



## School Annual Report 2017

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### 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

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## TOTAL ENROLMENTS FOR 2017

A total of 132 students (equivalent to 69.6 full-time enrolments) attended the Autism Queensland School. This included six full-time enrolments at each campus and 120 students part-time (66 at Sunnybank campus and 54 at Brighton). The average attendance rate in 2017 for the whole school was 87.97% (86.26% for Sunnybank; 89.23% for Brighton).

## YEAR LEVELS OFFERED

Both campuses provide a range of enrolment 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

All students enrolled in the school have a diagnosis of ASD, which is characterised by persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts; and restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities. Students' access to learning is impacted by differences or difficulties involving some, or all, of the following:

- Attending to tasks, information, people, interactions, objects and items
- Interpreting and processing information, the intent of others, instructions and content and making connections between pieces of information

- Developing and utilising flexible thinking strategies to manage day to day and larger transitions or changes to routines, staff, content, processes and information
- Executive function tasks including retaining, organising, prioritising and utilising information for decision making and communication processes
- Communicating with others, including sharing information and needs, initiating and responding to others, using and understanding non-verbal interactions
- Developing and maintaining reciprocal interactions and relationships necessary for learning and play
- Identifying, learning and applying strategies to develop self-regulation skills necessary for day to day learning and engagement.

At Autism Queensland we aim to develop a highly effective school environment that enhances participation and optimises learning for students with ASD. Consideration is given to students' communication, the social and emotional wellbeing of students, the physical environment and students' sensory processing needs, preference for consistent relationships and interactions and curriculum adjustments to content, delivery, and assessment.

Evidence-informed strategies and adjustments within our school consider the impact of ASD on each student and address barriers to curriculum access to ensure:

- Our students can be successful and confident
- Adjustments consider safety, maximise success and are least restrictive
- Uniform strategies, language, resources and support are evident across our school.

For students in Years Prep-3, parents have a choice of either part-time or full-time enrolment. For Years Prep-12, Autism Queensland's Education Service Agreement with the Department of Education, under the Non-State Special Needs Organisations funding program, facilitates shared placement of students with 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.

## **The School Program**

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

- An interdisciplinary 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
- Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs), 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 to maximise 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.

Consideration is given to reasonable adjustments to ensure our students are provided with opportunities to participate in education. Our school pedagogy outlines how we teach at Autism Queensland:

- Continuous assessment is used to determine curriculum and learning needs
- All students have a personalised learning plan that addresses barriers to learning
- All students have access to an individual weekly schedule outlining their learning arrangements and the resources to support this arrangement
- Student wellbeing, relationships and regulation needs are addressed through explicit teaching of elements of the Australian Curriculum
- Consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders including parents, the student, home school team and the Autism Queensland school team determine student needs and curriculum priorities in each school setting.

### **Class Placements**

The decision for part or full-time 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. Consideration for inclusion in the program involves the collection and review of a variety of enrolment information including:

- A current diagnosis of ASD and/or verification for school-age students
- 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
- Review of recent documents such as school reports, current personalised learning 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.

### **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OFFERED**

- Community access
- Parenting 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, as well as 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 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 PLP and individual behaviour support plan development and implementation
- Sharing of assessments and reports, including verification documents and information, PLP 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 caregivers 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 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 Spectrum Disorder through responsive, evidence-informed practice and advocacy.

### Our Values

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



ENABLING  
PARTICIPATION

### Key Drivers



ENHANCING  
CHOICE



CREATING  
OPPORTUNITY

## PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT SATISFACTION WITHIN THE SCHOOL

A parent opinion survey was completed by 94 respondents across both campuses (62.8% Sunnybank, 37.2% Brighton) representing 71.2% of all possible respondents. Results are consistent with anecdotal observations and considered a reliable representation of parent attitudes about the school. Feedback from respondents was very positive:

- Parents feel their child is safe and well supported in the Autism Queensland School environment (88.30% strongly agree, 11.70% agree)
- The educational program has been appropriately adjusted to meet their child's learning needs (86.17% strongly agree, 13.83% agree)
- The school environment and resources adequately meet their child's needs (86.17% strongly agree, 13.83% agree)
- Autism Queensland School placement has had a positive impact on their child's engagement at school (81.91% strongly agree, 18.09% agree)
- Parents are satisfied with the communication and reporting from Autism Queensland (89.36% strongly agree, 10.64% agree)
- Parents agreed that their child's school placement at Autism Queensland positively support other aspects of their child's life (89.36% strongly agree, 10.64% agree)
- Parents would recommend Autism Queensland School placement to other families with a child with autism (94.68% strongly agree, 5.32% agree).

