



School Annual Report 2018

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 2018

A total of 144 students (equivalent to 78 full-time enrolments) attended the Autism Queensland School. This included 12 full-time enrolments at Sunnybank and six at Brighton campus, and 126 part-time enrolments (66 at Sunnybank campus and 60 at Brighton). The average attendance rate in 2018 for the whole school was 89.11% (91.39% for Sunnybank; 86.83% for Brighton).

YEAR LEVELS OFFERED

Both campuses provide a range of enrolment options for students verified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) from Prep to Year 12.

CO-EDUCATIONAL OR SINGLE SEX

Co-educational

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT BODY

All students enrolled in the school have a diagnosis of autism and verified ASD in accordance with the Queensland Department of Education's guidelines to support students with disability in independent schools.

Students present, in varying degrees, with persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts; and restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities.

Their 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.

DISTINCTIVE CURRICULUM OFFERINGS

Autism Queensland is committed to ensuring our students have access to a high-quality curriculum suitable to their individual learning needs. Teachers use the Australian Curriculum to develop teaching and learning programs that consider students' strengths and interests, their age and their individual learning needs. 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.

Appropriate adjustments are provided to optimise our students' engagement and participation 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.

The School Program

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.

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.

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

- Parenting information sessions
- Annual Go Blue for Autism fundraising and awareness campaign
- Holiday programs
- Book Week activities
- 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.
- Provision of information regarding other possible services and supports
- Attendance at external stakeholder meetings as relevant.

SOCIAL CLIMATE

Inclusive education for students with ASD is a complex process requiring collaborative relationships and partnerships, responsive planning, and creative supports.

Evidence-informed strategies and adjustments within our school consider the impact of autism 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.

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. Regular contact with home school staff, through school visits, emails and phone calls, ensures targeted skills remain relevant for the student during their enrolment at Autism Queensland. There is a strong emphasis on informed practice that meets the specific needs of students with a verification of ASD in every aspect of the school program.

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

Key Drivers



ENABLING
PARTICIPATION



ENHANCING
CHOICE



CREATING
OPPORTUNITY

PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT SATISFACTION WITHIN THE SCHOOL

As part of Autism Queensland's data collection process, staff were surveyed regarding the service provided by Autism Queensland to students, families and other schools in 2018, as well as the impact of this service. Survey data was collated for 119 students who had dual enrolment in the 2018 school year. The findings reflect significant improvement in student access to and participation in the Australian Curriculum. In particular, this is evident in the following findings:

- Attendance
 - While **84.9%** of students had regular attendance at Autism Queensland (with few or no absences), only **68.1%** of students also had this attendance pattern in their other school setting
 - The attendance patterns of **5.9%** of students improved in an Autism Queensland setting as the Autism Queensland placement progressed, making a total of **90.8%** of students who had regular attendance at AQ (with few or no absences)

- The attendance patterns of **11.8%** of students improved in their other school setting as the Autism Queensland placement progressed
 - It is important to note that **97.5%** of students attended full days when at Autism Queensland whereas only **66.4%** of students attended full days in their other school setting
 - By the end of the 2018 school year only **one** Autism Queensland student was not attending full days in the Autism Queensland School setting
 - **15.1%** of students increased their hours of attendance in their other school setting as their Autism Queensland enrolment progressed.
- Student engagement and achievement:
- It should be noted that the attendance data provided above reflects the increased opportunity students had to access and participate in the Australian in both school settings as an outcome of Autism Queensland enrolment.
 - Support for students to develop increased and adaptive self-regulation skills enables them to transition into classrooms after play times and to better transition from one learning task to another, thereby providing improved access to the Australian Curriculum. It was reported that **86.5%** of students improved their ability to transition well between learning environments and tasks in an Autism Queensland setting.
 - The engagement in learning of students with autism is impacted by the adjustments provided. It was found that **90.7%** of students improved their ability to engage in learning tasks at Autism Queensland.
 - It was found that **71.5%** of students demonstrated progress in learning and retaining Australian Curriculum English concepts (at the appropriate individual curriculum access level).
 - It was found that **80.7%** of students demonstrated progress in learning and retaining Australian Curriculum Mathematics concepts (at the appropriate individual curriculum access level).
 - It was found that **86.5%** of students demonstrated progress within the Australian Curriculum Personal and Social Capability, in the learning continuum and/or embedded within Australian Curriculum subjects or learning areas. This is significant evidence of the impact of the Autism Queensland program on curriculum access and participation.
- Transitioning students back to mainstream schooling:
- Autism Queensland PLPs are reviewed every six months. In this process, all stakeholders discuss the student's current levels of support needs. Transition planning will occur for students who are transitioning:
 - i. From one Autism Queensland class to another (to increase or reduce the number of days a student attends AQ)
 - ii. From a full-time Autism Queensland class to a dual enrolment with Autism Queensland and another school setting
 - iii. From Autism Queensland School to a full-time placement in another school setting
 - Autism Queensland placement needs, and associated transition planning, were discussed with stakeholders including the student's family and/or representatives from the student's other school for **91.6%** of students in 2018.

