



# Parent Handbook



## Cairns State Special School

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# Principal's Welcome

It is with the greatest of pleasure that I welcome you to Cairns State Special School.

We are a new school that opens in Cairns, in January 2017, providing highly specialised and individualised programs for students with intellectual disability and/or multiple disabilities, from Prep to Year 12 from across the greater Cairns area.

Cairns State Special School is absolutely committed to the provision of high quality educational experiences for students in a safe, caring and respectful environment. With state of the art classrooms, teaching spaces and outdoor play areas, we ensure the delivery of engaging learning experiences appropriate to the diverse needs of our students. We provide opportunities for all students to achieve their personal best through authentic and relevant learning experiences aimed at developing and enhancing academic skills, social competencies, and daily living and recreational skills.

Our collective goal is to pursue excellence across our school community within a culture of continuous improvement. We deliberately plan to provide opportunities for all students to be the best they can be. We have uniformity of purpose and a common direction in which to work as detailed in our current Strategic Plan. We work in teams and offer programs that meet the personal needs of our students and we value all members of our learning community. We share the responsibility and care for all children enrolled at our school.

Our school is a Resilience Project (Official Partnership) school and as such, we provide an emotionally engaging, whole school program that uses evidence based approaches to build resilience in order to develop mental health. The school wide implementation of the Resilience Project which focuses on Gratitude, Empathy, Mindfulness and Emotional Literacy, directly supports our school's values.

Community partnerships are important to us and we make a deliberate choice to foster strong community partnerships. We welcome parent involvement in our school to ensure that our students have access to all the supports they require in their learning.

With this in mind I look forward to your continued support as we work together for the benefit of all children enrolled at Cairns State Special School.

Again, the very warmest of welcomes to Cairns State Special School!

Chris Simmons  
Principal

Respect Care Learning Innovation Excellence

# About our school



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## School Overview

Cairns State Special School is a co-educational state school facility providing **excellence in education** in a friendly and **supportive environment**. We provide programs and services for students in the greater Cairns area with severe disability, where the impact of the intellectual disability or multiple impairments (including an intellectual disability) results in the student requiring a highly individualised program to access and participate in education.

Cairns State Special School provides a **comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach** ensuring educational, vocational, medical, paramedical and other support **services maximise educational outcomes** for all students.

Our endeavour is a **fully integrated collaborative model of service delivery** that includes **all stakeholders**. We **share responsibility** for setting appropriate goals, for determining strategies to achieve goals, for **empowering each other** and **collaborating** on teaching practices which maximise **goal achievement**. We reflect on what we need to **know, do** and **be** in order to achieve excellence.

Opening in January 2017, state of the art classrooms, teaching spaces and outdoor areas support the delivery of engaging and relevant learning experiences appropriate to the diverse needs of students.

The school's facilities include twenty (20) flexible teaching spaces (P-12), a multi-purpose skills centre, horticulture centre (indoor/outdoor), hospitality centre, extensive play areas, plus core facilities including administration, information management centre, community hub, central staff centre, outdoor covered areas, amenities and ancillary services. Stage 1 of the school will accommodate up to 120 students. A further stage will see us grow to an enrolment of approximately 144 students.



## Statement of Purpose

Our purpose is to provide opportunities for all students to achieve their potential.

## Our Vision, Values and Beliefs

Cairns State Special School is a **vibrant place**, a **learning place** and an **innovative place** with purposeful community links that provides **personalised and relevant opportunities** for all students to reach their potential and have a **voice and choice** in their learning and pathway. Our agreed values include:

- **Respect**
- **Care**
- **Learning**
- **Innovation**
- **Excellence**

We value a **holistic** and **student focused** approach to education. We value **high expectations**, **explicit teaching** and authentic **learning** with a focus on **communication**, promoted and delivered through a **dynamic, diverse, inclusive curriculum**. In all learning, we value **discovery**, **connection** (active engagement) **achievement** and **innovation** as we work together to achieve the extraordinary. We value a **safe** and **encouraging** learning environment, where **ability** is recognised and **possibilities** are encouraged. Our endeavour is the demonstration of the core principles of **resilience** including **gratitude**, **empathy** and **mindfulness**, thereby promoting emotional literacy and positive mental health.

