



Independent Public Schools

Policy Framework



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Independent Public Schools Framework

Purpose of IPS

To be a catalyst for improving learning outcomes across Queensland's state school system

Key features

Strong state schooling citizens – a critical mass for change
Innovation, trialling and sharing of good practice
Accountable through governance structures that value community participation

System support

School selection – a diverse range of high potential schools
Capacity building – professional development and system responsiveness
Operational flexibility – to enable trialling of innovative practice

Evaluation of the initiative

Introduction

Provision of a world-class state education system is a priority of the Queensland Government. All Queensland children and young people should be able to benefit from the opportunities a quality education can offer.

Queensland's state education system must be dynamic, flexible and innovative to meet the opportunities and challenges of educating children in the modern world. Independent Public Schools (IPS) are a catalyst for positive system-wide change that leads to improved services and learning outcomes for all state school students.

This Policy Framework sets out the key features of the IPS initiative in Queensland, and the system supports that enable it to deliver to its full potential.

What is an Independent Public School?

Like all state schools, IPS are an integral part of the state schooling system. They partner with their school community to create and pursue a shared strategic direction that focuses on student well-being and improved student outcomes. IPS are required to operate in line with the same legislation, industrial instruments, directives, whole of government policy and national agreements as all other state schools.

IPS are high potential schools, selected on the basis of their ability to clearly demonstrate the 'distance travelled' in each year of their operation. While this affords them some operational flexibility to test new ways of working, it comes with an expectation that they will be fully accountable to their community and the department and share innovative practice that lifts the performance of their own school and supports positive change across the entire state schooling system.





Key features of IPS

IPS are strong state schooling citizens. They are an integral part of Queensland's state education system, enacting the same core values and whole-of-system priorities as other state schools. Their guiding legislation includes: the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*; and the *Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2006*.

There are three key features of IPS:

- IPS provide a critical mass for system-wide improvement
- IPS have the capacity to – and are expected to – innovate, trial and share good practice across the state school system
- IPS are accountable to their local community and the broader state school system through arrangements that value community participation.

A critical mass for system-wide improvement

All Queensland state schools enjoy a large degree of self-determination and continually strive for improved outcomes for their students and community. However, as high potential schools IPS are well-placed and expected to be a catalyst for system-wide advancement.

The 250 IPS that will be in place by 2017 will provide the critical mass needed for this advancement.

Under Queensland's IPS initiative, IPS principals and staff do not work in isolation. They are expected to look outwards, working in partnership with their community, other IPS, other state schools, state school regions and central office to create an enabling force of connected school leaders that impact positively on student outcomes.

Innovating, trialling and sharing good practice

While innovation and capacity to improve practice are not exclusive qualities of IPS, there is an expectation that IPS will individually and collectively contribute to improvement across the system.

To become an IPS, a school must show it can take greater responsibility for its affairs, clearly articulate the benefits for their students and the wider school community and outline the innovative educational programs the school will implement to improve student outcomes.

Once becoming an IPS, the school will:

- proactively identify potential challenges and opportunities for enhancing school performance and student wellbeing and success;
- trial innovative ways of working, with a view to building a strong evidence base about the most effective measures and interventions in various schooling contexts; and
- share their learnings and drive positive, evidence-based reforms across the system.

To be most effective in these endeavours, IPS will reach out and capitalise on the expertise of various partners in their local community and beyond, making use of the skills, capacity and innovation that exist in the government, private and not-for-profit sectors.

IPS will then facilitate system reform by using system networks to generate wider adoption of evidence-based initiatives and ideas.

Accountability arrangements that value community participation

Community engagement is an essential feature of any high functioning school, and central to the operation of IPS. Strong relationships with students, families and the wider community are critical to the ability of any school to lift student learning outcomes. However, the expectations placed on IPS, and the operational flexibilities they may enact, require some specialised accountability arrangements.

Delivery and Performance Agreement

IPS are required to enter into a Delivery and Performance Agreement with the Director-General of the Department of Education and Training and the chair of the school council. This Agreement outlines key expectations, roles and responsibilities, and the performance and accountability expectations for the school.

Local consultative and accountability structures

There are three key local consultative and accountability structures of relevance to IPS: (a) the Local Consultative Committee (LCC); (b) the P&C; and (c) the school council.

Like all schools with more than 20 employees, IPS must have an LCC - a representative group of management and union nominees established to provide advice on work related issues within the school. Arrangements for LCCs are set out in the Department of Education, Training and Employment State School Teachers' Certified Agreement 2012.

