



School Annual Report 2022 (for 2021)

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 governs two Education and Therapy Centres in Brisbane at Brighton and Sunnybank Hills and a third at Edmonton in Cairns, which operate as an accredited independent special school (herein referred to as AQ School) and provide specialist educational support to children on the autism spectrum.

Most students attend AQ School part time, to provide the opportunity for supported, shared enrolment with each student's local, mainstream school. Limited full-time enrolments cater for students identified as benefitting from an intensive autism-specific educational program targeting areas that impact students' access to learning.

SCHOOL SECTOR

Independent

SCHOOL ADDRESS

Sunnybank Campus
437 Hellowell Road
Sunnybank Hills Qld 4109
Ph: 07 3273 0000
Fax: 07 3273 0093

Brighton Campus
136 North Road
Brighton Qld 4017
Ph: 07 3631 6300
Fax: 07 3631 6388

Cairns Campus
15-17 Marr Street
Edmonton Qld 4869
Ph: 07 4034 6600
Fax: 07 3631 6388

sunnybankschool@autismqld.com.au

brighton@autismqld.com.au

cairns@autismqld.com.au

Contact: The Principal.

W: autismqld.com.au

TOTAL ENROLMENTS FOR 2021

A total of 168 students (equivalent to 109.8 full-time enrolments) attended the AQ School in 2021. This included 23 full-time enrolments at Sunnybank and 24 at Brighton campus and 121 students part-time (59 at Sunnybank campus, 51 at Brighton and 11 at Cairns). The average attendance rate in 2021 for the whole school was 84.03% (85.60% for Sunnybank; 82.69% for Brighton and 83.81% for Cairns).

YEAR LEVELS OFFERED

AQ School provides a range of enrolment options for students verified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) from Prep to Year 12 at the Brisbane campuses and Prep-Year 4 in Cairns.

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 autism spectrum disorder, in accordance with the Queensland Department of Education's guidelines to support students with disability in independent schools.

All AQ School students present with complex access and engagement barriers; many students access curriculum below their same age peers in one or more Learning Areas and require an adjusted educational program. 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 implementing 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 processes and communication
- 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.

The personalised planning and support required to support students' complex learning needs requires an extensive team of specialist staff, a responsive educational program, and an adjusted learning environment.

DISTINCTIVE CURRICULUM OFFERINGS

AQ School is committed to ensuring students have access to a high-quality curriculum suitable to their individual learning needs. Teachers, with the support of the AQ School interdisciplinary team, plan, deliver, assess and report on Australian Curriculum Learning Areas. Students' strengths and interests, their age, and their individual learning needs are considered in curriculum decision making processes. The provision of appropriate personalised adjustments increases opportunities for students to access and engage with learning and with others though. Our school pedagogy outlines how we teach at Autism Queensland and includes:

- Continuous assessment is used to determine curriculum and learning needs
- All students have a personalised learning plan that addresses barriers to learning
- Whole school universal supports as well as personalised adjustments within the learning environment are determined and provided.
- 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, Health and Physical Education Learning Area.
- 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.

For students in the senior phase of learning (years 10-12) within our Brighton and Sunnybank campuses, access to a full-time individualised program working towards a Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA). QCIA goals that support the development of independence and transition from school within five curriculum organisers are the focus of a portfolio of achievements finalised in students' final year of schooling. The five curriculum organisers are:

- Communication and technologies
- Community, citizenship and the environment
- Leisure and recreation
- Personal and living dimensions
- Vocational and transition activities.

The School Program

The AQ School facilitates both full time and shared enrolment of students on the autism spectrum. At the Sunnybank and Brighton campuses, parents have a choice of either part-time or full-time enrolment for select year levels. In Cairns, due to the smaller cohort of students, only two-day part time options are available. For Years Prep-10, Autism Queensland's Education Service Agreement with the Department of Education, under the Non-State Special Needs Organisations funding program, facilitates shared enrolment of students on the autism spectrum in a part-time school-based program at Autism Queensland School with enrolment at their base or "home" mainstream school providing an inclusive program for students specifically designed to:

- Enable students to maintain connection with their local school peer group and educational program;
- Enable students to develop and practise 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.

Class Placements

Students attending AQ School are grouped according to age, and students' curriculum and personal support needs, with a maximum of six students per class. Each class is staffed by a Teacher and Teacher Aide, with additional support from allied health professionals, featuring:

- An interdisciplinary team approach including parents, the student, home school staff, AQ School teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, wellbeing facilitators, and other associated professionals
- Regular goal-based communication with parents and carers
- Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs), tailored to address the impact of autism on students' access to learning, developed in collaboration with stakeholders such as the student, parents and carers and the home school education support team

- Universal, targeted and specialist therapy and wellbeing support within the learning environment
- 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.