Our **collaborative partnerships with our community** promote opportunities for authentic, meaningful and relevant school community engagement and maximise student outcomes.





## School Setting

The school has excellent facilities, landscaped spaces and wonderful indoor and outdoor recreation areas. The buildings, grounds and play areas have been designed to be accessible for all students, including those in wheelchairs.

Students have access to air-conditioned classrooms, devices to assist learning and an array of assistive technology and professional specialised support.

## Enrolment

Enrolment for the Cairns State Special School is in accordance with the Department of Education and Training criteria. Following is the key information and links to further information and definitions.

### Minister's Criteria

The Minister's Policy for the criteria to decide whether a person is a person with a disability, for the purpose of enrolment in State Special Schools, is that the person **must meet the following criteria:**

- The person has a disability as defined by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA).
- The person has a *severe disability* which includes an intellectual disability.
- The person is unlikely to attain the levels of development of which the person is capable unless the person receives special education.
- The person's educational program is best delivered in a special school taking into account the appropriateness of this placement for the individual concerned.

## Daily Routine

The formal school day at Cairns State Special School commences at 8:45 am and concludes at 2:45pm. As our students arrive each morning, they are welcomed and received by staff on duty. To ensure adequate student supervision and safety, students are not to be left at the school prior to 8:30am and should be collected promptly at the end of the day. A quick call to us if you are running late is very much appreciated.

For the safety of your child and all other students attending our school, we ask that you observe the signs related to parking and drop-offs/pickups.

The day is broken into five (5) sessions with the sessions separated by morning tea/morning play and lunch/lunch play.

## Class Groupings

Students are organised into class groups based on age, level of maturity, social/emotional needs and individual curriculum needs. Class groupings generally range in size from 4 to 6 students. Classes are primarily staffed with a Teacher and one Teacher Aide.

## Attendance

If your child is going to be away from school, we ask that you contact the school to notify office staff of this absence. Please phone the school prior to 9:00 a.m. and leave a message if the phone is unattended. If your child is away due to an illness, you may wish to discuss this on their return to school with the home group teacher. Students are not permitted to leave the grounds (except on approved school activities) unless a request in writing is presented to the classroom teacher or Principal.

## School Term Information

The school campus calendar operates according to the Education Queensland school calendar with assigned student free days, term and semester holidays. A copy of the calendar which contains information about the school holidays and term dates can be accessed through the DET website at [http://education.qld.gov.au/public\\_media/](http://education.qld.gov.au/public_media/)

## Parents & Citizens Association

The Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) is a representative committee established to work with the school on a range of matters including fundraising.

Parents and members of the community are welcome to come along to meetings and introduce themselves to the committee. The work of our P&C is integral in supporting our school to ensure the educational needs of your child are met and volunteering as part of our P&C provides another opportunity for you to have your voice within our school community heard and valued.

## Support Available

The school campus staff consists of:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Classroom Teachers
- Teacher Aides
- Guidance Officer
- Business Services Manager
- School Administration Officers
- Schools Officer Grounds and Facilities

The school works closely with Students Services and a number of other agencies that provide support to our students, including:

- Physiotherapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Registered School Nurses
- Advisory Visiting Teacher/s
- Autism Qld
- Educators external to the school
- Department of Family Services
- Queensland Transport
- Post school services
- Cerebral Palsy League
- Respite services
- Local hospitals
- Paediatricians
- Disability Services Queensland
- The Resilience Project



A referral process is in place to access most of these services. This enables us to ensure service providers can provide any necessary assessments and interventions in order to meet your child's educational needs.

# About our curriculum



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## Curriculum

Curriculum refers to everything a school does to support student learning, including what is taught and the knowledge and skills acquired by students. Across Queensland, each school develops its own curriculum plan which gives details of the what, when and how of the teaching-learning process of a particular school across the different years and phases of schooling.

