included in this report.

Professional Development:

All school staff including teachers, allied health professionals, teacher aides and ancillary staff such as bus drivers and bus escorts participate in relevant professional development focusing on critical elements of their roles.

Staff participate in annual performance reviews to identify strengths and areas where performance can be enhanced through coaching and mentoring, professional development and access to training opportunities. The performance review process facilitates an individually tailored approach to professional development. Staff who attend external professional development programs are required to share learning with their peers – either informally within the School teams or by means of a presentation at staff meetings. This promotes cross-disciplinary knowledge and understanding, ultimately improving the quality of service provided to students and their families.

Some highlights in 2015 of Autism Queensland School professional development included:

- Secret Agent Society (SAS) social skills training for Teachers and Therapists
- Senior First Aid and CPR Training
- Child Protection: Policy update
- Protective Behaviours and Growing Respect (NAPCAN)
- Sensory Differences in ASD and Communication
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Autism Queensland Methodology
- Zones of Regulation
- Workplace Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: Reviewing the Tool
- Wellbeing and Mindfulness
- Picky Eater vs Problem Feeders: The SOS approach to feeding - SOS Basic Training Course
- Team-Teach Refresher Course
- The App Guide to Social Skills & Social Stories

- Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People 2015
- Language Learning & Literacy: Improving practice, delivering results
- Bronze Medallion training.

Expenditure on and staff participation in professional development 2015:

The total funds expended on staff professional development in 2015 was \$40,066.

There was 100% involvement by teaching staff in professional development activities in 2015.

Student Performance:

Students attending the Autism Queensland School do not participate in NAPLAN testing during their placement but may participate at their 'home school'. It should be noted that while many students enrolled in the Autism Queensland School may also be exempt from NAPLAN testing, such decisions regarding exemption are determined by a student's 'home school' staff and their parents.

All students attending the Autism Queensland School have an individualised plan with goals set across curriculum areas. These plans are reviewed six monthly in collaboration with the Autism Queensland School team, 'home school' staff and parents.

How computers are used at Autism Queensland to assist learning:

During 2015, interactive whiteboards were purchased so that every Autism Queensland classroom is equipped to offer our students access to high quality ICT. Through ICT, students with ASD are supported to better communicate with others, become self-sufficient, achieve more at school, and be better placed for employment later in life.

The need to prepare the students with ASD for the digital learning environments of both the present and future is recognised as a priority through the provision of:

- Access to learning materials to assist their individualised areas of interest
- Internet use for research for school assignments
- Access to interactive learning platforms, both individually and in small group settings.
- Specific skill training in areas of communication and social skills
- Digitally based project designs: e.g. digital photo and video editing and presentations, recording and broadcasting podcasts and web page design.

School progress towards its goals:

Self-Improving Schools

The Autism Queensland School continued its participation in Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ)'s program for school self-improvement throughout 2015. Supported by an external facilitator provided by ISQ, focus areas were prioritised through a methodical process, underpinned by recognised research for school improvement.

Review of Autism Queensland School's Methodology with Autism Queensland's Research & Development Team

Following collaboration with Dr Jill Ashburner and her team on the review of the school's methodology, plans were made to ensure that annual updates for all staff would be scheduled commencing January 2016 to ensure consistency in application of evidence informed practices across each and every classroom in the Autism Queensland School campuses.