



School Annual Report 2016

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 Limited 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
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Contact: Cae Ashton - Principal

Website: www.autismqld.com.au

Total enrolments for 2016:

An average of 116 students attended part-time placements (65 at Sunnybank campus and 51 at Brighton). The average attendance rate in 2016 for the whole school was 90.22% (92.87% for Sunnybank; 87.6% 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:

Autism Queensland's Education Service Agreement with the Department of Education and Training, under the Non-State Special Needs Organisations funding program, facilitates shared placement of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a part-time school-based program at Autism Queensland with enrolment at their base or "home" mainstream school. This partnership promotes an inclusive program for students specifically designed to:

- Enable students to maintain connection with their peer group and local school curriculum
- Enable students to practice identified skills for generalisation to a mainstream setting
- Continue social connection with their local community
- Provide opportunities for observation, data collection and sharing of expertise among key stakeholders.

Allocation of academic work at Autism Queensland is determined in close collaboration with the respective student's home school, with activities and focus areas selected to match individual student

needs. 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).

The School Environment

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

- A multidisciplinary team approach including parents, home school staff, Autism Queensland teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, and other associated professionals
- Regular goal-based communication with parents and carers
- Individualised Education Programs (IEPs), tailored to address the impact of ASD on students' access to learning, developed in collaboration with the home school education support team and parents and carers
- Therapy support within the classroom and playground areas
- Explicit teaching of skills addressing the function of behaviours of concern
- Environmental modifications and supports
- Structured learning environments maximizing engagement and success for students with ASD
- Focus on functional life skill development including social problem solving and emotional regulation skills necessary for lifelong learning
- Emphasis on generalisation to home and other educational settings
- Parent support, advocacy and education.

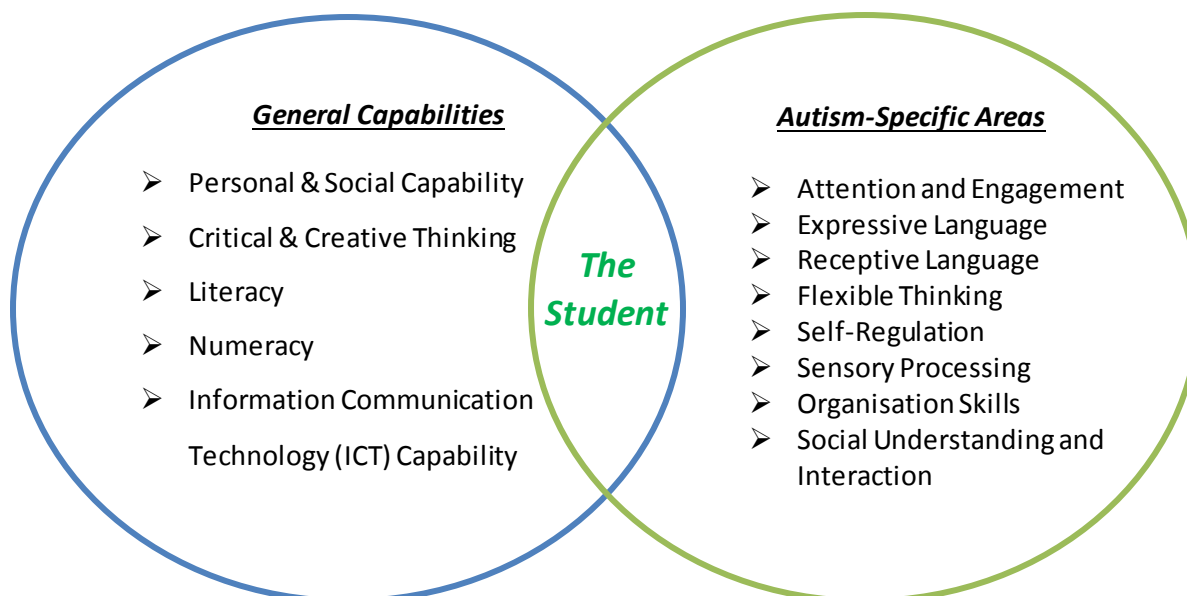
Class Placements

The decision for one, two or three day placements is made on a case by case basis and is dependent on criteria which impact school attendance and/or access to (mainstream) school programs such as anxiety, social communication and behaviour. Students are grouped according to age and individual needs with places determined following the collection and review of a variety of enrolment information including:

- A school visit to the student's home school by Autism Queensland staff
- An enrolment interview with the student and his/her parents
- Consultation with relevant stakeholders (parents and/or school staff)
- Review of recent documents such as school reports, current IEP and Individual Positive Behaviour Support Plans and recent therapy reports.

Students who function academically relatively well but are identified as potentially benefitting from Autism Queensland specific programs, will be offered fewer days than those requiring greater support to access their school program. Other factors such as the payment of school fees may influence some parents' choice in the length of placement for their child.

Autism Queensland school programs explicitly address the Australian Curriculum's General Capabilities, in combination with Autism-specific areas:



Extra-curricular activities offered at Autism Queensland:

- Community access
- Parenting programs and information sessions
- Holiday programs
- Annual Go Blue For Autism fundraising and awareness campaign
- End of year Concert and Markets

School Outreach Service

'Outreach' is provided by Autism Queensland School staff for the students' whole team including parents and carers, home school teachers and education support team staff, and other relevant external stakeholders. Autism Queensland teachers have additional non-contact time explicitly allocated for home school visits and consultative support for the students' education support teams. This provides the opportunity for Autism Queensland staff to observe students in their mainstream setting to assist in providing realistic support to the education support team and opportunities for generalisation of strategies developed in the Autism-specific program.

