Every student is entitled to attend a NSW public school. Cowan Public School is a small and caring school community with teachers and staff who are proud to provide support to children with a range of special learning needs. As an inclusive school community we support all students and their families, and encourage all members of the community to accept and indeed celebrate the unique abilities and differences amongst us. We encourage parents and carers to teach their children tolerance and kindness towards others and to support the school staff in the effort to provide the best possible learning environment for all students.

If a child has a disability (diagnosed or not) or has special learning needs, they will be supported within the regular classroom via the Learning Support Team (LST). Students experiencing difficulties in learning in regular classes, regardless of the cause, are supported by their regular class teacher in collaboration with the team, with options for additional support as required. This may include support for students with significant learning difficulties, mild intellectual disabilities, physical and sensory disabilities, language disorders, social skills and communication challenges and behaviour needs.

Withdrawal from the classroom is not usually the primary mode of support, as class teachers make reasonable adjustments within the class program to cater for all students in the class. Learning and Support Teacher (L&ST) and/or School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) time is prioritised by the Learning Support Team, and the mode of support these resources provide is varied according to these priorities. Students may, at times, work in small groups and/or individually with their teacher, L&ST or SLSO, as part of an individualised learning program. Intensive supports may be implemented to support students with more significant difficulties. This may include short periods of instruction away from the regular class, if this is deemed to be the most effective and dignified means to assist the child’s learning. Withdrawal for individual assessments (e.g. for reading levels) are conducted by the teacher or L&ST from time to time, as part of the regular program.

Students do not need a formal disability diagnosis to access support through Learning and Support Team resources, including students with autism spectrum disorders or mental health disorders who have lower level needs. A formal diagnosis (where applicable) from a paediatrician and/or assessments from other professional therapists can provide valuable information about a student to assist the teachers in providing appropriate support. Teachers may, at times, make suggestions to parents to seek additional professional assessment and/or therapy. Teachers and school staff are not able to ‘diagnose’ specific disabilities but may alert parents or carers to difficulties a child may be experiencing in the
classroom or playground. Professional services such as those accessed via Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, etc., can provide intensive, individual therapy for students with particular difficulties and needs beyond the scope of the regular classroom.

Parents or carers of a child with a confirmed disability should advise the school of their child’s needs and provide further documentation so that additional support services may be accessed if applicable, and so that the school may arrange suitable resources and prepare staff to support the student at school.

Additional integration funding support is usually only available to the school when a student has a diagnosis of disability or disorder requiring higher levels of support. Short-term funding may be available to the school for students with moderate to severe behaviour needs or to provide transition support for students with a disability. Parents/Carers should approach the school if they require further information to access this support.

Learning and Support funds are included in an allocation to the school by the Department of Education, and are directed to support initiatives prioritised by the Learning and Support Team. Parents should be aware that their child’s needs will be addressed by the class teacher, who will seek additional support if their assessment and/or observation of the student indicates that they are not making satisfactory progress. Teachers will discuss their concerns with the parent/carer prior to making a formal referral to the Learning and Support Team.

When a parent/carer has concerns about their child’s progress or learning needs, they should first make an appointment to discuss these issues with the class teacher to gain information about class-based support, and to determine ways to support the child’s learning at home. Parents/carers may initiate a referral to the School Counsellor via the Learning and Support Team if they have specific concerns about their child’s emotional/psychological needs or when there are particular issues at home that may benefit from counsellor support. Parents/carers are also welcome to make an appointment with the Learning and Support Teacher.

Cowan Public School currently has an allocation of one day per week for a Learning and Support Teacher, and a half day per fortnight for a School Counsellor. Parental/carer permission is required before a student has contact with the school counsellor, and parents will be advised in writing prior to a student being formally referred to the LST.

Counsellor and Learning Support files relating to specific children and their reports are stored securely and are treated as confidential.