However, unlike in other state schools where they are encouraged but remain optional, IPS should establish a school council within 12 months. Provisions regarding the establishment, functions and operation of school councils are set out in the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006. The school council is a vital means of engaging with and being held to account by parents, school staff and the community. The specific details of each IPS's school council are documented in their school council constitution and consistent with their prescribed functions to: monitor the school's strategic direction; approve and monitor the implementation of school plans and policies of a strategic nature (including the annual estimate of revenue and expenditure for the school); and advise the principal about strategic matters.

In line with the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, IPS may also choose to have a local P&C which: fosters community interest in educational matters; tries to bring about closer co-operation between parents of children attending the school, other members of the community, staff members of the school and students of the school; gives advice and recommendations to the principal about issues relating to students and the general operation and management of the school; and assists in the giving of financial or other resources or services for the benefit of students of the school.

IPS tenure arrangements

The IPS network is expected to be dynamic, adaptive and responsive to the future needs of the individual schools, their communities, and the broader state school system. The pool of IPS may change over time, with continued positive outcomes, appropriate school leadership and strong community support key factors in determining a school's ongoing participation in the IPS initiative.





Regular school review

Under the School Performance Assessment Framework, all state schools, including IPS, are subject to an annual performance assessment in the form of a desktop audit of school performance data conducted by the School Improvement Unit against agreed headline indicators.

Based on the outcomes of this assessment, and with consideration of the broader school context, schools will be designated to undertake one of the following reviews: self-determined reviews (for high-performing schools); priority reviews (for schools identified as needing further support); or full school reviews (for all other schools). Schools must undergo at least one review every four years.

This review process offers differentiated support and intervention matched to the needs and contexts of schools. It is administered by the School Improvement Unit, and IPS reviews are undertaken in consultation with the Director-General or their delegate.

As part of their school review process, IPS are expected to ensure their continued high standards (for example, high gain in student learning outcomes, appropriate financial audits, etc) and ongoing support from their community. Should a review identify a need for additional support and/or closer monitoring of an IPS, it is expected the regional office will play a more direct role in conjunction with the School Improvement Unit to assist the school to implement an agreed improvement plan.

Following appropriate system support, and based on consultation with the school council, LCC, principal, regional office and central office, the Director-General will make a final decision on whether the school is to remain in the IPS initiative.

Withdrawal from the IPS initiative

In consultation with its school community, including with the support of, QTU members, LCC and P&C, a school may choose to withdraw from the IPS initiative. Requests to withdraw from the initiative can be initiated by the school council and IPS principal, for the consideration of the Director-General.



System support

In Queensland, IPS drive their own school improvement design, maximise student outcomes within their school and contribute to change across the system. The IPS initiative is strengthened by a rigorous IPS selection process and other system supports that enable IPS to fulfil their role, as described below.

School selection

The IPS initiative in Queensland will include a diverse range of 'high potential' schools, including a variety of school types, schools in urban, regional and remote locations and schools from different socio-economic settings.

State schools can apply to become an IPS through an expression of interest (EOI) process. The selection panel for this process is comprised of a range of stakeholder representatives, who examine the information provided in the applications according to a rigorous and fair process. While student outcomes and wellbeing are placed above all other considerations, the panel examines:

- the school's capacity to assume greater responsibility for its affairs
- evidence of consultation and support from key stakeholder groups including QTU members, LCC and P&C
- potential benefits for students and the broader school community for the school to become an IPS
- the innovative educational programs or practices that the school will implement to improve student performance.

In looking for 'high potential' schools, the panel considers evidence held by the department such as school performance data based on headline indicators (for example, attendance data, student disciplinary absences, National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy outcomes - comparing like schools against the Upper Two Bands, mean scale scores and relative gain data in the previous year), and financial and audit results.

Community engagement is critical to the success of IPS. Prior to submitting an expression of interest, school principals must provide evidence that the school community has been consulted, and demonstrate that they have the support of key stakeholders including QTU members, the LCC and P&C. Broad consultation should involve teachers and school staff, the school council (if one already exists), the P&C Committee (if one exists), the LCC, the parent body, students, local business and industry and the wider community.

Schools seeking to grow their capacity to become an IPS will have access to support and information from central office to assist in preparing their application.





Capacity building

The Department of Education and Training supports capacity building in all schools.

Professional development

As IPS remain an important part of the state school system, they continue to have access to central and regional office support and advice, as well as high quality targeted professional development for school principals, staff and school council community members.

