

Every student succeeding

State Schools Strategy 2014–2018



Independent Public Schools

Driving local decision-making and innovation

2016 Prospectus



Director-General's foreword

The Independent Public Schools initiative provides us with an exciting opportunity to increase empowerment in decision-making and remove barriers to maximise student learning outcomes.

As a department we recognise that the best decision making often occurs at a local level through direct response to local community needs and aspirations.

By using local expertise to respond to local community needs, Independent Public Schools are able to embrace innovation, and make the most of opportunities to collaborate. This includes increased agency to work in new ways with local businesses, industry and other community organisations.

In Queensland, the flexibility offered to Independent Public Schools is not about principals and schools working in isolation. It is about schools building their capacity to drive their own school improvement journey by working with, contributing to and leveraging off available central, regional and collegial support as needed.

It is about enabling school leaders to make decisions that will impact on teaching and learning while the department devotes resources to build capacity and capability, and provides an authorising environment built upon collaboration and shared responsibility.

All Independent Public Schools remain part of the strong state system. They have a responsibility to work within the system to support growth, and share learnings and practices to build collective capacity.

I look forward to working together to develop autonomous and innovative practices that will improve outcomes for our students across the state.

Dr Jim Watterston

Director-General

Department of Education and Training



Looking to the future

The implementation of the Independent Public Schools initiative has been closely monitored since its inception in 2013.

A rolling evaluation is being undertaken and will be completed by December 2016.

A short term independent evaluation was also commissioned in June 2015 to inform the continued roll out of the Independent Public Schools initiative.

Findings of this evaluation are currently being considered. Decisions from this evaluation may impact on the conditions under which all Independent Public Schools operate in the future.



Maximising possibilities

The Independent Public Schools initiative empowers school principals in conjunction with staff, parents and the broader community to make important decisions regarding their school and respond directly to local needs and aspirations.

It is designed to offer schools the freedom to be responsive and open to the broader range of possibilities their communities can offer. It also expands the opportunities for schools to collaborate and innovate in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for their students and local communities.

Since 2013, 130 schools have commenced as Independent Public Schools. In 2016, additional schools will have the opportunity to become Independent Public Schools and embrace additional autonomy to enable:

- increased innovation
- stronger partnerships with industry and the community
- further tailoring of local school programs.





Enhanced local governance

All Independent Public Schools are required to establish a school council.

School councils enable greater involvement of the school community and other stakeholders, such as industry, in setting the strategic direction for the school.

School councils approve and monitor the school's strategic direction, further strengthening collaborative local decision-making.

Role of the school council

The council must perform its role in accordance with legislation and in a way that achieves the best learning outcomes for the school's students.

The school council:

- monitors the school's strategic direction
- approves plans and policies and other strategic school documents including the annual estimate of revenue and expenditure
- monitors the implementation of the plans, policies and other strategic documents
- advises the school principal about strategic matters.



Advancing innovation

Greater autonomy enables Independent Public Schools to find exciting new ways to do business. This enhanced innovation drives improved outcomes for Queensland's students.

Opportunities for innovation

Independent Public Schools benefit from:

- a direct line of communication with the Director-General and other senior executives who help prioritise innovation by paving a smooth path through departmental processes
- the opportunity to recruit staff and to build a team that is fit-for-purpose to drive innovation
- more autonomy to manage and use infrastructure, financial resources and human resources
- opportunities to work in new ways with local businesses, industry and other community organisations
- an option to pursue creative models of sponsorship, industry partnerships and infrastructure partnerships
- increased flexibility to shape curriculum offerings that suit the needs of their students e.g. International Baccalaureate programs, extracurricular programs, gateway programs and centres of excellence
- freedom to shape and deliver innovative educational practices that maximise outcomes for students.

Independent Public Schools use their additional autonomy to enable them to better respond to the unique potential of their students and community.



Locally tailored workforce

Independent Public Schools have additional autonomy for greater flexibility in staffing options through:

- direct recruitment of classified and non-classified teaching staff (NB: Protocols regarding the implementation of this option are currently being developed)
- direct allocation of staffing resources expressed in notional full-time equivalent staff
- local management of their staffing profile.

Principals of Independent Public Schools:

- can directly recruit teachers (where vacancies exist) as well as filling vacancies through existing department applicant pools or the transfer system (NB: Protocols regarding the implementation of this option are currently being developed)
- can access the relocation process for classified teaching staff.

Increased financial flexibility

Independent Public Schools can flexibly direct their budget to best meet their students' individual needs.

Schools manage their appropriation budget based on their identified needs.

