

Independent Public Schools – Frequently Asked Questions

How will Queensland *Independent Public Schools* differ from other state schools?

Queensland's state schools already have a good deal of autonomy. *Independent Public Schools* will be provided with an opportunity for greater involvement of their school community in scoping their strategic direction to embrace innovation and tailor school programs to meet the individual needs of their community.

How can schools become an *Independent Public School*?

All Queensland state schools will be invited to become an *Independent Public School* through an open Expression of Interest (EOI) process. It will be important for schools to have the support of their school community in submitting their application.

Schools need to prepare a written application to support their EOI.

The application needs to:

- demonstrate broad consultation has occurred with:
 - staff, including the Local Consultative Committee
 - parents, including the Parents & Citizens' (P&C) Association
 - the wider community, including local business and industry
- demonstrate the school's capacity to assume greater responsibility for their affairs
- outline the potential benefits for students and the broader school community.
- outline the innovative educational programs or practices the school will implement.

How will schools be involved in the initiative?

A departmental selection panel will consider all applications. Schools that are in the best position to use increased autonomy to improve student outcomes will be selected. Additionally, the schools selected will represent the diversity of state schools across Queensland.

Schools that have already been identified to participate in the *Empowering Local Schools National Partnership* program will still be able to apply to become an

Independent Public School. Should they be selected, they will shift to the *Independent Public Schools* initiative, and a replacement school for the *Empowering Local Schools National Partnership* program will be identified.

How many schools will be involved?

Up to 30 *Independent Public Schools* will be selected to commence in 2013. A total of 120 *Independent Public Schools* will be involved in the initiative – 30 each year from 2013 to 2016.

What will school governance look like in an *Independent Public School*?

Independent Public Schools will be required to have a school council. This will enable greater involvement of the school community in setting the strategic direction of the school. School councils will inform and monitor the school's strategic direction, strengthening local decision making.

In addition, principals will have a performance agreement with the Director-General.

Will *Independent Public Schools* be funded differently?

Independent Public Schools will receive \$50 000 to assist in the change. In addition, schools will be eligible to receive a further \$50 000 in funding each year for administrative purposes.

All other funding amounts will remain the same; however *Independent Public Schools* will be provided with a one-line school budget that includes school grants and a staffing budget expressed in both full-time equivalent staff and notional monetary terms.

How will staffing processes differ for *Independent Public Schools*?

Principals at *Independent Public Schools* will be able to choose between directly recruiting teachers (where vacancies exist) or by filling vacancies through existing department applicant pools or the transfer system. Principals at *Independent Public Schools* will also be able



to recruit classified teachers without having to go through the relocation process.

Independent Public Schools may choose to undertake workforce planning to determine their staffing mix. Local workforce committees will continue to operate to ensure a strong local consultative process, and the final workforce plan will be approved by the school council.

The *Independent Public School* initiative will not impact upon permanency of staff. If a permanent employee does not wish to remain in an *Independent Public School*, the employee will have the opportunity to transfer to another state school within the same geographical area.

All permanent employees will be required to confirm in writing if they are opting out from their school within one month of the notification that the school will be included in the *Independent Public Schools* initiative. Teaching staff will be managed within the current teacher transfer process. Non-teaching employees will remain at their current location until a permanent position at a new location is found through the normal relocation processes of the department. Transfers will only be considered within the employee's current geographical area.

The transfer system will continue to be available for teachers at *Independent Public Schools* who wish to apply for a transfer to other locations.

Will the transfer system be affected?

The transfer system will be retained and strengthened for all Queensland state schools.

How will the management of school facilities differ for *Independent Public Schools*?

Independent Public Schools will have the opportunity to participate with local councils, industry and community to plan joint facilities. In addition, *Independent Public Schools* will be able to submit requests for capital works directly to central office and will have the opportunity to develop and implement their *Strategic Infrastructure (Assets) Plan* directly with central office.

Independent Public Schools will also be able to contract and manage their maintenance using QBuild or contractors.

There will be no change to the level of funding for facilities provided to *Independent Public Schools*.

How will principals of *Independent Public Schools* be affected?

Principals of *Independent Public Schools* will be employed under existing conditions. This means they will still be able to apply for relocations or promotions through existing processes. The *Independent Public Schools* initiative will not impact on the banding of the principal position.

The selection of a new principal of an *Independent Public School* will follow the current statewide process for the appointment of Executive Principals. The only difference will be that the school council chair will be included on the selection panel.

How will *Independent Public Schools* remain accountable?

As part of Queensland's strong state education system, *Independent Public Schools* will be required to comply with all national and state legislation, industrial instruments, directives, delegations, whole-of-government policy and national agreements. They will also be required to participate in all departmental audits.

For *Independent Public Schools*, a school review will be conducted independently every four years.

Accountabilities and targets for principals will be negotiated through a performance agreement with the Director-General and monitored through annual performance discussions.

What will be included in a principal's performance agreement?

The agreed outcomes and their indicators of achievement for each *Independent Public School* will be identified in a performance agreement between the principal and the Director-General.

The agreement will include the key priorities for the school, such as student and school performance and workforce planning, effectiveness of governance arrangements, compliance, leadership development, resourcing and support and reporting against school plans.