At Cairns State Special School our specialisation in education provision is to provide programs for students with intellectual and/or multiple disabilities.

Our school offers a highly individualised curriculum providing significant educational support based on adjustments to the curriculum content and achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum. Core learning areas are delivered to students using the Students with Disabilities Curriculum to Classroom (C2C) units of work adapted to context. At all times we consider curriculum for the multi-sensory learner.

## Phases of Learning

Our staff plan in teams and share the responsibility of teaching and learning across four phases of learning including:

- Junior School - Years P-2
- Middle School - Years 3-6
- Junior Secondary Years 7-10
- Senior School - Years 11-12

The curriculum for students in Prep to Year 10 is informed by the Australian Curriculum and includes appropriate Learning Area content and context, General Capabilities, Cross-Curriculum Priorities and Essential Learnings.

## Junior School

Students in the equivalent of Prep to Year 2 are in our Junior School. The Junior School curriculum is driven by a student centred approach to teaching and learning. The Junior School team centres their planning, teaching and assessment around the needs and abilities of the students in the junior classes.

## Middle School

Students within the Middle School (equivalent of Year 3-6) continue to be taught new knowledge areas with a Learnings Area curriculum delivered through integrated programming and a multi-sensory approach.

The Middle School curriculum builds on and consolidates the Junior School practices with an emphasis on expanding student knowledge, skills and the contexts in which they can demonstrate their learning.



## Junior Secondary School

The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 10 continues to be informed by the Australian Curriculum. There is a shift in the later stages of this phase to look at intensive planning for post school options including pathways for community based activities and vocational skills.

## Senior School

Students in the equivalent of Year Eleven and above have their curriculum delivered through the Queensland Studies Authority curriculum organisers and the Senior Education and Training Plan. The focus for the Senior School is preparing students for their life beyond school, so there is an increased emphasis on community based activities and vocational skills.



## Communication

Many students attending the school do not have expressive verbal communication skills. Developing communication skills for all students is recognised as a high priority, as this areas of development is significantly affected by the loss of verbal and physical abilities.

All staff working with students at Cairns State Special School are committed to identifying existing communication skills. Developing these into an effective means of communication so that students are able to interact with others, make choices and communicate their needs is a high focus within the student's Individual Curriculum Plan.

Individual modes of communication, as well as many alternative and augmentative communication strategies (signing, pointing to symbols, gesturing and facial expression and communication devices) are used by our students to communicate.

## Individual Curriculum Plans and Senior Education and Training Plans

An Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) is documented during a shared decision making process which brings parents/carers and professionals together as a team to assess and determine the needs and learning priorities for a student. The ICP process, with active parent involvement, is a key aspect of curriculum development and delivery for teachers. Documentation of both ICP goals and progress over a six month period fosters a culture of continuous monitoring, assessment and review.

All students, depending on their age, have either an Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) or a Senior Education and Training Plan (SET Plan) that identifies their key learning goals and guides their curriculum delivery.

The department's Education Adjustment Program (EAP) is a process for identifying and responding to the educational needs of students with disability who require significant education adjustments related to specific disability. All students who have a disability verified through the Education Adjustment Program, have an EAP profile completed. The EAP profile is used to record the range and frequency of a sample of education adjustments made for the individual student and is reviewed periodically.

## Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction is an approach based on striking up a 'dialogue' with students who are difficult to reach because they haven't learnt fundamental communication skills. We use 'topics' of conversation that the student already recognises; we look for things that seem to have meaning for the learner, and we do it with them. Intensive Interaction is an approach to developing the ability and desire to communicate and participate in social interactions. It may be utilised with people who have poorly developed social and communication abilities, usually accompanied by additional learning and/or sensory difficulties.



## Reporting

It is the policy of this school to hold Parent/Teacher interviews during the first Semester, usually in Term One and when requested. Written reports will be issued twice each year - at the end of Terms Two and Four.