Outreach services may include:

Collaboration and Peer Support

- Regular communication with, and support for, the home school education support team
- Termly outreach visits to the students' home school to view and collaborate
- Consultancy support to the students' home school education support team to introduce new strategies and adjustments
- Support for parents and carers
- Home school staff visits to Autism Queensland School to view and discuss programs, the environment and supports and adjustments implemented
- Leading IEP and individual behaviour support plan development and implementation

- Sharing of assessments and reports, including verification documents and information, IEP and individualised program documents.

Transition Planning and Support

- Orientation visits and information for the family and student before the beginning of placement
- Enrolment data collection
- Regular meetings and ongoing communication for transitions both in and out of dual placement and for some, transition to high school.
- Comprehensive exit reports and follow up consultation
- Provision of information regarding other possible services and supports
- Attendance at external stakeholder meetings as relevant.

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 2016 by 39 respondents across both campuses (64% Sunnybank, 36% Brighton), representing 38% of all possible respondents from Sunnybank and 39% from Brighton respectively. Results are consistent with anecdotal observations and considered a reliable representation of parent attitudes about the school.

From those who responded, feedback was excellent: 100% parents felt that their child's placement at Autism Queensland was meeting their major concerns and 92% that their child was happy, safe and well supported in the Autism Queensland School environment.

Parents reported ASD specific curriculum areas of greatest priority for their child to be: 1. social skills (87%); 2. stress management (85%); 3. communication (69%) and 4. sensory issues (54%), which is consistent with Autism Queensland methodology's target areas for intervention. 97% of parents responded that during 2016 they felt their child's participation and performance had improved at their home school as a result of the Autism Queensland placement. 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	91
Total number teaching staff	23
Total number of non-teaching staff:	76
Total number of part-time teaching staff	19
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	72
Total number of indigenous staff	1
Total number of school staff:	99

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	2
Bachelor Degree	17
Diploma	4
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
14	10	71.4%

Average staff attendance for the school, based on unplanned absences of sick and emergency leave periods of up to 5 days:

Number of Staff	Number of School Days	Total Days Staff Absences	Average Staff Attendance Rate
99	195	400	97.93%
For permanent and temporary classroom teachers and school leaders the average staff attendance rate was 97.93% in 2016			

Staff participation in and expenditure on professional development in 2016:

All school staff including teachers, allied health professionals, teacher aides and ancillary staff such as bus drivers and bus aides 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.

Total Number of Teachers	Total expenditure on teacher PD (as recorded in Financial Questionnaire)	Average expenditure on PD per teacher
23	\$20,937.00	\$1,046.85
Total funds expended on teacher professional development in 2016		\$20,937.00
Proportion of the teaching staff involved in professional development activities during 2016		100%

The major professional development initiatives were as follows:

- Secret Agent Society (SAS) social skills training for Teachers and Therapists
- Senior First Aid and CPR Training
- Bronze Medallion training
- Child Protection: Policy updates
- Fire Safety Training
- Workplace Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: Identifying Adjustments
- Sensory Processing in ASD and Emotional Regulation
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Autism Queensland Methodology and Research Updates
- Structured Teaching
- Models of Practice
- Zones of Regulation
- Peer Mentoring and Staff Wellbeing
- The SOS approach to feeding
 - SOS Basic Training Course
 - Food Science Adaptation
- Team-Teach Refresher Course
- Picture Exchange Communication System Level 1
- Reading Doctor
- Athletics

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 AQ to assist learning:

Computers are used on a daily basis to support learning within the classroom, both for individual needs and in small group sessions. The need to prepare 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.

School progress towards its goals:

- **New Principal and Campus Team Leaders**

During 2016 a new organisational school structure consolidated the two previous principals into a single principal, based across both campuses. Two campus team leaders work closely with the principal to oversee smooth operations of the school. Reviewed processes during 2016 enabled greater consistency of operations across campuses including the enrolments process and administration procedures.

- **Participation in Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) Self Improving Schools program**

2016 was the third year of Autism Queensland's involvement in the program which is facilitated by a consultant through Independent Schools Queensland. An assigned area of focus from 2015 continued for staff mentoring and peer observations, across campuses with emphasis on AQ methodology and evidence-informed practice. Staff wellbeing and improved of teaching and therapy spaces were also flagged as areas for attention for 2016.

- **Community Engagement**

Work on Brighton campus' Sensory Garden project continued throughout 2016 with the support of local members of the community, both in cash and in-kind support. The Bracken Ridge Lions Club continued their generous support during 2016 through sponsorship at mini train days and the Bracken Ridge Backyard Bonanza sausage sizzles hosted by Brisbane City Council.

- **Preparations of a fulltime Prep pilot program for 2017**

Expressions of interest were sought from parents and staff for the introduction of Full time Prep in 2017 to coincide with mandatory Prep in Queensland. Information sessions were well attended with positive feedback received and plans proceeded to pilot a single class at each school campus in the 2017 school year.