ASD: A Collaborative Response

A review of the effectiveness of the practices, policies and procedures currently in place at St James College in responding to the individual needs of young people on the Autism Spectrum.

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3.1 Supportive environment to promote social interactions, friendships, resilience and address bullying issues
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Two members of the St James College staff; Mrs Samantha Adams (Assistant Principal–Pastoral) and Mrs Dianne McRoberts (Head of Department- Teaching Learning) were selected to participate in the project; *Positive Partnerships: Supporting school aged students on the Autism Spectrum*, which is the professional development component of an initiative being funded through the Australian Government's *Helping Children with Autism* package.

The national program of professional development for teachers included completion of an introductory web-based learning module, four (4) days of face-to-face workshops, establishment of a professional network and participation in an interactive online learning platform.

Participants were encouraged to design and implement a project back in their school, which focused on building and supporting the capacity for sustained whole school change in addressing the unique needs of young people on the Autism Spectrum.

St James College is renowned for its inclusive enrolment policy and diverse range of students. The college currently caters for fifty students with disabilities, twenty three (23) of whom are on the Autism Spectrum. Co-operation of the whole St James College community was sought to conduct an evaluation and reflection on the effectiveness of our current practices. It is intended to use the findings of the review to inform a renewed whole school focus on supporting students on the Autism Spectrum to achieve improved outcomes and successfully participate in the life of the school. Production of a DVD to document the results of our research will provide a valuable professional development and staff education resource.
Methodology

The review process aimed to involve the whole school community, and, under the direction of the Teaching Learning HOD, the following activities were undertaken to gather information:

- Online questionnaire of all staff in the St James College community
- Online questionnaire of present and past parents of young people on the Autism Spectrum
- Discussions with stakeholders at the Individual Education Planning (IEP) reviews
- Interviews with students who have been diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum
- Consideration of current College and TLS policies and processes

Purpose of the Surveys

The questionnaires were structured to gather information on:

- School Culture, Policies and Practices
- Student Learning and Participation in College Life
- Supportive Environment and Networks

Staff and parent responses reflected on the:

- Inclusive nature of the school and staff understanding of the characteristics of Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Effectiveness of our current practices in relation to enrolment, transition, orientation and support procedures
- Provision of adjustments and strategies for accessing learning
- Provision of a safe supportive environment
- Provision positive individual and family support networks

Information provided by staff and parents on the impact and implications of the characteristics of ASD will inform the design of IEP’s and guide future in-service opportunities.

The parent questionnaire provided an understanding and appreciation of the challenges experienced by families of a young person on the Autism Spectrum. The college commitment to sensitivity and respect for individual dignity and privacy of student’s experiences and personal journeys was assured and adhered to.
Information gathering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Respondent</th>
<th>Staff Questionnaire</th>
<th>Parent Questionnaire</th>
<th>IEP Meetings</th>
<th>Student Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Respondents</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total School Cohort</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data relating to the respondents (see below) indicates responses from a cross section of staff across the school except for grounds and maintenance staff. Just over 50% of respondents were teaching staff and all teaching areas were represented.

Parent responses represent a sample of students across each year level except Year 11. Interestingly, 50% of responses are from parents of young people in Year 12 and past students; so their responses will reflect five years of partnership and exposure to school procedures. 28% of responses represent newly enrolled Year 8 students who have experienced just six months of their transition to St James College.

Despite the oversight in using a ten-point scale on the parent survey and a five-point scale on the staff survey, comparisons of results of the responses can still be drawn.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in college</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative / office</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College leadership</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounds maintenance</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School officer / teacher aide</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting / extra curricula</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuckshop</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching areas represented:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) Art</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Business / IT</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) Design Technology</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) English</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) Humanities</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F) Mathematics</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G) Outdoor Rec/Health</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H) Religious Education</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I) Science</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J) Tourism Hospitality</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- **Staff knowledge and understanding of the Disability Standards for Education**

- **Staff knowledge and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder**

- **Staff confidence in managing the challenges of Autism Spectrum Disorder**
Parent Respondents:
(Number of respondents: 15)

Student Details

- Gender of students on the Autism Spectrum

- Year level (2 past students included in Yr 12 cohort)

- A: Present student  B: Past student

- Age of diagnosis of ASD

Ranges from youngest age: 20 months; 2.5 yrs; 3yrs; 3.5 yrs; 2 students at 5 yrs; 3 students at 6 yrs; 7 yrs; 7.5 yrs; 10 yrs, 11 yrs; eldest was diagnosed at 13 yrs late in year 7
1. School Culture, Policies and Practices

1.1 Inclusive nature of school

1.2 Staff knowledge base and understanding of Autistic Spectrum Disorder

1.3 Supported enrolment process

1.4 Orientation process / transition from primary school

1.1 Inclusive nature of school
Parent perspective

Positive characteristics of inclusive nature of the school

Parent Responses Included:

We have been extremely pleased with the supportive and positive responses that the school have given our family.

Good facilities encourage diversity. Interested teachers

Great mentoring, Accessibility to teachers and staff, double lessons.

The inclusive nature of school has meant for the first time in his life Jordan has felt he belongs and has friends.

I think that Benjamin was given every opportunity to be included in most activities and opportunities at school.

Teaching and office staff are generally very kindly and supportive of Cameron. We like the multicultural emphasis of the school and feel that it is indeed an impressively welcoming and inclusive school.

Welcoming of students with disabilities. Small enrolment

All teachers know James and understand his needs. Regular contact re any issues and collaborative practices in terms of how to follow-up both in the school and home environment, nurturing pastoral care process

Small number of students, many excellent staff who work to make each child included

Most staff have a great understanding of children with differences and are happy to include these students into the programs.

Inclusive school with great pastoral care and communication with the home. Jason attended from 1997 to 2001. in that era Jason would not have survived in a regular academic school program.

All students are treated as equal in terms of their rights, potential and access but are supported for their individual needs.

Accommodates the students’ differences in most areas

Learning Support understanding concerns and listening to make attempts to implement ideas and strategies
1.1 Inclusive nature of school

Staff perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderately effective</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely ineffective</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive characteristics of inclusive nature of school:

**Staff Responses Included:**

- Inclusive and supportive.
  - St James is very inclusive and aims to meet the needs of all students in their learning and also in outside of class activities.

- Students are accepted and not bullied because they are different.

- Will persist with helping a student who consistently displays bad behaviour

- Inclusive practices provide more opportunities for students with autism to learn and practise social skills with their peers.

- All students learn to accept others with disabilities, or those who do not normally fit in, and learn how to associate with them.

- Great pastoral care / holistic approach to education. School community embraces diversity.

- Integrated teamwork system in assistance of students with ASD.

- Not excluding students and helping them realise they “belong” with everyone else. Encouraging them to reach their full potential.

- School caters for many different types of learners and doesn’t restrict them to a certain part of the school like a ‘special ed’ unit or block.

- Small, focus on relationship building, toleration and acceptance of difference. Strong anti-bullying approaches. TLS department.

- All students are very much apart of the culture, they are treated with dignity, are able to be involved in many events that allow them to have success at school. They are included in all classes and their differences managed.

- Allow students to be in a "real" classroom and interact in a normal social setting.

- Some students accept them.

- I think it is excellent that we do not separate these students from normal classes as it gives them a truly integrated experience. It also gives other students the opportunity to build up rapport with students they would not usually associate with.

- Differentiation of the curriculum for students with ASD

- Tolerance of mode of functioning of all students by teachers

- Inclusive for students.
Close relationship with TLS dept helps provide help when required and the aide support in the classroom is excellent

Inclusive environment, meeting student needs, advocating student differences, teacher and staff promoting student achieving potential

Acceptance of all. Teachers happy to work with Teaching/Learning Dept in managing students within their classrooms. Excellent support given.