Home school staff are invited to visit students to see them 'in action' at Autism Queensland, and parent contact sessions scheduled 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.

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

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

## 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: <https://myschool.edu.au/school/40402>

## STAFFING

### *Staff Composition, Including Indigenous Staff*

Total number of full-time school staff	17
Total number of part-time school staff	54
Total number teaching staff	23
Total number of non-teaching staff:	84
Total number of part-time teaching staff	15
Total number of full-time teaching staff	8
Total number of full-time non-teaching staff	30
Total number of part-time non-teaching staff	54
Total number of indigenous staff	1
<b>Total number of school staff:</b>	<b>106</b>

### *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	6
Bachelor's Degree	27
Diploma	4
Certificate	17

### *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	13	81.25%

### *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
106	194	650	96.8%
For permanent and temporary classroom teachers and school leaders the average staff attendance rate was 96.8% in 2017.			

## STAFF PARTICIPATION IN AND EXPENDITURE ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN 2017

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 also 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	\$11,843	\$ 514.91
Total funds expended on teacher professional development in 2017		\$11,843
Proportion of the teaching staff involved in professional development activities during 2017		100%
<p>The major professional development initiatives were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior First Aid and CPR Training</li> <li>• Child Protection: Policy updates</li> <li>• Fire Safety Training</li> <li>• The impact of ASD on Learning</li> <li>• Structured Teaching</li> <li>• Zones of Regulation</li> <li>• Restorative Practice and Special Needs</li> <li>• Peer Mentoring and Staff Wellbeing</li> <li>• Team-Teach Refresher Course</li> <li>• Asia Pacific Autism Conference</li> <li>• Accountability: Influencing factors, Consistent processes, Ensuring efficiency</li> <li>• AQ Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Incident Reporting and Quality Assurance</li> <li>• Anaphylaxis training</li> <li>• Challenging Behaviour in Classic Autism</li> <li>• Positive Behaviour Support</li> <li>• ASD Learning Styles</li> <li>• Social Communication</li> <li>• Difficulties in Flexible Thinking</li> <li>• Gratitude &amp; Mindfulness</li> <li>• Effective Grammar Intervention</li> <li>• Social Thinking</li> <li>• Literacy Assessment</li> <li>• Future Planning: AQ School</li> </ul>		



- True Relationship Education
- Autism Queensland Code of Conduct
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: Identifying Adjustments
- Sensory Processing in ASD and Emotional Regulation
- Mental Health: Reactive Attachment Disorder
- Autism Queensland Methodology and Research Updates

## 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 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 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.

## SCHOOL PROGRESS TOWARDS ITS GOALS

### **School Cyclical Review 2017**

The Autism Queensland School Cyclical Review committee was established to consider data and documentation required to demonstrate compliance with accreditation criteria contained in the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001 and the accompanying regulation and opportunities for further improvement in school performance within the following areas:

- Governance and administration
- Financial viability
- Educational program and student welfare
- Resources and facilities
- School improvement

### **The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disability (NCCD)**

Training of all school staff was conducted throughout 2017 regarding the Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Standards of Education and their relevance to the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD). School teams at both campuses examined the process of identifying the level of adjustments required for individual students for the NCCD and planning days were held for school administration officers, team leaders and principal. Reporting for 2017 and 2018 was mapped and details regarding changes to processes for collecting evidence for the NCCD studied at length. Further staff training at subsequent staff meetings and internal moderation was implemented during Term 3, prior to data submission.