This includes professional development to:

- enhance the capacity of school leaders to drive positive reforms across the system
- meet the unique needs, characteristics and contexts of delivery across schools in rural and remote areas
- strengthen principal leadership in school governance and support school councils to build on the knowledge and capacity of local communities to take ownership and guide the strategic direction of their school.

IPS are encouraged to establish and utilise network clusters to develop peer coaching relationships, identify a mentor to provide professional advice and support, and procure their own professional development aligned to the goals and strategic directions of their school, community and the IPS initiative.

Facilitating system reform

IPS are professionally committed to driving positive change across the state school system. They are empowered to collaborate with other schools to improve student outcomes and school performance. Further, they are supported to discuss and review innovations with colleagues locally, state-wide and further afield to foster scaling-up of quality innovations and effective practice across all state schools.

IPS principals are expected to share successful and evidence-based solutions with other schools, through mechanisms that apply to all state schools as well as through those that apply to IPS specifically.

Key mechanisms for information-sharing that are available to all state schools include:

- Evidence Hub -- a web-based home for evidence and research related to school improvement and innovation in Queensland schools. Innovative practices included in the Evidence Hub are calibrated against standards of evidence to ensure the quality of research and case studies
- School clusters -- used flexibly by the whole system for the purpose of targeting the needs of school communities and sharing innovative practice. School clusters exist at a geographical level and are established both formally and informally within regions, meeting at different time intervals depending on the purpose of their establishment
- Principal's conference -- a state conference held biennially for the purpose of sharing strategic information and participating in workshops on a range of topics to inspire and give a unified whole-of-system message. The conferences are generally held early in the year to allow for new ideas to be put into practice
- Regional principal forums -- held in each region at various times to facilitate collaboration. Most regions hold a forum each term.

Additional mechanisms for information-sharing that are available to IPS include:

- IPS Principals Alliance -- IPS principals and their school council chairs have the opportunity to meet as an alliance, to discuss collaborative practice and think strategically about challenges and whole-of-system solutions

- IPS Principals Forums -- IPS principals meet in small forums on a rotational basis each term with the Director-General for professional performance conversations - these serve to build capability across the leadership cohort through shared best-practice and critical reflection.

Operational flexibility

To enable the trialling of innovative practice and scaling up across the system, IPS have more streamlined reporting relationships, are provided with a modest amount of financial assistance and may be afforded some other operational flexibilities ahead of their being rolled out to other state schools.

Reporting relationships

IPS have a direct management reporting line to the Director-General or their delegate. This reporting relationship is supplemented by support and mentorship from central office and the region.

The IPS initiative is complemented by structures that ensure that IPS principals have clear and direct access to mentors, peers and supervisors for information, advice and support. Current practice is for IPS principals to seek feedback and support on specific matters from the regional office as required, and to advise the Director-General if significant issues arise.

Regional offices can play an important role in the success of an IPS, as a partner or critical friend to IPS principals as determined through agreement between the principal and regional director.

Financial assistance

Each school that becomes an IPS receives a \$50,000 upfront establishment grant to assist with the transition to IPS, and \$50,000 per annum for functions associated with becoming an IPS. The allocation of these funds is determined by the IPS, in consultation with the school community. Examples of how IPS funding has been spent in school communities to address local needs include the procurement of resources such as additional hours for a business service manager, for additional specialist staffing, or for the purchase of specialist educational programs or services.

Policies and procedures

As noted above, IPS are required to operate in line with the same legislation, industrial instruments, directives, whole of government policy and national agreements as all other state schools. Queensland state school policies and procedures are published on the department's Policy and Procedure Register. While most policies and procedures remain mandatory across all schools, some decision-making and management responsibility that would otherwise be undertaken by central office or regional staff has been devolved to IPS principals. For example, IPS have increased flexibility over elements such as staffing profile, budget allocations and facilities management.

Other flexibilities

All IPS are expected to be involved in trialling system improvements. Flexibilities in relation to particular areas of innovation being trialled by IPS may, if proven to be beneficial, be rolled out to all state schools.

Noting that the school council must approve the IPS four year strategic plan and annual implementation plan, innovative practice will be supported by:

- the ability to directly recruit staff and build a team that is fit-for-purpose to local needs
- flexible management of infrastructure, financial resources and human resources
- exploration of innovative ways to connect with local businesses, industry and other community organisations
- pursuit of creative models of sponsorship, industry partnerships and infrastructure partnerships.



Evaluation

The performance of the IPS initiative is being closely monitored. An evaluation of this initiative will be conducted at the end of 2017 to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and inform future planning with a view to embracing continual improvement in the state schooling system.