Students are working in a very supportive environment. They are encouraged to develop with the rest of the group.

Inclusivity

In general, most students are quite accepting of the diverse nature of our cohort (older students in particular).

Students are not isolated or made to feel different- they are treated as people with dignity first.

Embracing tolerance and understanding of difference.

All students in the school acknowledge that the school is inclusive and there are differences amongst students -swd are supported and encouraged by the school community - see st as talented in sport and recognise their ability not disability. prepares them for life. Disability does not impact on the participation on sports days - everyone participates.

On the whole most students with disabilities are treated with respect and accepted.

Students are happy to repair and restore relationships if they are challenged about their mistreatment of other less able students.

A comfortable, inclusive approach by adults in the community ensures students are included.

Office staff have an awareness of the time and frustration that teaching staff experience.

All students are accepting of all students regardless of difference.

Tolerance of difference, accommodating diversity.
Negative characteristics / frustrations of inclusive nature of school:

**Parent responses included:**

Lack of organisational support for child. Bullying needs to be dealt with immediately, even if it is my child

Maybe needing to recognise ability and push for results.

He has like-minded friends (obviously) and this can get him into trouble.

I think that Benjamin suffered by being labelled as "Special", when he just wanted to be "normal". There was an occasion when his behaviour was taken by the school management in the extreme.

In some of the earlier years, there were problems with a few of Cameron's teachers who probably found him rather irritating but all his current teachers are doing a fine job!

Difficult to communicate with teachers

School discipline for behavioural issues

Basically the opposite to the above. Not all staff have the same inclusive skills and struggle greatly with having these students in their environment. The student and their families feel this exclusion.

Only some concern about support and supervision during recess breaks. Some sort of activity/scaffold may help social modelling and appropriate social behaviours.

Tendency to clump students with special needs together in a class

Teachers not fully understanding of the effect ASD has on students and just because it isn’t physically evident – they are all different – some quiet, some noisy.

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**Staff Responses included:**

Some extreme behaviour of students to deal with.

The students and many teachers are unaware of the issues that students with ASD face and I feel to be completely inclusive we need to ensure that more needs to be done to educate staff and students on this. This may help reduce the bullying these students can often be faced with.

Sometimes warning are given but not followed through with. There is a need for consistency.

Although being in a classroom definitely has the potential to develop students’ social skills, they probably don’t learn as much (academically, not socially) as if they were being taught work that was more at their academic level. Very often, the class work is far beyond their understanding, and it would be more beneficial to them (academically) to practising spelling or reading or basic maths, or something where they could actually make some progress. For other subjects like science, SOSE, etc, it would help a lot if the reading material was at a level they could deal with.

Difficult getting those with ASD traits to do heavier work in class, and engage on a deeper level with other students on any given topic.

How does the outside community view us?

Not enough afterschool support.

Some students are better off with a far smaller group, either within a mainstream school or in a Support Unit.

Although, this school caters for these students through education, I don’t think it caters for them socially. I believe that many of our students don’t really understand or know about the spectrum and therefore have trouble understanding those who are on it. I think this is where some of our bullying starts. Perhaps the school could education the entire cohort on ASD and what its is about and how to be understanding of these students (of course without labelling any of the kids who fall under the spectrum). I’m not sure if such a practice would work but I think there is a big problem in this school with students not being tolerant
of others with learning needs or difficulties.

There are limits to flexibility in adapting a program to an individual.

At times other student can make fun or "set up" students. Hard to comprehend why?

They are seen as different from the other students therefore some will pick on them, make fun of them, and aggravate them to get a reaction from them and to embarrass them. I see a lot of bullying of them in my classes. I believe they find it difficult in our school.

It concerns me that some staff forget that each child is an individual and that we need to tailor our teaching to reflect that and to not just teach huge slabs of work to each child and expect them to come on board.

Not being one completely by the community - only certain classes, subjects and certain teachers

Lack of understanding of disorder on student's part.

Size of prac classes and the level of support required when there are several students requiring close attention

Bullying or negative comments, lack of understanding.

Students rely on staff and aides too much and the work is reflective of ability.

Teachers need constant support. Those in authority should never take for granted those who have to work with ASD students on a regular basis and should ensure that adequate and compassionate support is in place.

Some students are intolerant and cut the student short when they are having their say or, even worse, tease the student about some aspect of their behaviour. It is very difficult to save the hurt student's feelings once a bully has spoken meanly or deliberately bumped, etc. Much more support from PC's and Mrs Adams is assisting greatly in this situation.

Forgetting their individual needs and overlooking the person.

Younger students sometimes taking advantage of those students with differing needs & sometimes instigating certain behaviours from those students. These instigators are not dealt with harshly enough!

There is a limit to the sheer numbers of students with ASD that can be effectively dealt with by even the best teacher and sometimes we go over that limit.

There is a bit of a hierarchy within the people with disabilities - because they feel so comfortable they will target those less able than themselves.

Such a high range and different degrees of ability impacts on organisation and selection of school sports.

Not enough personnel to deal with the number of students who require additional support.

Inconsistent consequences for behaviour and other associated problems undermine whole school approach to learning.
1.2 **Staff knowledge base and understanding of Autistic Spectrum Disorder**

**Parent perspective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Extremely satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Moderately satisfied</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Completely dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effectiveness of current practice:**

**Parent responses included:**

- Very positive.
- Some behavioural strategies had not been put in place.
- Satisfied with knowledge.
- There have only been issues with new staff or temporary staff, again him not liking change.
- Benjamin was fortunate to have a Guidance Officer who was extremely tolerant and forgiving of his condition.
- Mostly good. There have been a few exceptions, but generally the staff have been very understanding and supportive of Cameron - even more so after a letter I wrote about Cameron which was circulated.
- Unsure as I have not been able to speak with any staff members to date, apart from yourself.
- Good understanding and implementation of appropriate strategies.
- Most of the teachers have been marvellous, but there have been a couple who have difficulty in the daily management of students with the condition.
- Most staff seem on board and have a large knowledge base and understanding.
- Staff were still accessing and increasing their knowledge base of ASD while Jason attended St James
- Key staff (Di McRoberts, Sam Adams, Mark Holmes) have an excellent knowledge base. As I haven’t observed a class I can’t comment specifically on aides or teachers.
- The staff’s flexibility and willingness to learn has been extremely positive - for Joshua and for us. Working with parents has been most respectful and encouraging.
- Learning Support team have great knowledge and are willing to help with any support asked for.
1.2 Staff knowledge base and understanding of Autistic Spectrum

Staff perspective

Effectiveness of current practice:

Staff Responses included:

IEP information. Meetings with parents. Sharing of information.

Providing teacher aides to assist can be helpful and raising awareness of the needs of students in our classes has been effective in managing and catering for the diverse learning needs of these students.

Head of learning support gives information periodically.

Understand the need for different teaching styles to cater for the needs and varying learning styles of students.

Good levels of understanding / task adjustment, staff access to IEPs and information on learning differences using Teacher Kiosk.

More understanding about ASD may improve the effectiveness.

Students achieving in their work due to teachers scaffolding work as needed, giving clear verbal and written instructions, making necessary adjustments, pacing the work as needed, having a good manner and understanding and keeping class behaviour under control.

Most staff have a rough idea of the needs of these students through years of experience.

Excellent information available, support offered through TLS. Communication about student needs frequent and helpful. Teacher skill levels high. Good relationships with parents.

Staff are very aware of students differences. Staff are routinely given strategies to managed diversity in the classroom.

Good to look at individual and subject choices to ensure the best outcome possible.