Close co-operation is sought between home and school in order to provide your child with his/her best chance of reaching their full potential and to accommodate their particular teaching/learning needs. At any stage throughout the school year, parents may request a meeting with teaching staff, administration or student service providers, by contacting either the office or home group teacher.



Additionally, a review of your child's Education Adjustment Program is conducted every four years to determine that appropriate programs are in place and to ensure that your child is in the education setting best suited to his/her needs. This may be conducted by your child's home group teacher and a Guidance Officer and will involve discussions with your child's teachers, the Principal and Guidance Officer. You will be notified by the school office if your child is to be reviewed as part of this routine assessment program.

Finally, staff use photographs and videos of students to assist both in teaching as well as to report on a student's learning. You are also asked to provide your permission for this to occur when you complete the Media Permissions form.

## Student Resource Scheme

Cairns State Special School operates a Student Resource Scheme (SRS). The SRS is designed to benefit students and parents by substantially reducing the financial burden of purchasing expensive resources. It is a non-profit scheme that provides each participant with resource books and materials. Our scheme has been fully endorsed by the Cairns State Special School Steering Committee.

The SRS is a voluntary scheme. Various payment options will be available including Centrepay. Details of the SRS and costs will be available prior to the commencement of the new school year. Booklists will be available for those families not wishing to participate in the SRS.

## Textbook and Resource Allowance

The Queensland Government pays a Textbook Allowance for students aged 13 years and older. The allowance is paid directly to the school. Although called a Textbook Allowance, in our school the materials issued in this scheme are not textbooks, but rather part of a very long and varied list of resources required by our students to enable them to engage in learning experiences and activities across the school day. The Textbook Allowance covers the cost of classroom consumables, some transport and some registration costs at vocational education etc. A full breakdown is provided to parents/carers annually. You can choose not to participate in this Textbook Allowance Scheme and can request that the school pay you the allowance. However in this case, you will be required to provide and/or pay for the resources and equipment listed for your child for that year. The value of the resources and equipment is always greater than the Textbook and Resource Allowance.

## The Resilience Project

Our school is a Resilience Project (Official Partnership) school and as such, we provide an emotionally engaging, whole school program that uses evidence based approaches to build resilience in order to develop mental health. The school wide implementation of the Resilience Project which focuses on Gratitude, Empathy, Mindfulness and Emotional Literacy, directly supports our school's values.



# About our procedures



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## Accident and Illness

A majority of school staff at Cairns State Special School has current first aid qualifications including CPR and anaphylaxis training. Should a student require further medical assessment/intervention whilst at school, we will contact the emergency nominated contact person on the student's enrolment form and/or when required, an ambulance will be called and the student escorted with a staff member to the nearest hospital.

DET policy recommends that unwell students remain absent and that medical advice be followed regarding time periods for doing so. DET does have exclusion periods to be followed with regards to contagious diseases. For more information go to: Infection Control and Management of Prescribed Contagious Conditions at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/health/hl spr004/>

It is our belief that students should attend school when they are well and able to fully participate in their educational programs. When a child is not well enough to participate in their programs at school, they should remain absent from school to promote their recovery. If a student is at school and appears unwell and unable to participate in their programs, we will make contact with parents to arrange collection of their child from school.

## Child Custody and Access Issues

Any court order issued relating to custody of a student must be shown and a copy given to the Business Services Manager. The school will comply with the directions of the Order. It is also important that we receive notification of any changes or amendments to the Order.

## Complaints

From time to time you may have concerns about your child at school or the operations of the school. These concerns may grow into bigger issues if you don't talk to the school staff about them. DET is committed to ensuring that all parents have their concerns heard in a fair and equitable manner and there are processes and support structures in place to enable able parents to work through any issues they may have.



Concerns should initially be shared with the teacher involved or lodged directly with the Deputy Principal/Principal.

As part of this process, the Executive Director (Schools) will be notified and involved if necessary.

## iPad Program

Cairns State Special School offers a parent supported 1 to 1 iPad program for all students. The iPad program enables us to provide further opportunities to personalise learning for our students in a way that is meaningful and engaging. Technology rich teaching increases student engagement, participation and excitement.