The decision for part or full-time enrolment is made on a case-by-case basis to ensure benefit to the student. Consideration for inclusion in the program involves the collection and review of a variety of personalised enrolment information including:

- A current diagnosis of autism and/or verification for school-age students in the ASD category of the Educational Adjustment Program
- The collation of current support and transition needs via consultation with relevant stakeholders
- An enrolment interview with the student and his/her parents
- Review of recent documents including school reports, current personalised learning plans, individual positive behaviour support plans and recent therapy reports.

Enrolment and transition opportunities consider the student's capacity to engage with learning and with others and manage the transition or enrolment option available.

Stakeholder Engagement

Consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders are a key feature of AQ School's personalised educational program for students with complex learning and support needs. Support is provided by AQ 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 of classes with dual enrolled students have additional non-contact time explicitly allocated for home school visits and consultative support for the students' home school education support teams. This provides the opportunity for AQ School staff to observe students in their mainstream setting to assist in providing responsive support to the education support team and opportunities for generalisation of strategies developed in the Autism-specific program.

Collaboration and Peer Support may include:

- 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.
- Support with continuous curriculum decision making process including the sharing of curriculum planning details, semester reports and to families and home school team

Transition Planning and Support may include:

- 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.

Feedback from a recent Special Education Program teacher supporting a dual enrolled student to transition back to full time enrolment within their school included noting that the visits to AQ School to observe and collaborate and the very clear lines of communication were highly beneficial to the student's home school educational team.

SOCIAL CLIMATE

Inclusive education for students on the autism spectrum is a complex process requiring collaborative relationships and partnerships, responsive planning, and creative supports to address personalised needs. 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.

AQ School places students at the centre of their education by supporting the explicit development of student voice and ensuring each student's educational program celebrates and supports their strengths and provides opportunities for personal and academic growth and outcomes.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration provides the policy framework for the Australian Curriculum delivered within AQ School. The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration aligns with the AQ core values of:

- **Integrity and Authenticity:** We are genuine, honest and accountable for what we do.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** We respect and celebrate all people and their right to participate and belong.
- **Strengths Focus:** We strive to support the development of every person's potential, recognising that a strengths focus enables growth and empowers decision-making and self-advocacy.
- **Safety and Wellbeing:** We provide and promote safe, respectful, caring and engaging people and environments that support positive development and relationships.

- **Evidence-informed Practice:** We use professional reasoning to bring together current high quality research evidence and the values, strengths and preferences of individuals and families to optimise outcomes.

Collaboration between the AQ School interdisciplinary team and the student, parents and carers, and external stakeholders such as home school staff and therapists are utilised to develop appropriate individualised plans to meet the personalised needs of students. Regular consultation and collaboration through school visits, emails and phone calls, and meetings ensures personalised goals are responsive to student needs during their enrolment at AQ School. There is a strong emphasis on evidence informed educational practice that meets the specific needs of students on the autism spectrum.

PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT SATISFACTION WITHIN THE SCHOOL

As part of AQ's data collection process, stakeholders were surveyed regarding the service provided by AQ School to students, families and other schools during 2021, as well as the impact of this service. Survey data was collated for eighty-three students who shared enrolment with a home school during the 2021 school year. The findings reflect significant improvement in student access to and participation in the Australian Curriculum.

Student engagement and achievement:

- **25%** of students had special arrangements in place at the student's other school to support access and participation during play times. **8%** had special arrangements that were reduced as the AQ School shared enrolment progressed and support was provided to address peer engagement barriers.
- **71%** of respondents agreed that as the AQ School shared enrolment progressed, the student improved their ability to transition well between learning environments and tasks (**49%** agreed, **22%** strongly agreed).
- **92%** of respondents agreed that as the AQ School shared enrolment progressed, the student improved their ability to engage in learning tasks (**57%** agree, **35%** strongly agreed).
- **89%** of respondents agreed that collaboration between AQ school and the home school team relating to the student's personalised adjustments and progress occurred each term. This included at least weekly collaboration (**32%**)
- The AQ school team regularly provided information and input to the home School team to support the alignment of curriculum access for the student between both schools. (**98%** of respondents agree)
- Students demonstrated progress retaining Australian Curriculum Learning Area concepts. (**99%** English, **99%** Mathematics, **99%** HPE) during the 2021 school year.