Building for the future

Independent Public Schools can formulate infrastructure plans and industry links to shape a physical environment that best matches the strategic vision for their school. Schools can:

- make local decisions about joint facility agreements and partnerships
- contract and manage their own maintenance using Building and Asset Services (BAS) or contractors
- develop a Strategic Infrastructure (Assets) Plan in direct consultation with Infrastructure Services Branch (ISB)
- submit requests for capital works projects directly to ISB.

An Independent Public School that is subject to a Public Private Partnership (PPP) is obligated to comply with the PPP contract conditions. For example, a PPP school is not required to formulate a maintenance or Infrastructure (Asset) Plan as these are incorporated into the PPP arrangements. The PPP contract continues to be managed centrally by the department.

Public accountability, transparency and performance

All Independent Public Schools remain part of our state school system. They need to operate within the system, enacting the same core values, beliefs and priorities as other state schools.

As part of Queensland's strong state education system, Independent Public Schools comply with state and national legislation, industrial instruments, directives, delegations, whole-of-government policies and national agreements.

While Independent Public Schools are not required to follow a number of operational procedures, they are required to:

- determine and manage their planning, review and reporting processes for the school
- participate in system audits and school reviews
- provide systemic data and use corporate systems, for example OneSchool and MyHR
- purchase IT products that are compatible with the department's managed operating environment.

The school council monitors and endorses school performance against planned targets. Independent Public School principals are responsible for developing and managing a process for their performance measurement and professional development that meets their needs, while being accountable for their performance, and that of the school, to the school community and Director-General.

To achieve continual improvement, the Independent Public School initiative is periodically reviewed and evaluated, which may result in changes to the processes, parameters and conditions of implementation of the initiative in future.

Supporting our Independent Public Schools

Independent Public Schools receive a one-off \$50,000 grant to assist with their transition. This funding enables the schools to seek expertise and advice about the establishment and effective functioning of their school council. In 2016 all Independent Public Schools will also receive a further \$50,000 in funding.

Independent Public Schools continue to benefit from the strengths of the Queensland state education system through access to:

- existing liability insurance
- legal and media advice
- financial and procurement advice
- industrial relations advice and support
- Curriculum into the Classroom
- OneSchool
- MyHR
- WorkCover Queensland support
- central and regional office support.



How to become an Independent Public School

All Queensland state schools, irrespective of size, geographical location or school type, can apply to become an Independent Public School in 2016.

Schools are required to submit a written application using an online e-form available via a link on [OnePortal](#).

The written application must demonstrate:

- the consultation that has occurred across stakeholder groups, including a summary of their views
- the school's capacity to assume greater responsibility for its affairs
- the potential benefits for students and the broader school community for the school to become an Independent Public School
- the innovative educational programs or practices that the school will implement to improve student performance.

Applications close on Friday 16 October 2015.

Late applications will not be accepted.

Selection process

Applications will be considered by a panel comprising:

- the Principal Education Officer, School Autonomy (chair)
- Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) representative
- principal associations' representatives
- existing Independent Public School principals' representatives.

The panel will consider applications using a five-stage process:

Stage 1: Identification of suitable financial controls, level of consultation and school community support

Purpose: To identify schools where suitable financial controls and school community support for the Independent Public Schools initiative exists.

- Do suitable financial controls exist – in particular, is the latest school audit result rated above 'minimal'?
- Does evidence of school community consultation exist, including the compulsory nature of an affirmative voting pattern from the following key stakeholders – QTU members, Local Consultative Committee, Parents and Citizens' Association?

Stage 2: Application of set criteria to the school responses

Purpose: To identify pools of schools to join the Independent Public Schools initiative utilising the evidence provided by the school in their written application to the prospectus, and any relevant school performance data.

- The school has demonstrated that a quality consultation process has occurred across stakeholder groups, including a summary of their views.
- The school has demonstrated in the application the capacity to assume greater responsibility for its affairs.
- Evidence of the school being able to assume greater responsibility for its affairs as shown by **improved school performance** demonstrated in the application and the 'School Data Profile', or other differentiated areas of exemplary performance (for example, industry partnerships).
- The application details the potential benefits for students and the broader school community for the school to become an Independent Public School.
- The application details the innovative educational programs or practices that the school will implement to improve student performance.



Stage 3: Input of current supervisor

Purpose: The panel requests input from the school's supervisor, via the Regional Director, in relation to the school's capacity to assume greater autonomy.

Stage 4: Equity consideration

Purpose: To meet the program requirements regarding the inclusion of a broad cross section of schools from across Queensland — regional and metropolitan schools, and small and large schools; special consideration will be given to schools from areas of socio-economic and geographic disadvantage.

Stage 5: Ethical standards consideration

Purpose: The Ethical Standards Unit is consulted on any outstanding matters in these schools.

Approval

The panel will make recommendations to the Director-General for approval.

Future opportunities

A further opportunity to express interest in becoming an Independent Public School in 2017 will be provided in 2016.