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	14
Total number of part-time school staff	95
Total number teaching staff	24
Total number of non-teaching staff:	85
Total number of part-time teaching staff	16
Total number of full-time teaching staff	8
Total number of full-time non-teaching staff	6
Total number of part-time non-teaching staff	79
Total number of indigenous staff	1
Total number of school staff:	109

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	7
Bachelor's Degree	34
Diploma	11
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
18	17	94.4%

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
109	205	691	96.91%

For permanent and temporary classroom teachers and school leaders the average staff attendance rate was 96.91% in 2018.

STAFF PARTICIPATION IN AND EXPENDITURE ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN 2018

The School is supported by teaching, therapy, transport and administrative staff of 54.7 FTE including a principal and two campus team leaders.

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
24	\$17,366	\$ 723
Total funds expended on teacher professional development in 2017		\$17,366
Proportion of the teaching staff involved in professional development activities during 2018		100%
<p>The major professional development initiatives were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior First Aid and CPR Training • Child Protection: Policy updates • Fire Safety Training • The impact of ASD on Learning • Structured Teaching • Zones of Regulation • Restorative Practice and Special Needs • AQ Pedagogical Framework • Managing Stress and Anxiety in Students with ASD • Team-Teach Refresher Course • Autism in Education Conference • AQ Policies and Procedures • Incident Reporting and Quality Assurance • Positive Psychology and Staff Wellness: OM Yoga, The Extra Mile Fitness • Positive Behaviour Support • Behaviour Escalation Plans and Resources • ASD Learning Styles: Curriculum Decision Making & Planning • Literacy Intensive Program • AASE National Conference • ISQ Wellbeing Conference • The Social Mind Workshop • Growth Mindset Program • True Relationship Education • Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: Identifying Adjustments and Evidence • Sensory Processing in ASD and Emotional Regulation • Autism Queensland Methodology and Research Updates • Bus Staff Training: Incident and Management Plan, regular Transport Industry and Main Roads updates; AQ specific responsibilities 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 daily 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

- ***Extension of full-time school program***

In addition to existing part-time groups, a full-time program was extended at Both Sunnybank and Brighton campuses to include Prep and Year 1 students identified as benefitting from intensive early intervention. Its aim is 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. 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.

- ***New Brighton Team Leader***

Bronwyn Masterman was welcomed as new team leader to Brighton campus, in February 2018. Bronwyn's wealth of experience in curriculum and secondary transitions are a huge asset for the school. Bronwyn is very passionate about her role at Autism Queensland and has effectively promoted leadership opportunities at various school events for our senior students throughout the year.

- **School Cyclical Review**

The Autism Queensland School Cyclical Review continued from 2017 to demonstrate compliance with accreditation criteria and opportunities for further school improvement in the following areas:

- governance and administration
- financial viability
- educational program and student welfare
- resources and facilities
- school improvement.

Three recommendations were identified:

1. *That a formalised, systematic approach is introduced which explicitly links teaching and learning goals within the strategic plan, to be communicated to partner schools and families on an annual basis.*

A new school leadership position of Teaching and Learning Coordinator was created, and Corinne Norris was appointed in August 2018. Corinne has a very strong foundation and depth of understanding in behaviour support, adjusted curriculum to assist students with disability and disengaged students and works closely with teachers and therapists across campuses to improve teaching and learning goals and student outcomes, in partnership with families and mainstream schools. Corinne has been an invaluable addition to the school leadership team.

2. *That infrastructure investment is prioritised to ensure Autism Queensland School has modern, evidence-informed, autism-specific teaching and learning resources to support the School's educational program and curriculum offerings.*

A Block Grant Authority (BGA) grant was lodged for significant school building refurbishments at the Sunnybank site and construction began in December 2018. All plans have a strong autism research base and the new facilities provide an opportunity to gather evidence of the impact of physical environmental adjustments on student learning outcomes.

3. *That stakeholders representing diversity across the autism spectrum, including past students, are engaged to inform the School's performance against its strategic plan.*

- **Ongoing participation in Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) programs**

The school continued participation in the ISQ programs and activities during 2018. 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.