All of the information on students with ASD is readily available. It is regularly updated and staff are always informed.

Information readily available to staff.

Inclusive of all students.

Seems to be mostly effective.

Great use of P drive to disseminate info.

Teacher feedback, sharing of practice, inclusive environment, meeting student needs.

The use of the TASS system to record for teachers' reference particular conditions of students as well as background reading and other supportive resources is excellent.

Staff are aware.

Good, but there's always room for improvement.

We are given access to plenty of info but some do not access it.

A bit hit and miss - some staff are very aware and some are not as accommodating in regards recognising the students needs.

Able to connect and integrate ASD students into mainstream school context.
Staff response to the question “Would you benefit of increased knowledge and support in implementing effective strategies for students on the Autism Spectrum.?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes responses</th>
<th>Twenty nine (29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No responses</td>
<td>Four (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Staff Responses Included:**

- Up to date research/information on this area.
- Some general strategies for students with different levels of ASD and then go into strategies that benefit specific students within our school.
- More training and/or networking on strategies in dealing with students with special requirements.
- Introduce a section on the school intranet for web-based resources, links and training.
- Further education regarding effective strategies may help a lot.
- Strategies to help with non-compliant/aggressive students.
- Keep talking, PD, feedback of successes.
- Extra knowledge is always helpful when dealing with individual differences. This is an ongoing process.
- So that I can build up my knowledge of how to support students with ASD and implement the different strategies in a variety of the areas I deal with at school.
- More knowledge and effective strategies through open discussion with other teachers, parents, support staff of what works well with these students.
- It is for me to avail myself more of the outstanding level of information made available to staff.
- Workshop/info session.
  - Student specific strategies guide/sheet where applicable.
  - I learn much from sharing of ideas, and talking with Di McR. regarding individual students. Greatest difficulty is finding the time; would be good to speak with Di and the particular aide at same time.
- Appropriate behaviour management strategies (as mentioned above).
- Strategies for Learning (particularly in respect to inclusive education policies and practices).
- Perhaps using the IEP model to design programs for gifted students in addition to those with ASD or learning differences.
- Some coaching, please.
- Less theoretical & more practical approach to dealing with our ASD students (case studies, suggested strategies, role plays etc.)
- In-services always help even if you only learn a couple of things each time.
- School Officers would appreciate additional info on the nature of disabilities and effective ways of working with them.
- In-servicing to gain knowledge; More training and PD; PD for the staff!
- Training for dealing with outbursts, assessment modification, communication with parents.
Suggestions for improvement

Re: Staff knowledge and understanding of ASD:

**Parent Responses Included:**

More understanding required by all teachers via brochures, parental material, accept that all students with ASD cover the whole spectrum and all have some form of compulsive disorder to make them all individual.

Liaison with parent, access parental knowledge, more staff training

Maybe need to learn more about the whole spectrum and not just under one umbrella.

I personally believe teachers have enough on their plates just teaching, although it would be helpful to have a good understanding of ASD if they have a child in their class.

I wouldn't expect that any school would have all of its staff fully conversant on the topic

Would suggest asking the parents of any child with special needs to write a descriptive letter about their child and his/her problems, to be circulated to all relevant staff.

Ensure children with disabilities have been able to make appointments with teachers at parent/teacher interview times. Harrison was not able to do this.

Keep student’s with Asperger in classes with teachers who are good with these kids.

Knowledge base and understanding does not always mean there are strategies put in place. There are still sceptics in our society and in every institution.

After conversations with teachers either after school or at parent/teacher meetings it is clear that most struggle to understand what impact the ASD diagnosis may have on classroom dynamics. Some class teachers would benefit from exposure to a range of strategies to engage students with ASD. One size fits all approach does not work.

On-going regular meetings re individual needs, in-service presentations and/or workshops. Support for staff in the classroom and to attend seminars on the topic.
Suggestions for improvement

Re: Staff knowledge and understanding of ASD:

**Staff Responses Included:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training for new staff.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More education on how we can provide meaningful learning experiences and promote positive social interaction with other students and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A basic list of suggestions for different types of ASD ascertained students; with a list of effective and engaging activities for these students would be a great tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a section on the school intranet for web-based resources, links and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group education regarding ASD may be helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some teachers need to make adjustments in their teaching methods to help maximise comprehension and learning ie: not going too quickly through the work and adjusting the work as needed. Certain classes also need the teacher to be firmer with ensuring the class noise level and disruptive behaviour does not become excessive. More understanding is also needed by some to better understand and know how to deal with the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the staff needs to be educated properly on how to educate these students and how to be more understanding. I think we should be made to attend PDs ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of strategies that work. Spreading the load.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher aides are very helpful as long as they don’t do work for them, but are there to assist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate classes, more staff in service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff actually need to access the information, read it and apply the strategies suggested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More in-services and staff discussions of certain students with ASD or other differing abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of B McE in homeroom group - though I do not know background of this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further training/info for staff and students re ‘autism’ would be useful. Practical strategies for staff - ideally student specific. Maybe section of IEP gone over with staff when they have a autistic student in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When reminders or further info is given in staff meetings, often that particular student is not in “your” module at the time... so further reminders in following terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More shared info, in-services on strategies to help learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More of the same. Perhaps also workshops in which teachers have the opportunity to share with others what has worked for them and things could be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However staff are increasingly under work intensification and find it difficult to devote energies on students who need patient attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A less holistic approach to learning about ASD. More case studies &amp; examples of how to deal with certain behaviours (perhaps relating back to our own students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even though we have info it is still hard to know what to do at times and we could do with more help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased feedback on effective strategies and use of resources to address the st needs - sharing of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More in-service to ALL staff to gain understanding of the ASD and the needs associated with along with strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit extreme cases to one per class if possible. More teacher aides. Better training for teaching staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1.3 Supported enrolment process

#### Parent response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Completely dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Effectiveness of current practice:

### Parent Responses Included:

- **Great process.**
  - Mrs McRoberts was excellent and gentle. For the first time we didn’t feel our child was a nuisance that had to be enrolled.
- **Very supportive.**
  - Cameron began at St. James in the final term of Year 8, after being at two other schools that year as well as being home-schooled for some time. At our enrolment interview we were very impressed by both Mrs Tuite and Mrs McRoberts and the way they talked to Cameron more than to us. He came away feeling genuinely welcome.
- **Very effective.**
  - Harrison and friends from Primary school were introduced to St James some weeks before Yr 7 finished, this practise gave Harry confidence in knowing what to expect from High school and confidence in knowing that he could travel to school on public transport.
  - Effective interview process at enrolment to discuss James’s needs. Visits to James’s Primary school
  - When Phillip was enrolled, she was visited by staff from St James and she had a couple of days when she visited St James and became familiar with the school environment and met some other staff
  - All of the enrolment process was very clear. Open days and other events assist with familiarisation of the environment.
  - Jason did not enter the school under the special education umbrella as at the time his diagnosis did not occur until mid yr 7 and the state system saw no reason to ascertain him as he was not going to attend a state high school. This however did not stop him from accessing the learning support department at St James.
- **Very positive, access to key staff was made easy.**
  - Student understanding that he can communicate with staff when a problem occurs has taken four – five years of confidence to evolve.
1.3 Supported enrolment process

Parent response

Suggestions for improvement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Responses Included:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We were surprised that it was a whole term before any mention of the IEP occurred. It would have been helpful to know that there was an interim IEP in place, as we did not realise this until the IEP meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None that I can think of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't think of any way in which this approach could be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More opportunity to observe inclusive teaching practices would have been useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to understand that all students have different requirements and changes take a long time but eventually we all have a win. Patience to read and learn any parent information given and ask as many questions no matter how they sound because every student is and will be different.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4 Orientation process / transition from primary school

Parent response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Level</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Completely dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectiveness of current practice:

Parent Responses Included:

The P/E games prior to the starting date were excellent, plus the orientation day was really great.