By the end of Term 1 2017, all families will receive information about the program and how they can support the program. There is a small charge (approximately \$50) for joining the device to our network, identifying the device and providing a bundle of appropriate apps. Students and parents/carers are provided an *Acceptable Use Agreement* ensuring privacy, safety and iPad use is clearly understood.

## Keeping in Touch

Regular communication between home and school is integral to our success. During the first term at our school, all students will be provided with a communication book which goes between home and school each day and is an important part of your child's daily routine. Please use the book as much as you require to share information. By the end of Term One, we anticipate your child's iPad will be utilised as a home school communication tool, allowing you to celebrate your child's achievement and participation at school.



The open door policy of the school encourages informal communication and is supported by the following:

- Fortnightly School Newsletter
- P&C Committee meetings
- School website
- Individual Education Planning
- Parent Information evenings
- Celebration events

To ensure a satisfactory standard of communication between the school and parents/carers, notification of changes to phone numbers, addresses, medications, alternative contacts or guardianship should be made to administration.

## Lost Property

Please ensure that all clothing and personal property is clearly marked with your child's name. This makes the return of lost property easier. Items of lost property are kept in your child's classroom or in the school office. At the end of each semester unclaimed articles are donated to charity.

## Mealtime Assistance

Some students require intensive adult assistance when eating and drinking and require modification to their mealtimes. Students requiring specialised procedures and or intensive adult contact and support when eating and/or drinking are supported by trained school staff. An individual student Mealtime Assistance Plan is developed in consultation with the parents/carers and student's medical specialist. Changes to this Mealtime Assistance Plan occur only after approval from the student's medical practitioner (e.g. paediatrician).

## Medication at School

Please note that school staff is **not permitted** to administer any medication, including over-the-counter medications

<http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/health/hl spr009/definition.html> (for definition), such as paracetamol, ibuprofen, naturopathic, herbal and homeopathic preparations and pharmacist-only medicines at school, unless:

1. The Parent/Caregiver forwards the appropriate form to the school requesting the administration of the medication. Forms are available from the school office.
2. The prescribed medication form must be either co-signed by the registered medical practitioner or a separate letter from the registered medical practitioner outlining the medications, dosages and times for use (this includes over the counter medication, e.g. paracetamol etc.).
3. The parent/carer notifies the school in writing of any changes to the prescribed medication and completes a new request form.
4. The parent/carer is to ensure all medication has a pharmacy label attached with the name of student, correct dosage and route of the administration to be delivered.



5. If a student requires emergency medications, the Parent/carer will need to supply them, with the completed Request for Administration noted in point 1.

If your child requires prescribed medication to be given within school hours or there is a change to the existing medication, it is necessary to provide the school with the required information BEFORE the medication can be administered by school staff.

These new guidelines conform to the new policy on Administration of Routine and Emergency Medication in Schools at <http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/health/hl spr009/>



## Nursing Services

DET Registered Nurses work in partnership with Cairns State Special School staff to safely manage the health needs of students with specialised health needs. Working with staff in our school, the registered nurses help manage our students by:

- Assessing individual students' health needs.
- Developing individualised student health and emergency plans.
- Providing competency based training for school staff to meet the individual students' health needs.
- Provide support and advice for students, parents and school staff.

## Personal Electronic Equipment

A number of children bring to school a range of electronic pieces of equipment. Some of these electronics (portable DVD players, iPods, iPads etc) are used to support your child's transition from home to school. Other items are being used throughout the school day in class programs.

The school community is happy to support the various uses of electronic equipment for your child, but need to advise that should the equipment be damaged whilst at school there is no capacity for the school to repair or replace the equipment. Therefore, it is advisable that you arrange for the device/s to be covered through your own insurance policy.

## Respite

Please let the school know if your child is going into respite and requires a change to their transport arrangements (preferably five days' notice). This includes the following information:

- Dates
- Location – address and phone number of respite accommodation
- Name of contact person at respite care facility

Changes to destination are not to be arranged with bus/taxi drivers – all changes **MUST** be made through the school. Please be aware that if the office is not notified, your child will not be provided with transport between the respite centre and school.