### **New full-time Prep pilot program for 2017**

In addition to existing part-time groups, a full-time Prep program was introduced in 2017 for students identified as benefitting from intensive early intervention. Its aim was to increase the potential for successful transition to a mainstream setting and address a growing demand by families for the provision of specialist services to young children with ASD at school. At any time throughout the school day, a therapist, teacher and teacher aide work with the students. Baseline observations and informal assessments were administered to determine priorities for planning with student progress and parent feedback used as criteria for the program's success and basis for expansion. Provision of the new full-time Prep classrooms involved the refurbishment of the largely disused multipurpose room at Brighton and relocation of complementary part time classes to consolidate the use of existing classroom spaces for Sunnybank's program.

### **Ongoing participation in Independent Schools Queensland programs**

Autism Queensland School participated in the following Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) programs and activities during 2017. Each of these programs provided opportunities to foster relationships with other independent schools, enhance professional learning communities and evidence-informed practice and moderate student outcomes with like-minded professionals outside of Autism Queensland:

#### **1. Self-Improving Schools Program**

2017 was the fourth year of Autism Queensland's involvement in the program which is facilitated by a consultant through ISQ. All school staff were issued an ISQ login to access professional training online with emphasis on Autism Queensland methodology and evidence-informed practice through the development of an autism-specific pedagogical framework. Staff wellbeing and improved of teaching and therapy spaces were also flagged as areas for attention for 2017 and beyond.

#### **2. Educational Data Project**

Following a whole-school staff collaborative review of assessment and reporting protocols, revised templates were published internally for all therapists and teachers to collate information available from prior assessments and reports to set goals for individualised program planning and report on student progress. The objective was to reduce the surfeit of Autism Queensland school reports (at times replicated across therapies and teaching disciplines), but still meet the requirements for planning, establishing baselines for student progress and accountability reporting.

#### **3. Great Teachers in Independent Schools Professional Growth Tool**

Team leaders and the principal worked with ISQ consultant Kate Crowe to set priorities for professional development for school staff. The introduction of a

Teaching and Learning / Curriculum Coordinator with significant knowledge of curriculum and the Standards for teachers was recommended to drive explicit professional learning in planning, implementing, assessing and reporting of curriculum for students with ASD.

#### **4. Differentiated Curriculum Project**

Autism Queensland School hosted a forum at which guests from ISQ and independent special school leaders discussed differentiated curriculum, the challenges it presents for the respective special schools and how social moderation and collaboration between the schools might be successfully achieved. Jenene Rosser, ISQ Executive Manager Curriculum and Assessment, subsequently presented valuable workshops for Autism Queensland teaching and therapy staff.

#### **5. Building Assessment Communities**

Focus areas include Autism Queensland's pedagogical framework (what we teach and why), our strategies, our professional skills and development needs, assessment processes and data collection, peer mentoring, differentiation in our school, and sharing what we know / learn from others with similar learning environments.

### **External Providers/ Stakeholders**

- The introduction of external providers for swimming lessons at Sunnybank was successfully implemented during Terms 1 and 4 to provide Autism Queensland staff the opportunity for greater focus on implementing ASD-specific strategies for students that target the different sensory environment, associated anxiety, and socialisation.
- A grant from the Australian Sports Commission funded an external coach and equipment for coaching athletics, delivered twice weekly at Sunnybank for a term.
- Livestreams Organisation provided a coach for weekly sports sessions at both campuses throughout the year.

### **Community Engagement**

- The Taiwan Women's League of Queensland raised \$15,500 for Autism Queensland at their annual Mother's Day Charity Concert in May.
- The Bracken Ridge Lions Club continued their generous support during 2017 through sponsorship at mini train days and the Bracken Ridge Backyard Bonanza sausage sizzles hosted by Brisbane City Council.
- Work on Brighton campus' Sensory Garden project continued throughout 2017 with the support of local members of the community, both in cash and in-kind support.
- Brighton Campus hosted an international visit by Teachers and Administrators from the Philippines in May, funded by the Department of Education and facilitated through Queensland University of Technology. Visitors participated in workshop activities and visited classrooms throughout the day.
- Brighton School received notification that it was nominated for an Inspiring Schools Awards for 2017 through the Woolworths Earn and Learn Program.