Needs more transition process, more open days to ASD children, awareness of timetable, etc.

Arrived in year nine.

Jordan transitioned from New Zealand and we were completely surprised, especially when he doesn't like change, how well he coped.

This worked very well; Benjamin visited the school on a couple of occasions and was made to feel that he belonged there.

Because we only "discovered" St. James late in Cameron's Year 8, I can't really comment except to say that his transition from a mixture of home-schooling and part-time school was handled very well.

Sports program in the last week of the holidays before school commenced was a great ice breaker.

As above - Effective interview process at enrolment to discuss James's needs. Visits to James's Primary school. St James orientation day to settle in.

As above. Phili was very positive on her first day. Di Riddle came up to us as she remembered Phili from her orientation at end of previous year. I found that very reassuring and it turned out to be very easy going into secondary school.

This is a difficult one as high schools are very different to primary schools. The expectation is often very high for students to adjust in a very short amount of time.

Jason was not offered a transition program as he was not officially ascertained - he coped with transportation to school with practise bus trips to and from school with his family. His orientation of the school was the same as other students.

Ok, limited on some ways by the participation of the school you are leaving.

N/A

Great
Suggestions for improvement:

Parent Responses Included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It would have been nice to have meet the teachers prior to parent teacher meetings.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More e-mails to parents prior to commencement, actively listen to concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a staff member on the lookout for each special needs student (who they met while still in Yr7) to make them feel like they have a point of reference and to make them feel special. Maybe you do that anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students could be given access to a mentor (buddy system) older student or teacher to build a trust bond from the beginning. Not to hang with continually but to check in - just to know there is someone out there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some web download documents which chart processes, expectations and possible problems and opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact at least every term for Yr 8 – 10, then at end of first and third term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

1. School Culture, Policies and Practices

1.1 Inclusive nature of school

Responses from the families of young people on the Autism Spectrum reflect that St James is very accommodating of student’s individual differences and all students are included as equal in terms of their rights, potential and access to activities and opportunities. The school is described by parents as welcoming, caring and supportive in its positive response to students with disabilities. It offers a small, diverse, multicultural environment in which students experience a sense of belonging, great mentoring and accessibility to nurturing pastoral care as well as interested and understanding teachers and office staff. The collaborative practices of active listening, understanding and following up with concerns through regular home contact and communication were listed as positive characteristics of the school processes.

Staff alluded to the fact that in general, the school community embraces diversity; students on the whole are accepting, tolerant, understanding of differences and respectful towards treating others with dignity. Students with disabilities are not made to feel different or isolated, particularly in sport where students are recognized for their talent and ability not disability. Staff respond to meeting the individual student needs in an inclusive, supportive manner in close collaboration with the Learning Support Department to ensure all students experience success and reach their full potential both in the classroom and through participation in events and activities outside the classroom. Staff acknowledge the persistence, teamwork, emphasis on relationship building and anti-bullying; and the role of the Pastoral Care structures in promoting inclusive opportunities for students on the Autism Spectrum to learn and practice social skills with their peers.

Staff frustrations and the negative aspects of promoting the inclusive nature of our school revolved around the social challenges faced by students on the Autism Spectrum, their vulnerability to ‘bullying’ and negative interactions by some of their peers, and the consistency and severity in dealing with the instigators. Concerns from two parents related to bullying and school discipline practices. Support and supervision through provision of structured activities during lunch breaks was suggested by one parent as a way of helping with social modeling and appropriate social behaviours.

The limitations in provision of adjustments to ensure quality programming, class size and classroom support, particularly in practical classes, considering the number of students requiring additional support because of ASD was noted.
1.2 Staff knowledge base and understanding of Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Observations from families conclude that most staff, particularly key staff, including the Learning Support, Guidance Officer, PC’s and Assistant Principal Pastoral, have a good knowledge base and understanding of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The flexibility and willingness of staff to learn appropriate strategies to implement was noted as very positive.

The responses from staff indicate that information on student differences is very well disseminated and they have ready access to additional information and excellent support from the Teaching Learning Support Department.

However, both parents and staff agreed that not all staff have a clear understanding of the impact that a diagnosis of ASD can have on classroom dynamics and suggest that staff would benefit from exposure to a range of strategies to more fully engage students. One parent stated that the 'one size fits all' approach does not work. Both staff and parents offered some constructive suggestions, which will be included in the recommendations of this report.

1.3 Supported enrolment process

1.4 Orientation process / transition from primary school

Feedback from the families indicates that 86% were extremely satisfied with the supported enrolment process for their young people on the Autism Spectrum. The enrolment interview was described as effective, positive, clear; two families elaborated on the extent to which they and their young people felt genuinely welcomed. One commented on the fact that the student was spoken to more than the parents and one expressed that for the first time, they didn’t feel that their child was a nuisance that had to be enrolled.

Parents also made reference to the effectiveness of the open day, orientation day and transition activities, such as staff visits to the primary school and visits by the students to St James, in building confidence and familiarizing students with the new school environment and key staff. The sports days in the last week of the holidays prior to the starting date were mentioned as great ice breakers for the students.

One parent would have found the opportunity to observe inclusive teaching practice useful and one was not fully aware of the interim IEP that was developed at the end of Year 7, indicating a more consistent approach to maintaining more effective contact prior to commencement.

Parent’s suggestions for improvements to the transitioning process will be included in the recommendations section.
Recommendations

1. School Culture, Policies and Practices

1.1 Inclusive nature of school

⇒ Continue to promote inclusive practices across the school and empower staff with the background information, knowledge and support to respond to the needs of all students.

⇒ Alert staff to the nature of the Disability Standards for Education and refer them to the TLS P Drive folders for additional information.

1.2 Staff knowledge base and understanding of Autistic Spectrum Disorder

⇒ Negotiate provision of additional staff in-service so as to increase understanding about Autistic Spectrum Disorder and the implication for classroom and playground dynamics.

⇒ Consider conducting twilight evening workshops to address more specific strategies for individual students based on information gained from parent questionnaire and IEP meetings. The updated matrix used in the IEP’s for our students on the Autism Spectrum will inform these workshops.

⇒ Alert staff to the updated information on P Drive and the training module on the Autism Training website, which is a compulsory undertaking for all school staff. Assist staff to register and complete this online learning module. (www.autismtraining.com.au)

⇒ Continue to support and encourage staff to access information on student background and IEP’s through Teacher Kiosk.

⇒ Design and implement a readily accessible resource for new staff and supply teachers, to gain a brief snapshot of the strengths and support needs of students requiring significant strategies and adjustments. This resource to be made available through the School Admin coordinator in accordance with the school confidentiality processes for respecting the student’s right for individual privacy and dignity.

⇒ In collaboration with pastoral staff and structures, consider options for whole school awareness development of disabilities and the implications for school access and participation. Consider use of vertical homerooms, peer mentoring, house or year level meeting times, assemblies, liturgies, etc. to promote increased understanding.
1.3 Supported enrolment process

⇒ Continue to provide the individualised support and collaborative approach in implementing the supported enrolment process to gather information and a thorough understanding of the needs of students requiring significant adjustments to access learning and participate in the life of the college.

⇒ Continue to maintain close communication with families after initial contact at time of enrolment / open day, IEP review meetings at the end of Year 7 and throughout the transition process.

⇒ Clarify the existence of an interim IEP designed from information gathered during the transition process.

