

Mr Bruce Notley-Smith MP
Chair
Legislative Assembly Public Accounts Committee
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

DGL17/1141

Dear Mr Notley-Smith

I write in response to your letter of 23 November 2017 requesting additional information about the NSW Department of Education's implementation of Recommendations 2, 5 and 8 from the Auditor-General's performance audit report – *Supporting students with disability in NSW public schools* (2016).

Please find attached the information for Recommendations 2, 5 and 8 as requested.

Should the Committee require further information about the support provided to students with disability, Ms Melissa Clements, Director, Disability Learning and Support is available to assist. Ms Clements can be contacted by telephone on 9266 8737 or email at melissa.clements2@det.nsw.edu.au.

Information about the department's recruitment practices is available from Ms Veronica Willmott, Director, Recruitment and Employment, who can be contacted by email at Veronica.Willmott@det.nsw.edu.au.

Yours sincerely



Mark Scott AO
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
22 January 2017

Recommendation 2:

What arrangements does the Department of Education have in place to ensure up to date information for parents, on supporting students with disability, is included in all school website service content?

Information for parents on supporting students with disability can be found on the department's website at [Disability, learning and support](http://www.education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support) (www.education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support).

In 2018, the department will transition the school website service (SWS) to a new platform where this content will be mandatory and automatically populated on each school's website. Schools will be able to add their own information, for example the key contact for local support.

It is envisaged that the approximately 200 schools who currently do not utilise SWS will transition to the platform over the next twelve to eighteen months. This will provide a comprehensive channel to all current and prospective parents across the state.

Recommendation 5:

What specific information has been provided to ensure both schools and parents understand each other's expectations on how to consult with each other to achieve the best outcome for all parties i.e. what does good consultation look like in terms of what the school will do and what the parents should do?

The department's new website includes a range of updated information for parents and school staff that recognises the importance of schools and parents/carers working collaboratively to ensure the best outcomes for all students. This includes tips for schools around consulting and engaging with parents and guidance on building effective communication with students, parents and the wider community.

Information about enrolment and getting ready for school is also available on the website which encourages parents to contact their child's school to discuss enrolment, transition to school, and any additional support needs if their child has a disability or additional learning need.

In addition, the department's Disability, Learning and Support website includes guidance for schools, parents and carers about working together to meet a student's individual learning and support needs. It outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of key school staff in developing collaborative partnerships with parents and carers and ensuring that parents and carers are consulted in decision-making around personalised learning and support and the provision of adjustments for a student. Evidence of this consultation is a requirement for all schools in completing the annual national collection of data on students with disability.

The website also provides information for schools and parents/carers about the responsibilities of schools under the *Disability Standards for Education (2005)*. The Standards require schools to consult with students or their parents/carers about the provision of reasonable adjustments. The department provides accredited professional learning on the Standards for principals, teachers and support staff to support their understanding of these obligations. This training provides case scenarios and video case studies focused on consultation obligations. To date more than 85,000 training courses have been completed by NSW public school staff.

Parents and the community are able to access a free e-learning web resource on the Standards through the department's website. This resource complements the teacher professional learning referred to above and clarifies expectations around the consultation process to support positive learning outcomes for students.

Recommendation 8:

Please provide more information on the Department of Education's examination of options for enhancing recruitment practices.

The department's Human Resources Directorate maintains responsibility for granting approval to teach for qualified teachers of students with additional learning and support needs including disabilities.

Teachers completing approved initial teacher education qualifications are accredited by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), and on demonstration of personal suitability and satisfactory completion of all required recruitment requirements are eligible for approval to teach. Specific subject teaching codes are granted to relevant teachers who are then eligible to be employed in NSW public schools on a casual, temporary or permanent basis.

Teachers completing post graduate qualifications for students with additional learning and support needs, including disabilities, are also granted approval in the relevant teaching codes and are eligible to be appointed to permanent teaching positions in NSW public schools.