## Responsible Behaviour Plan

Our Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students is designed to facilitate high standards of behaviour so that the learning and teaching in our school can be effective and students can participate positively within our school community.

Our school community identify the following rules to teach and promote our high standards of responsible behaviour:

- We wait
- We listen
- We communicate
- We share
- We are safe

All areas of Cairns State Special School are learning and teaching environments. We consider the Responsible Behaviour Plan to be an opportunity for valuable social learning as well as a means of maximising the success of student learning programs.

In situations where students experience difficulty using positive behaviours and following the school rules, an Individual Behaviour Support Plan (IBSP) is developed in consultation with the student's parents/carers, teacher and guidance officer. This IBSP aims to teach students the positive behaviour skills they need to interact appropriately with others.

## Student Protection

DET Procedure SMS-PR-012: Student Protection located at <http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/students/smspr012/> outlines the responsibilities and commitment staff at Cairns State Special School has to provide for a safe and supportive learning environment and what staff must do to prevent and respond to harm or risk of harm for all students. Four categories of harm are addressed: harm caused by a school employee; harm caused by another student; harm caused by someone outside the state education institution environment; and student self-harm.

## Transport

Queensland Transport can provide assistance to parents to transport their child to and from school. The Deputy Principal is responsible for assessing students' entitlement to transport assistance. Applications for transport assistance are completed at the school but approved at our Regional Office and arranged by Queensland Transport. Changes to transport arrangements take time to organise. Parents are responsible for contacting the taxi or bus company as well as the school if your child is going to be absent from school.

In the event of moving house, a new transport application is required for approval. Students receive funded transport only to the recommended nearest school otherwise Parents/Carers are responsible for providing transport for their child.

## Uniforms

Students wear the school uniform which is both attractive and practical. School shirts and shorts are available through the school. Cairns State Special School is a sun safe school therefore we ask you to provide appropriate headwear for your son or daughter in the form of sun safe bucket hat which can be purchased at the school.

## Volunteer/Parental Involvement

Voluntary assistance in the classroom and for outside activities is welcome. Parents/carers will be required to work with children other than their own. Please contact the office for further information. All volunteers must be trained and have a Working with Children Check "Blue Card" and wear a volunteer's name tag at all times.

Parents are very welcome at the school during the day but we do ask that you always report to Administration before going to your child's classroom. Your involvement in all school activities, such as excursions, swimming classes, music sessions, sports day and celebratory events is encouraged. Assistance with fund raising activities such as barbeques, raffles and school events is much appreciated. We value the work of our volunteers, many of whom donate their services over a long period of time.

## What to Bring to School Each Day

On a daily basis, it is recommended that the following items are provided in your child's school bag:

- Your child's morning tea and lunch including drinks – Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) Schools, support a healthy eating program.
- Your child's communication book/device for home-school communication.
- Any assistive technology your child requires.
- A hat and sunscreen – DET endorses sun safety and because of the high incidence of skin cancer in our state, Cairns State Special School advocate sun safe practices across all learning. We encourage all students to wear a hat when outside and recommence the use of an effective sunscreen (30+), especially during the summer months. Students without hats will participate in activities under cover.
- A change of clothes in the event of accidents.
- Continence and personal hygiene items for toileting routines.
- Clothing protectors, bibs, face wipes etc. for mealtimes.
- Ee-nies and towels for swimming days.

## Where to go for More Information

1. Contact Cairns State Special School and ask to speak to the Principal or email [principal@cairnsstatespecs.eq.edu.au](mailto:principal@cairnsstatespecs.eq.edu.au)
2. Download a copy of 'Education for children with a disability – a Guide for Parents' at <http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/learning/disability/parentguide/index.html>
3. Visit the DET website at <http://education.qld.gov.au/> and go to 'Student Services' or 'DET Policies and Procedures' in the Quick Links section.