1.4 Orientation process / transition from primary school

⇒ Initiate processes to enhance the existing transition activities and package as suggested by families.

⇒ Add a section on transition to the TLS pages on the St James website. Enlist ideas from feeder Primary schools, students and families to contribute to this resource.

⇒ Encourage families of young people with significant support requirements to write a descriptive letter to staff outlining their young persons strengths, interests and the impact of their condition on learning and social participation at school.

⇒ Consider a dignified PowerPoint presentation for staff at the beginning of the year to introduce the strengths, learning profile and support requirements of new entry students.

⇒ Enhance the existing practice of structuring a mentoring procedure for students requiring close monitoring. Allocation of a specific mentor / key person (teacher aide) for each student with significant requirements when allocating classroom support personnel. Instigate a checklist of instances requiring close mentoring and alerting to changes to regular routine; eg. sports carnival days, completing parent teacher interviews forms, advise of changes via notes in diary.
2. **Student Learning and Participation in College Life**

2.1 Provision for Individual Education Planning (IEP)

2.2 Collaborative approach and involvement of relevant stakeholders in Individual Education Planning (IEP)

2.3 Provision of adjustment for accessing learning

2.4 Provision of support staff / teacher aides in classrooms
2.1 Provision for Individual Education Planning (IEP)

Parent response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Completely dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectiveness of current practice:

Parent Responses Included:

It seemed to be very positive and supportive of Owens’ needs.

Have no problems with process.

I know there is a IEP but I haven't thought about it, but feel that Cameron's needs are being met, so it must be working.

Unsure as yet, can comment after the meeting

Good development, review and implementation of plan

The process is good - Although I probably need to be more proactive in following up each one toward the end of the year to see how we have all gone against the indicators

When shown as being necessary IEP's are implemented well. Most teachers are able to be be creative with their implementation of IEPs.

Jason did not have an IEP but we had help in choosing his subjects of study and he accessed private tutoring which was helpful in elevating his Maths results.

I have rated this an 8 only because it hasn't happened yet, but all preparatory discussion has been very positive.

Reasonable balance between accommodating individual needs and setting expectations to conform

OK
**Suggestions for improvement:**

**Parent Responses Included:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think that Benjamin was swapping his subjects because he arrived at a point where he needed to be tested and he didn't want to be tested.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IEP Meeting late Term 1 or early Term 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up specific timings for reviewing the plan and whether the goals and strategies are being/have been met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upskill teachers to be able to implement plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure all teachers understand functional significance of special needs. We have had to make contact to clarify when Josh very anxious with expectations &amp; freezes in class (taken as opposition or laziness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews more in the early part of high school and Yr 11 start the kids towards the &quot;big world&quot; especially with more work experience skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Collaborative approach and involvement of relevant stakeholders in Individual Education Planning (IEP)

Parent response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1 Completely dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectiveness of current practice:

Parent Responses Included:

The diary is excellent, and the teachers all seem to be very professional in their work.

Very appropriate.

As parents, we felt that we were included.

Seems to be working well.

Comment after meeting

Do class teachers have input?

Good process involving all key stakeholders.

Di is wonderful in involving the other stakeholders

Most stakeholders seemed happy to be part of a collaborative approach and openly listen and provide input to achieve success.

AS above - although no formal IEP we were able to access the knowledge and expertise of Jason's teachers.

Again an 8 because the process hasn't started yet, but initial discussion have been very positive.

Pastoral coordinator role particularly effective for collaborative approach. The meeting with all of Josh's subject teachers together was most constructive.

OK

Suggestions for improvement:

Parent Responses Included:

None. Not yet, OK

More of the same. Query need of counsellor for some students.
2.3 Provision of adjustment for accessing learning

Staff response

- Extremely effective: 5
- Moderately effective: 9
- Completely ineffective: 2

Effectiveness of current practice:

Staff Responses Included:

- Adjusted outcomes/assessments.
- Most teachers provide modified learning tasks for their students, which help them reach their full potential. Students generally improve during their time at our school.
- Often, students with autism are able to understand some but not all of the class work, so they just do the easy bits and aren’t required to do the hard bits. This is okay sometimes, but other times they just fill in the answers without really understanding (or thinking about) the context of the worksheet, for example. So as a result, it is not a very effective learning exercise.
- Fantastic TLS department with extensive resources; comprehensive IEPs; effective monitoring of students; staff who care.
- Accomplishing within the limited time frame is basically a challenging issue.
- Works very well when work is adjusted according to the student’s ability and appropriate strategies are used.
- Staff are quite good at modifying assessment.
- Excellent information available, support offered through TLS. Communication about student needs frequent and helpful. Opportunities to share strategies that work.
- Regular IEP meetings. Goals set for students in the different classes. All tasks/assessment is altered to suit the students.
- Modify assessment for success is good
- Fair, too much reading to do and I do not have the time to read all of them.
- Teacher aides in all classrooms is excellent
- Information readily available to staff
- Publication of IEPs as well as effective classroom practices is outstanding
- Adjustment to assessment, tailoring learning, teacher-student ratio
- This school does more than any other school in this regard
- Pretty good
- My teacher aides have been excellent in suggesting or implementing adjustments to the learning of these particular individuals
- There is plenty of help out there but some staff still do not access it
- Modification of assessment instruments for ASD students allows then to achieve attainable goals.
Suggestions for improvement:

**Staff Responses Included:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff awareness of students needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some teachers may be unaware of what strategies are best for individual students and also how we design student specific modifies tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the level of class work is beyond some students in the class, sometimes they need very simplified activities which are on the same topic as what the rest of the class is doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes that are too large and without a teacher aide make it difficult to implement individual strategies for these ASD students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in updated technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More financial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All teachers need to be informed of the Task Adjustment Sheets to be able to plan adjustments accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think this could be regulated more and checked up on through the support staff and HOD. Although it may be a great deal of work, I think if you get a new class list with one of these kids on it then perhaps we could receive a handout out with the types of things we should be doing or types of assessment changes we need to be making. I understand we have the IEPs but sometimes there isn't enough time to access these files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe an accessible assessment bank with ideas of how to modify assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take one group of the same issue and teach the whole staff strategies for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use them effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More whole staff in-services and staff discussions of certain students with ASD or other differing abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep up the good work. Much appreciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to encourage teacher aides to assist proactively in classroom adjustments &amp; strategies for these students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep on everyone's back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased staff awareness and availability of resources to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer monitoring by TLS dept to ensure consistency across subject areas/staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 Provision of adjustment for accessing learning

Parent response

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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectiveness of current practice:

Parent Responses Included:

Reports are written purely on performance. Very positive.

Continue with current technology aids in the classroom.

Jordan’s maths has improved immensely based on the teaching methods and adjustments the school has made.

I think that every effort was made by the school staff to accommodate Benjamin’s learning needs.

In latter years, this has been very good. We particularly appreciate the flexibility that has been shown over exam times. Letting Cameron have longer to do his exams has reduced his previously high stress load and taken into account that, although he has trouble organizing himself and works very slowly, he needs to have the chance to show what he can do.

Not sure of these practices

Effective Unit to focus of special needs, provision of teacher aid as required, modification of program as required, follow-up on any issues as required.

In English and maths particularly, Phil has had adjustment of material learnt. It has been good as she has felt she has progressed. The teachers Aides have been a great asset.

Most staff have shown they have a clear understanding of expectations to ensure a win win situation for all.

Jason was able to access a modified language class through to year 12 - he was able to do industry placement which was very successful and was able to do a more practical based curriculum ie outdoor education and ICT.

I think that for the most part accessing learning has been made accessible to Connor through a range of staff adjustments to process and assessment.

