

School open after fraud claims

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A CAMPUS of Australia's premier indigenous school yesterday reopened its doors to boarders after closing last year amid financial strife, scandal and fraud allegations.

Specialist fraud police are finishing an investigation into claims Djarragun College , at Gordonvale, south of Cairns, wrongly claimed more than \$3 million in government funding for 150 ``phantom" students over three years.

Most classes and all boarding at the school's second campus, Wangetti, south of Port Douglas, were suspended last June as the college battled to stay afloat financially.

Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson, director of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, is in the process of taking over Djarragun and has overhauled its administration and curriculum.

He has also secured private funding to pay off the school's substantial debts.

Mr Pearson's appointed principal, veteran educator Don Anderson, yesterday told The Australian the school was looking forward to a more positive year.

``We're back in business and we've got a product we're proud of," Mr Anderson said.

The former principal of the school, Jean Illingworth, was stood down when the fraud allegations were made public in March last year.

She is still employed by the college and has always denied any wrongdoing.