Feedback from AQ School students included the following comments relating to their personalised program:

- Everything is explained properly, and no one yells at me
- I love access to movement breaks.
- I love playing with my friends and learning in class
- Being able to take breaks and not be under stress.

Attendance

- While **77%** of students had regular attendance at AQ School (with few or no absences), only **61%** of students also had this attendance pattern in their other school setting. Some
- respondents noted that students were only able to attend their home school when individual direct support was able to be provided to support safety and this impacted their attendance.
- **96%** of students accessed full days at AQ School and **59%** of students accessed full days at their other school setting.
- The attendance patterns of **10%** of students were reported to have improved in their other school setting as the AQ School placement progressed and support was provided to address attendance and engagement barriers.

Transitioning students back to mainstream schooling

- **63%** of respondents reported that AQ School discussed shared enrolment needs and associated transition planning with the student's family and/or their home school team during 2021.
- **46%** of respondents reported that transition support for the home school team was provided by AQ School staff during 2021. This varied from assistance with transition from AQ School to full time into mainstream, transitioning from primary to high school while still attending AQ School and also transitioning into a new mainstream class. Information provided had a clear focus on adjustments to the personalised learning plan and evidence-informed information for the student's team to proactively assist with the student's transition.
- **45%** of respondents reported that transition support for the student was provided through the provision of information and transition activities for the student and their parent or carer. This included support for transition to AQ School and not just to mainstream.

Feedback provided by a parent highlights the impact of AQ School enrolment on their child and family stating "AQ has provided a great start to my child's schooling life and made transition to mainstream a beautiful reality."

SCHOOL INCOME BROKEN DOWN BY FUNDING SOURCE

A breakdown of AQ School funding for all 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

An interdisciplinary team approach is utilised to support the complex learning needs of AQ School students. The AQ School team includes special educators, therapy and wellbeing staff, teacher aides, administration staff, and other support staff within the IT, maintenance and HR services.

Staff Composition, Including Indigenous Staff

Total number of teaching staff	36
Full-time equivalent teaching staff	27.6
Total number of non-teaching staff	85
Full-time equivalent non-teaching staff	57.5
Total number of Indigenous staff	2
Total number of school staff:	121

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	21
Diploma	2
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
26	25	96%

Number of Staff	Number of School Days	Average Staff Attendance Rate
121	109	96.9%

STAFF PARTICIPATION IN AND EXPENDITURE ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN 2021

AQ School is supported by teaching, therapy, transport and administrative staff of 85.1 full time equivalent, including a principal and heads of campus or team leaders within campuses. 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 and AQ School policies and practices.

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.

Evidence-informed strategies and programs continued throughout 2021 through consultation with AQ Research and Development Team and participation in the AQ Professional Practice Team. This provided access to an extensive team of experts, including senior therapists, Education School and Therapy Team members, Professional Learning and Development Services, individuals on the autism spectrum, and our affiliation with the Autism CRC research projects. Topics chosen for presentation during designated pupil free days and/or staff meetings are often presented by the various professionals from the AQ interdisciplinary team or from external organisations as appropriate.

Most notably, continued focus areas requested by AQ School staff for professional development during the 2021 school year were school community wellbeing, universal strategies to engage and teach students on the autism spectrum, positive behaviour support and differentiation within complex classes with multi-year level support needs.

Total Number of Teachers	Total expenditure on teacher PD (as recorded in Financial Questionnaire)	Average expenditure on PD per teacher
	Total funds expended on teacher professional development in 2021.	\$25,350
	Proportion of the teaching staff involved in professional development activities during 2021.	100%
<p>Major professional development initiatives were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior First Aid and CPR Training • Child Protection Training • Fire Safety Training • Gender Diversity • The impact of autism on learning • Autism and Executive Functioning Skills • Play for Children with Complex Needs • AQ School Curriculum Entitlement and Personalised Programming • Assessment and Reporting Planning • Risk Assessment Process • Middle Leadership • SMART Software use • Teacher Growth and Development • Universal supports for AQ School students • Supporting Literacy and Numeracy • Restorative Practice within AQ School • Team-Teach Refresher or Foundation Course • AQ Policies and Procedures • Incident Reporting and Quality Assurance • Positive Behaviour Supports • Behaviour Escalation Plans and Resources 		