Staff willingness to be pragmatic in this area has been very helpful. See above.

OK
Suggestions for improvement:

**Parent Responses Included:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More teacher aide time to check on organisation of child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need to not underestimate child's ability and push for more results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent and Di meet with or individual teachers initiate email contact early in term/semester, so there is a line of dialogue open in which parent can explain child's difficulties in learning, and teacher can explain what is to be achieved in term as well as assignments etc. I find it hard to find out from Phil what she has to do for assessment sometimes. Parent/Teacher night is great but too late for first term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This could be greatly improved (in the case of Connor at least) if the objectives and content of classes and homework was written up or accessible to parents more easily. As some homework and activities are reported to us (parents) verbally by Connor they are quite unreliable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perhaps class plans and homework could be put on the web by staff also we can follow them from home. This may be too time intensive, I don't know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even more consideration of the individual's needs where ASD is accompanied by other conditions. This also relates to assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More support required for Yr 12 towards getting employment and helping the student understand the importance of work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4 Provision of support staff / teacher aides in classrooms

Staff response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely effective</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely ineffective</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectiveness of current practice:

Staff Responses Included:

- Some teacher aides know students extremely well and work very effectively with them.
- Most classes with students with ASD have a teacher aide/learning support to assist the classroom teacher and student.
- Well shared amongst departments and classes.
- Having the individual attention of teacher aides for students with autism makes it much more feasible to adjust/tailor activities to the capabilities of particular students.
- Teacher aides are distributed effectively.
- Very effective to catch up with the main stream class.
- The students have the support they need to help them understand and complete as much of the work as possible. Aides can also inform the teachers who are unaware of a student's particular need.
- We have a great deal of teacher aide help here - which is great.
- Aides are well trained and supported. Seen as positive and vital members of the team.
- There is amazing support in the school through information, teacher aides, an incredibly hard working, knowledgeable leader in TLS (who looks out for the dignity of all students) and support from College Leadership.
- The aides who work regularly with a student really get to know them.
- Fair, but one student takes all the time of the aide and others need their help.
- Excellent think they are great.
- Support staff can track certain students well.
- One-on-one learning practices seems most effective from my limited experience.
- The support provided by most aides is excellent.
- Over time the teacher aides develop experience and develop a variety of strategies to allow students to achieve success.
- Support staff are friendly, helpful and creative in the ways they support students and teachers. They have developed strong relationships with the students and use this in assisting in the classroom. Very encouraging.
- Good.
- Would be lost without them.
- Some TA staff are magnificent-really knowledgeable and helpful-others not so.
- Excellent help in class with all range of learning difficulties.
**Suggestions for improvement:**

**Staff Responses Included:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More training for support staff/teacher aides on impacts of disabilities in the classroom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More education provided to teacher aides/learning support staff on how they can best work with the classroom teacher to see improvement in these students' work and social capabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think in the cases of many students, it would be beneficial to have lots more sessions like what happens on Wednesday mornings, with reading. I do completely agree that being in the classroom is great for social interaction, and this shouldn't be sacrificed lightly, but basic academic skills like reading, writing and spelling and maths are also really important for life in general (as are social skills), and when students with different academic capabilities have the majority of their learning opportunities in a classroom where the work is really difficult for them, they often don't learn very effectively. So I think there should be at least a small amount of time every single day, instead of just once a week on Wednesday mornings, when they get some individual assistance with reading/writing/spelling/maths etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, they are doing a great job ;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual care and communication both in the classroom and outside the classroom may improve the consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some classes do need more then one aide. Aides can undergo professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The times when teacher aides are not present due to illness or Wednesdays can really be a struggle. I think staff who are support staff in other areas (eg. sport or liaison officers) are not the best aides to have because they will often be absent for whatever reason. This makes it really hard in the classroom because you don't have a constant help and the aide is in and out all the time. This change can be unsettling for someone on the spectrum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must assist student to do OWN work, not do work for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should supply more money so that we can employ them for more hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More of an open discussion/communication and relationship between staff and support staff especially in regards to students with ASD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would help if same aides who work with students in prac classes could follow through with assignments...often a different aide on Wednesdays. Also important for aides to have good knowledge of skills required in kitchen as well as solid understanding of what is required by teacher. It is very difficult when this is not the case, and there are up to four students requiring support per class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific in-services on ASD, sharing information, peer mentor aides are mentored by an experienced aide. Shadowing etc. better teacher/ aide dialogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More of same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There's always room for more. Seniors are vulnerable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay them more money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe there needs to be a probationary period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Teacher aides - more money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration with the amount of resources available in the College against the number of students with needs, therefore, students are being let down and staff being frustrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear role description for Teacher aides. They are not teacher helpers/assistants or teachers themselves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Student Learning and Participation in College Life**

2.1 **Provision for Individual Education Planning (IEP)**

On the whole, parent feedback in relation to the design and implementation of IEP was positive. Some feedback questioned the timing of the meetings and the necessity for further up-skilling of teachers.

2.2 **Collaborative approach and involvement of relevant stakeholders in Individual Education Planning (IEP)**

According to the parent responses, the current collaborative approach to planning is effective. The role of the Pastoral Coordinator and School Counsellor was acknowledged as a positive inclusion in the planning process.

2.3 **Provision of adjustment for accessing learning**

Responses from both parents and staff acknowledge that there are processes in place to assist staff in providing adjustments to enable students to access learning. The extensive resources, comprehensive IEP’s, information, communication and support provided through the Teaching Learning Support Department is regarded as excellent, although some staff admit it is challenging to find the time to read and implement everything.

Provision of teacher aides in the classrooms to assist with task adjustments and close monitoring of students contributes to the effectiveness of our current practices, however staff do have concerns about implementing individual strategies for students with ASD in larger classes without the support of a teacher aide.

Increased staff awareness on assessment modification, additional financial support and investment in updated technology are listed by staff as suggestions for improvement.

Parents are appreciative of the flexibility, particularly in relation to additional time in exams, use of technology and adjustment of curriculum content and teaching methods.

Requests for additional, easy parent access to term outlines, class plans, homework and assessment tasks would greatly improve communication; due to short-term memory difficulties, some students are not reliable sources for relaying this information. One
parent also requested the need not to underestimate the young person's ability and to push for more results.

2.4 Provision of support staff / teacher aides in classrooms

Staff provided positive feedback on the effectiveness of classroom support provided by teacher aides. The aides are perceived as positive and vital members of the team. They are well trained and supported in their role to be friendly, helpful and creative in encouraging students to achieve success. The strong relationships that are developed through regular one-on-one work and close monitoring is based on a thorough knowledge and understanding of individual student need. Staff also commented on the number of teacher aides and the fact that they are distributed effectively across departments and classes.

Staff comments reflect a frustration with resourcing as the number of students requiring significant support increases. Apart from increasing the quantity and pay for teacher aides, suggestions for improvement include more specific in-service and closer collaboration with staff on specific strategies for students on the Autism Spectrum. One staff member had concerns that the teacher aides role is one of support; they must not do the work for the students.

Logistical concerns relating to allocation to practical classes and replacement in instances of illness and on Wednesdays will be followed up in the recommendations section of this report.
Recommendations

2. Student Learning and Participation in College Life

2.1 Provision for Individual Education Planning (IEP)

2.2 Collaborative approach and involvement of relevant stakeholders in Individual Education Planning (IEP)

⇒ Continue to implement the current process for IEP reviews, which are already well planned to coincide with other timeframes within the school year.

⇒ Clarify the timeframe of IEP reviews in a formal welcoming letter to families at the beginning of the year and alert to the support mechanisms and process of arranging case management meetings in collaboration with pastoral staff if urgent issues arise.