The school's four-year strategic plan and annual implementation plan will have the same elements as currently required under the *School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework 2012-2015*, with all school plans being approved by the school council.

What will the annual performance review involve?

The annual performance review will be a conversation between the *Independent Public School* principal and a delegate of the Director-General, based on the agreed outcomes and measures identified in the performance agreement.

Will *Independent Public Schools* have to follow departmental policies?

While *Independent Public Schools* will not be required to follow a number of operational procedures, they will be required to operate within legislation, industrial instruments, directives, delegations, whole-of-government policy and national agreements.

Further information can be found in the *Legislative and Policy Requirements Fact Sheet*.

Will *Independent Public Schools* deliver the same curriculum?

Within a curriculum framework approved by the Minister, *Independent Public School* principals will be able to plan the learning experiences offered to students at a school. This means continuing to implement the Australian Curriculum, the Queensland Studies Authority syllabuses and mandatory languages other than English in Years 6, 7 and 8.

Will enrolment processes differ for *Independent Public Schools*?

Independent Public Schools will continue to manage their enrolments within existing capacity and enrolment management plans. Special School principals involved in the *Independent Public Schools* initiative will make decisions regarding the enrolment of students at their school.

Will *Independent Public Schools* be able to charge additional fees?

Independent Public Schools will continue to determine student resource scheme amounts, voluntary contributions or to set fees for specialised programs.

Will *Independent Public Schools* be able to change their name?

Independent Public Schools will not be able to rename their school. The authority to change the name of a state school remains with the Minister.

What support will be provided to *Independent Public Schools*?

Independent Public Schools will receive a \$50 000 grant to assist with their transition. This funding will enable schools to seek expertise and advice about the establishment and effective functioning of their school council. In addition, schools will receive a further \$50 000 in funding each year.

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

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

How will school councils operate?

School councils in *Independent Public Schools* will operate under the existing legislation as applied to all state schools. The establishment of school councils will allow greater involvement of the school community in determining the school's strategic direction.

School councils will comprise at least six, but not more than 15 members. A school council must include at least one elected parent member and one elected staff member (the number of elected parent members and elected staff members of a school council must be equal).

A school council (for a school that provides Years 10, 11 and 12) must include at least one but not more than two elected student members and two appointed members. Elected student members can only be students from Year 10, 11 or 12 at the school. Schools may appoint coopted students from younger year levels, however these students are unable to vote.

In general, the school council will play a role in monitoring and informing the school's strategic direction in a way that achieves the best learning outcomes for the school's students. The size of the school will determine representation of staff and students on the school council.

For more information read the *Queensland school councils Fact Sheet*.

How will the role of a school council differ to that of a P&C?

The *Independent Public Schools* initiative will not have any impact on the functions of P&Cs.

School councils will have the responsibility to approve documents that set the strategic direction of the school, but will not be involved in daily operational aspects. The P&C president will be included on the school council to represent the views of the P&C Association.

Is the *Independent Public Schools* initiative supported by research?

Research on this subject shows that the success of school autonomy relies on a range of factors such as what support is provided, types of autonomy, accountabilities, etc. However, research also shows that while there should not be a 'one-size fits all' model for autonomy, there is a link between principal autonomy and school effectiveness. In addition, a recent study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development reports that a combination of autonomy and accountability is related to better student outcomes.

The level of autonomy required by schools is dependent on a complex mix of variables such as community aspiration, student cohort, geography, etc. The increased level of autonomy that will be offered by the *Independent Public Schools* initiative has the potential to enable local solutions for better learning and ultimately, improving student outcomes.

Will the *Independent Public Schools* initiative be evaluated?

The implementation of the *Independent Public Schools* initiative will be closely monitored. An evaluation will be conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative, and to ensure that any opportunities for improvement are identified. The first phase of the evaluation – to be conducted in Term Three, 2013 – will

inform the roll-out of the next 30 *Independent Public Schools* in 2014.

What is the difference between the Queensland Government's *Independent Public Schools* initiative and the Australian Government's *Empowering Local Schools National Partnership* program?

While the *Independent Public Schools* initiative and the *Empowering Local Schools National Partnership* program both recognise the benefits of increasing local decision making and principal autonomy, they are different. The Queensland Government's *Independent Public Schools* initiative will provide selected schools with a range of additional autonomies, whereas the *Empowering Local Schools National Partnership* program will drive system reforms to improve community engagement and local decision making for all Queensland state schools.

Independent Public Schools will receive \$50 000 as a transitional grant to assist in the change, and then a further \$50 000 in funding each year for administrative purposes.

Schools selected under the *Empowering Local Schools National Partnership* program will receive a one-off \$40 000 – \$50 000 grant to implement local strategies that will inform how the department can increase autonomy across the system resulting in improved student outcomes and community engagement.

In addition, some of the schools involved in the *Empowering Local Schools National Partnership* program will be invited to form a guiding coalition to work with the department to advise on system reforms to reduce red tape and enable greater local autonomy for all Queensland state schools.

The *Empowering Local Schools National Partnership* program will commence in Semester 2, 2012 and the *Independent Public Schools* initiative will commence in 2013.

Want to know more?

For more information about the *Independent Public Schools* initiative visit the Education Queensland website at www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/independent-public-schools/index.html or email IPS@dete.qld.gov.au