- AASE National Conference
- QCAA and ISQ curriculum updates
- True Relationship Education
- Wellbeing for students, staff and families
- Animal Assisted Therapy
- Differentiation and Curriculum Planning
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: Identifying Adjustments and Evidence
- Bus Staff Training: Incident and Management Plan, regular Department of Transport and Main Roads updates; AQ specific responsibilities updates

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The AQ School aims to increase the confidence and skills of the student, and for the student's family and home school. Student success is measured on an individual basis and may consider:

- Achievement against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards
- Student Engagement
- Achievement of personalised learning goals
- Continuous assessments
- Academic Semester Reports
- Standardised measures
- Stakeholder (student, parents, home school team) satisfactions
- School attendance
- On-going involvement of stakeholders
- Student progress reports

All students attending AQ School have a personalised plan with goals set across curriculum areas. These plans are reviewed six-monthly, in collaboration with the AQ School team, the student and family and other stakeholders such as the home school team. Semester progress reports documenting achievement against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards and measures of student engagement are sent to parents twice a year.

Survey data was collated for 83 students who shared enrolment with a home school during the 2021 school year.

The findings reflect significant improvement in student access to and participation in the Australian Curriculum at AQ School with students demonstrating progress retaining Australian Curriculum Learning Area concepts. (**99%** English, **99%** Mathematics, **99%** HPE) during the 2021 school year.

One student finished year 12 at the end of the 2021 school year, achieving a QCIA portfolio and has transitioned to post school further training opportunities including working towards a Certificate III.

Part-time students attending the AQ School do not participate in NAPLAN testing during their attendance but may participate at their 'home school.' All fulltime Year 3 students enrolled in the Autism Queensland School in 2021 were exempt from NAPLAN testing, in consultation with each student's parents.

The family of a student who transitioned back to full time attendance at their home school after the end of the 2021 school year shared that despite the disruption experienced during term 1 2022, their child is happy and engaged at his home school.

They note that maintaining the shared enrolment from Year 1 to Year 5 was of great benefit to their child, providing support to develop skills necessary to improve his school attendance and engagement with the curriculum while also maintaining connection with his home school peers. They report he is comfortable with his familiar home school peers, and they are comfortable with him, allowing opportunities for social engagement, peer modelling and peer support for the future.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

During the 2021 school year, significant events included:

- BGA building 5 refurbishment of the Sunnybank Campus junior classrooms saw new learning environments prepared for the start of the 2021 school year. Delays with outstanding works resulted in the learning spaces becoming available during the January Pupil Free period.
- Cairns' campus extended to include enrolment of students entering Year 4. Years 5 and 6 to be available in 2022 and 2023, respectively.
- AQ School staff restructure introduced the new role of Therapy Coordinator to complement the existing Teaching and Learning Coordinator and Wellbeing Facilitator roles appointed at Sunnybank and Brighton. A new School Administration Coordinator was also introduced to oversee systems and streamline processes across all three campuses.
- Consultation and preliminary trials of school management systems in preparation of installation and implementation in 2022 as part of AQ's organisation-wide digital transformation project.
- School leadership team met in May for a full day of planning to develop actions for the school strategic plan. Opportunities for cross campus collaboration with colleagues allowed for discussions and actions for the next twelve months of the school strategic summary 2020-2023.
- A school staff outbreak of gastroenteritis at the Brighton campus in June resulted in Queensland Health's Public Health Unit (PHU) being notified. All Queensland Health directives were effectively met and the outbreak thankfully short-lived.
- Ministerial opening of Block Grant Authority refurbished Junior School Building 5 by the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing, Grace Grace MP, with invited guests including representatives from donors John Villiers Trust and Master Builders Queensland.
- Innovative landscaping of unused spaces created classroom courtyards and a new playground at Brighton and Sunnybank campuses increased access to quiet zones and calming spaces.

- Sunnybank’s student wellbeing facilitator completed formal training in Animal Assisted Therapy with AQ trainee therapy dog Chica, for accreditation as an animal assisted therapy dog.
- ISQ Projects to support staff development and school improvement in 2021 included:
 - Teacher and Therapist Induction and Retention project;
 - continuation (and completion) of the two-year Middle Leaders project which resulted in updating the school data plan.

These projects are in alignment with AQ School’s strategic plan and were overseen by the teaching and learning coordinators in consultation with the school leadership team.

- SMART display boards and software became universal across campuses, replacing all superseded models. Professional learning opportunities were sourced to support greater staff confidence and capacity with the software and boards.