⇒ Maintain the close home/school communication and close monitoring of all students.

2.3 Provision of adjustment for accessing learning

⇒ Update TLS P Drive folder on resources to support staff with curriculum differentiation.

⇒ Design and make a readily accessible assessment bank of exemplars of negotiated task adjustments for modules across the curriculum.

⇒ Continue to keep abreast and monitor the use of assistive technology in the classrooms. Follow up the assurance of the trolley of NeoSmarts to be allocated out of the 2010 technology budget. Arrange for a staff demonstration by Spectrronics on the effective use of this resource. Ensure inclusion of teacher aides in this training opportunity.

⇒ Refine the mode of parent communication for keeping them informed of term planners, assessment tasks etc. Investigate and keep updated with plans for student access of school intranet at home.

2.4 Provision of support staff / teacher aides in classrooms

⇒ Ongoing reflection on the most effective use of support staff to address student need, in particular for practical classes and on a Wednesday.

⇒ Investigate the reality of requesting replacement teacher aides in instances of sickness as is presently organised for prolonged absence by T aides.
3. Supportive Environment and Networks

3.1 Supportive environment to promote social interactions, friendships, resilience and address bullying issues

3.2 Positive individual or family support network in school community
3.1 Supportive environment to promote social interactions, friendships, resilience and address bullying issues

Staff response

| Extremely effective | 6
|---------------------|---
| Moderately effective| 12
| Completely ineffective | 0

Effectiveness of current practice:

Staff Responses Include:

Inclusive school. TLS department. PC's and APP

As the school encourages inclusive attitudes and behaviour we do a great deal to promote social interaction and friendships and to prevent bullying.

Does not appear to be much bullying associated with student differences.

Students are given opportunities to socialise outside the classroom through various events, such as camp, cultural night and sporting activities. Bullying is actively monitored and effectively dealt with.

Very positive.

Some teachers positively support these issues.

Spoke of this before

Clear statements about inclusiveness, tolerance and anti-bullying. Caring community culture. Opportunities for lots of 'incidental' social teaching and learning.

There is high monitoring of the behaviour of all students, all issues are addressed quickly. Students are always given tips and support for managing and improving social interaction.

Continual need to encourage all students to accept each other despite their differences.

They have someone to talk to.

PC's and Homeroom teachers seem to monitor the process and with the help of the counsellors we seem to stay on top of any issues

Staff aware of students and can set up friendship/group pairing to help with their socialising into the school

'Other' students seem largely, though not entirely tolerant of ASD students, some seek refuge in library in almost all breaks

I think this is handled very well in the current pastoral system. House co-ordinators liaise well with home room teachers as well as TLS, and families.

Students have the ability to tackle issues such as bullying themselves. Great coping mechanisms, autonomy among individuals, the use of humour

A strong Pastoral Care structure is in place from the AP Pastoral down to the Homeroom teacher

As above
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ok</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works for some, not for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantastic—we may not be perfect but we try really hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Monday — organised house activities eg. tug of war, World Cup soccer, volleyball, WWI, chess, scrabble provide an opportunity for structured activities for relationship and friendship building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be more consequences and students need to more accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When issues are dealt with they are usually dealt with very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restorative meetings and counselling to assess behaviours that require addressing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Supportive environment to promote social interactions, friendships, resilience and address bullying issues

Parent response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Moderately satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Completely dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectiveness of current practice:

Parent Responses Included:

I think the current practice provides this, much of Owen's issues he brings upon himself, I'm not sure that more activities at lunch times etc, would prevent his reactionary manner.

Library is fantastic, counselling good.

Completely satisfied.

All issues have been addressed promptly and immediately.

I feel that the school has a very solid policy on "Bullying" however I think that it would be incredible to police it effectively 100% of the time.

This is mostly good. Cameron was bullied a bit in the lower grades but we do realise that bullying is impossible to control completely. I suspect Year 9 is the most difficult, in this regard, in any school and I think St. James manages bullying better than most schools. Cameron doesn't seem to make close friends but this is no one's fault and not for lack of a supportive environment.

Unaware of policies in this area.

Good pastoral care program and teacher awareness of the children. Currently part of IEP to look at ways to promote social interactions and friendships for James. Where bullying issues have arisen, they have been addressed and appropriate strategies put in place to resolve.

we have had great support from the school with respect to Phil's social issues. She has had great support from Brian over the years. I like the way that even Phil is told how she is a leader in year 12.

There are a group of very committed staff that work hard to ensure these above issues are tended to in a very supportive way.

Jason had difficulty building a friendship base initially and it took until the middle of yr 9 before he had a small core group of friends. Behaviour management processes were well implemented and follow up was good.

Friendships, resilience and bullying are very well supported in the school environment. Good processes and well implemented.

The pro-active Pastoral Care Coordinator role helpful in this area.

OK
## Suggestions for improvement:

### Parent Responses Included:

Perhaps greater supervision at break times, to observe antecedents of issues, particular activities for house groups etc.

**Peer buddy for train**

It would be great to have a social interaction program at the school especially geared for teenagers. His butting in, loud volume, need to be in control of the conversation as well as his interests can turn other peers of him. He does not realise the consequence of these behaviours but does have the desire to have friends.

I felt that the social interactions and friendships were essentially left to the students to develop. I don't feel that Benjamin came away from the school with a "real" sense of how to deal with the unpleasantness of life.

Continue the buddy system from year 8 (in some form) for longer for special needs students. Even if it is with peers from same year in year 9.

**Use of common language with clear, fair and equitable expectations for all students.**

Again, scaffold for social interaction in the playground would be excellent. Some structured programs would be ideal to help develop positive social contact.

Perhaps a mentoring system may help overcome the "Aspie" reluctance to extend socially. "Social curriculum" stories and role-play may also assist. Query trained counsellor involvement.

I feel getting the kids fully involved in as many school functions to gain confidence with communication and interaction skills in an environment that they feel comfortable in as being in a 'safe zone' helps become more interactive.
Suggestions for improvement:

Staff response

Staff Responses Included:

Peer mentoring.
Educating the students on ASD and creating awareness and understanding may help to prevent bullying of these students.

Modelling effective communication instead of just telling the student what is not acceptable/appropriate.
Individual care and communication with interest in their own world may offer more opportunities for positive social interactions.
Some teachers do not actively support these issues.

Bullying needs to be always kept on top of.

New students need to know there is a no tolerance to singling out anyone who is different.
Equip them with assertive statements when they feel bullied.

Playground duty staff to be more conscience of these particular students to monitor their socialising in the school

Tracking student behaviours of people who bully and talk with students about people with learning difference

Additional workshops for staff in behaviour management processes including restorative justice practices. Teachers need to be empowered more to handle problems and issues at the local level rather than off-loading them as a first resort down to the AP Pastoral

Zero tolerance of bullies and regular monitoring of this

I think this is a big area that needs attention
Bullying seems to occur mainly (but not exclusively) in the junior years. Offenders should be dealt with harshly!

More informal time with students- time in yard

Inconsistency with approach, procedures and processes. Tackle the problem when it's small before it grows and gets time consuming.

Closer inclusion of homeroom teacher/PC with TLS and AP-Pastoral
3.2 Positive individual or family support network in school community

Staff Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderately effective</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely ineffective</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectiveness of current practice:

**Staff Responses Included:**

- Regular contact/meetings.
  - Teachers and learning support work closely with the parents to provide support, encouragement and meaningful learning experiences in and out of school.

- Diary communications with family works well; teachers and support staff are always keen to discuss students with family. Everyone is open and honest.

- More active participation in school community may improve in many ways.

- Some staff provide positive support.

