



# Specialised Learning Programs

## Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

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### **What is a Specialised Learning Program?**

SLPs are designed to provide individualised, \*neurodiversity-affirming support to \*\*autistic students. They focus on fostering academic growth, social-emotional development, and overall well-being, by recognising and valuing each student's unique strengths and challenges. Through personalised program design and delivery, SLPs offer individualised learning experiences designed to suit each students' personal strengths and challenges within the school environment.

### **Is it an education support centre/education support unit, or a school for autistic students?**

SLPs are not separate schools or units. They are integrated, autism-specific programs within existing mainstream public schools, offering support alongside access to general education classrooms. Students within the program have access to a homeroom staffed by educators, including a program coordinator, teacher and education assistants. These staff offer support within the homeroom and provide support school-wide to teachers of autistic students in general classrooms.

### **Will my child still be a part of the school community and general learning activities and environments?**

Yes, absolutely! Students who access the SLP are valued members of the school community and participate in learning in accordance with each student's individual program. The SLP is designed to support student participation at a whole-school level, and is intended to facilitate participation, not curtail student access.



## **What does my child learn and do as a student enrolled in an SLP?**

Students enrolled in the SLP access the WA curriculum like any student enrolled in the school, however, have access to additional support and personalised learning experiences, based on their unique strengths and challenges. They may also participate in targeted programs to develop social-emotional skills, communication, self-advocacy and other areas identified as support priorities. The decisions around areas targeted within the SLP are decided in consultation with families/carers and professionals and focus on each student's unique profile.

## **Do students transition out of or leave the SLP? Will they continue in an SLP in high school if they enrol during primary school?**

Fostering academic growth, social and emotional development and overall wellbeing to support participation, is the goal. Transitioning out of the program is the aim and is considered collaboratively involving agreement around timing, and supported through a transition process. There is no deadline for program exit, however, the SLP is not designed to be an alternative placement for the entirety of a young persons educational journey.

## **When my child is in a generalist classroom, will they still receive support?**

Yes, support continues when students are in general education classrooms. The SLP team collaborates with classroom teachers to ensure consistent strategies and accommodations and offers support to students across all learning environments.

## **What involvement will I have in my child's program development and SLP experience?**

Parents/caregivers are involved in their child's SLP journey at all stages and are considered valued partners in the program. SLP staff understand and value the importance of relationships between schools and families and recognise that holistic collaboration with a child's family and professional therapy team is the best way to achieve positive outcomes for a child.



### **What is the process for enrolling in an SLP?**

Contact the SLP school directly to express your interest. They will guide you through the application process, which includes assessments and consultations to determine eligibility and suitability. There may be a waitlist, however, if the SLP that you are interested in is at capacity, this will be discussed with you at the early stages of your enquiry.

### **Can I enrol in an SLP if the program school is out of my catchment area?**

Yes, students can enrol in SLPs outside their local intake area. Contact the SLP school directly to express your interest.

### **Is my child eligible for an SLP?**

Students with a formal diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) without an accompanying intellectual disability are eligible.

### **I want my child to be accepted into an SLP and they are eligible. Is the SLP suitable for my child?**

The suitability of the SLP for your child will be determined by a panel. The panel gather assessment data and observe your child within their current education setting. Information following discussions with you and your child are submitted to the panel.

### **Can students with challenging or complex behaviour enrol in an SLP?**

SLPs are designed to be individualised, flexible and responsive to the complex variety of engagement \*\*\*barriers experienced by autistic students. Complex or challenging behaviour is not an impediment to eligibility and suitability for an SLP program.



## **If the SLP is not able to offer a place to my child, what options do I have?**

The Department is committed to providing quality education to every student to help them achieve their potential and to support teaching and learning excellence in every classroom.

All public schools have a strong commitment to helping every student to be successful and have access to a range of services and resources to help them achieve this.

*\*The Department acknowledges that language varies amongst the autistic community. In our published materials and other work we use the term 'autistic person', 'person with autism' or 'person on the autism spectrum' recognising that there is no one way that suits all people.*

*\*\*Neurodiversity-affirming means: 'Practices that seek to affirm the child's neurodivergent identity. In the context of autism, this term refers to providing supports that embrace each child's unique understanding of other people and the world around them, without seeking to 'cure' autism.' (CRC, 2022)*

*\*\*\*Barriers aligns to the social model of disability, and reflects the impact of external social and environmental factors on autistic students.*