- Very good process with pastoral care system

- Communication with parents good. Culture of contact and talk. Understanding of support structures and where to go for help.

- The TLS department and management have strong links with families with open communication two ways. Students are exposed to many positive activities and given a lot of recognition and praise.

- Encourage families to be involved in school activities. IEP meeting etc to show progress.

- Fair, hard to comment

- Some families are excellent and we are in constant communication via email phone calls or meetings

- IEP meetings

- Support provided at all levels

- Again think this is very effective via house system and pastoral system with TLS.

- Parents seem to be very happy with what is being done. Frequent meetings with parents in this regard are very helpful.

- Good

- Seems to be a very positive family involvement

- Family support groups in the suburbs are very important.

- Parents who volunteer and help in the tuckshop are always valued for their contribution. Mothers of young people with disabilities give up their time in appreciation of the work the school does for their young people.

- The friendly open atmosphere seem by visitors, parents and students when entering the College Office highlights the warmth and caring approach that the College provides.

- Contact with parents over phone via email or face to face at school functions.
3.2 Positive individual or family support network in school community

Parent response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Description</th>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Completely dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectiveness of current practice:

Parent Responses Included:

I feel that the network is very much a partnership, I have felt supported by all staff concerned; his home room teacher, house coordinator, admin, STIE and office staff.

Encourage all families, receptionist at office very polite and courteous, often a reflection on school

The school has always been there for us should we need support.

As parents we've always felt that the school staff has been very supportive, however

There is a sense of support for Cameron by the wider school community, including the office, library and counselling staff etc.

I am aware of some support but unsure how this works.

Very positive and open support network.

As a family, and Phil as an individual feel very well supported by the school community. Phil has had encouragement from many staff in many areas - even though she can be very difficult to get to do things

There again are a group of staff that offer a high standard of support for both the student and their family.

We were active members of the P & F whilst Jason attended school but did not meet other families of students with special needs.

Connor is very well supported by staff. They go above and beyond to help him make good choices and achieve his academic and social goals.

Particularly excellent work (that I know of) by Sam Adams and Mark Holmes in guiding transition from playground to classroom.

As a family we feel we have received support through our interactions with staff and certainly feel comfortable with approaching staff to assist with any issues. Attendance at our first fundraiser since coming to St James revealed a generally positive "vibe" from students, parents and staff who attended.

OK
3.2 Positive individual or family support network in school community

Suggestions for improvement:

Staff Response Included:

Staff awareness of student’s disabilities.
For parents or carers to discuss strategies that work well with their child and discuss what they can be doing at home to assist with the learning occurring at school.
Communicating with parents on a more constant level would / may provide further support for these students in the classroom. Need to provide a more direct and constant way of staying in touch with parents (other than diaries) so that the best (most effective) possible learning outcomes can be achieved.
Providing more opportunities for the parents to talk with school staff will help parents to manage the students better.

Continue to encourage families to be the primary educator
More communication about home issues would help.

More meetings and mandatory for both parents and teachers teaching students with differing abilities to attend meeting. Strategies need to be shared

It appears to have a lot of liaising with home
I would like to see more input from parents passed onto to staff in regards to the positives and negatives so that strategies can be improved
Better background to family situation at home.

Suggestions for improvement:

Parent Responses Included:

As Josh’s diagnosis isn’t profound, needs to be more reminders to staff of problems he is facing.
despite the number of events that we attended, I don’t think that in the five years, I was approached or introduced to another parent.

On line information line
Information is not often forthcoming and promises of communication are not met. Would be great to see an improvement in communication.

Giving key staff like Di McRoberts, Sam Adams and Mark Holmes to share strategy and approaches to various situations.
Introduce staff to a more forensic approach to identifying the trigger for inappropriate behaviour.
Parents and teachers have to accept and be prepared for a ‘hard long road’, many years of devotion and being ‘pushy’ to get help needed by your child
3. Supportive Environment and Networks

3.1 Supportive environment to promote social interactions, friendships, resilience and address bullying issues

Responses from both staff and parents reflect on the proactive nature of the pastoral structures in effectively implementing and monitoring supportive processes to address social difficulties and instances of bullying towards students on the Autism Spectrum.

In the caring community culture, clear statements about inclusivity, tolerance and ‘anti-bullying’ are evident and there is a strong commitment to promoting social interaction and friendship building. Opportunities for students to socialise and become involved in community events are provided; e.g. camps, cultural night, sporting activities and organized house activities every Monday lunch time, lunch time access to computers and the use of the library as a refuge if desired. Participation in these activities is encouraged as a natural context for ‘incidental’ social teaching in communication and interaction skills, as well as building confidence.

The focus of intervention through the pastoral structures is empowerment with skills and coping strategies. Instances of inappropriate interactions are continually debriefed and more socially appropriate responses put in place to resolve issues. However some staff do consider that often the approach, procedures and processes are inconsistent or not tackled early enough. One parent requested a common language with clear, fair and equitable expectations for all students.

In addressing bullying issues, which is cited as being more prevalent in the junior years, staff suggestions include; complete ‘zero’ tolerance, more regular monitoring and more harsh consequences. Offenders, particularly newly enrolled students, need to be made aware that there is no tolerance to singling out anyone who is different and greater education on creating an awareness and understanding of the Autism Spectrum amongst all students may contribute to the prevention of bullying.

Other suggested proactive strategies in addressing the social issues of students on the Autism Spectrum include; peer mentoring, modeling of effective communication/interaction rather than just saying ‘No! – Inappropriate’, equipping students with assertive statements, increased staff presence and awareness of the value of informal time and positive interaction in the yard/playground duty to contribute to student resilience.
latter suggestion correlates well with the suggestion of empowering teachers with the strategies to handle problems and issues at the local level, through participation in workshops in behaviour management processes such as restorative justice practices.

3.2 Positive individual or family support network in school community

Parent responses reflect on very supportive, positive partnerships with all staff including the wider school community; office staff, library and counseling services. The friendly, polite, courteous reception afforded visitors, parents and students when they first enter the office highlights the warmth and caring approach of the College. Parents who volunteer in the tuck shop, P&F feel valued for their contribution; and it was noted that often the families of young people with disabilities are very active in these areas in appreciation of the work and sense of support provided to their young person. The family support groups in the suburbs were also recognized as a valuable network for families.

Staff responses reflect on the effectiveness of the open, honest communication and strong links maintained with families through TLS and pastoral processes including the diary system. However suggestions from a few staff or more mandatory meetings, closer collaboration and sharing of input and successful strategies from parents would strengthen the network and lead to more improved outcomes for students.

Families also indicated the importance of key staff sharing strategies and approaches to various situations.

One parent alluded to an improvement in communication as often promises of communication and information is not always forthcoming. Another constructive suggestion for access to an on-line information source will be reflected in the recommendations to improve our practices in this area of support.
3. Supportive Environment and Networks

3.1 Supportive environment to promote social interactions, friendships, resilience and address bullying issues

⇒ Pastoral input and consideration of parent and staff suggestions and concerns relating to bullying, positive behaviour support processes and school discipline.

⇒ Consider initiating a more sustainable approach to peer mentoring through the vertical homeroom structures.

⇒ Consider options for the more structured mentoring, modeling of appropriate communication and social interaction opportunities during recess breaks.

⇒ Staff in-service to incorporate positive behaviour support strategies eg. restorative justice practices, a more forensic approach to identifying antecedents in instances of behavioural outbursts.

3.2 Positive individual or family support network in school community

⇒ Ongoing commitment to enhance existing collaborative sharing of relevant information and communication between home and school.

⇒ Investigate the options for more effective use of electronic and online communication tools to keep communication channels open and more frequent.