



THE AUDIT OFFICE
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

FACSIMILE

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Public Accounts Committee
Parliament of New South Wales

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Re Report No 158 - Students with Disabilities

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THE AUDIT OFFICE
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

CONTACT NAME P Achterstraat
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YOUR REFERENCE

Mr Paul McLeay MP
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House, Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

21 November 2007

Dear Mr McLeay

**Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Report 158
Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities.**

We have reviewed the submission provided by the Department of Education and training concerning the recommendations in the above performance audit report.

Following tabling of the report, we were pleased that the Director-General indicated he accepted all of the report's 16 recommendations. His response to the report also provided some additional details regarding how they planned to address each recommendation and proposed completion dates (see attachment 1).

The latest submission from the Director-General shows the progress that the Department has made in implementing the recommendations. We have not substantiated the Department's submission. Our assessment of whether the response addresses the issues raised in the original report along with an assessment of progress against the original timeline is provided in attachment 2.

The approach taken by the Department to monitor the implementation of recommendations meets our better practice standards. The status report identifies the outcome that the changes are intended to achieve, gives progress against milestones, assigns responsibility for implementation and is monitored each quarter by the audit committee. This is a model that we would recommend other agencies use to monitor progress.

I plan to forward a copy of this correspondence to the Director-General, Department of Education and Training for his information.

I am very happy to provide any further assistance the Committee may need in completing its examination.

Yours sincerely

Peter Achterstraat
Auditor-General

attachments

PA6408

Attachment 1



Early Childhood and Primary Education
 Secondary Education
 Technical and Further Education
 Vocational Education and Training
 Higher Education
 Adult and Community Education

6 OCT 2006

Ms Jane Tebbatt
 A/Assistant Auditor General, Performance Audit
 The Audit Office of New South Wales
 Level 15, 1 Margaret Street
 SYDNEY NSW 2000

DGL 06/1462

Rep 158
6/9/06

Dear Ms Tebbatt

I refer to your letter dated 13 September 2006 concerning the recommendations of the Performance Audit *Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities*.

Attached please find the Department of Education and Training's response. The report's 16 recommendations are accepted by the Department and included in this response are the ways in which they each will be addressed.

Should your office require further information regarding this matter, Mr Brian Smyth King, Director, Disability Programs, can be contacted on telephone number 9561 8885.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cappie-Wood
 DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
 MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAFE NSW
 4 October 2006

Noted J. AIO.

AP: please place copy on Afire for
recs of this management file for
audit.

Recommendations in the Performance Audit <i>Educating primary school students with disabilities</i>		
Recommendations	Accepted/Rejected	Proposed Actions
In regard to the special education services covered by this audit, we recommend that the Department:		
1. ■ as part of its new special education information system, collect data on demand for special education services including special classes and use this data to plan services at a school, region and state level	Accepted	The trial of a new data management system will be conducted in 2007 with full implementation scheduled for 2008. This system is dependent on the successful implementation of the Student Registration System, a new enrolment system and unique identifier for all school students.
2. ■ by 2008, change the way special classes are organised from disability type to classes based around the support and educational needs of students	Accepted	Work has already commenced on this through the Special Education Initiative and further development will be undertaken in 2007 with progressive implementation from 2008.
3. ■ introduce guidelines for the review of special classes in metropolitan and rural regions linked to regional planning	Accepted	The Special Education Handbook is currently being revised. A replacement handbook will be developed and implemented during 2007 that will address this recommendation.
4. ■ establish an enrolment threshold to trigger a review of special classes in line with new special class structures	Accepted	The Special Education Handbook is currently being revised. A replacement handbook will be developed and implemented during 2007 that will address this recommendation.
5. ■ introduce by 2008 a common assessment tool to capture the additional support needs of students with disabilities on enrolment	Accepted	Work has already commenced on this with development and trialling of alternative assessment ways proposed during 2007. Whole of government planning around assessment will need to be included in this action as it progresses through 2007.

6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establish service standards (timeframes and targets) for completing student assessments and placements 	Accepted	The Special Education Handbook is currently being revised. A replacement handbook will be developed and implemented during 2007 that will address this recommendation.
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ develop minimum standards for personalised learning plans for students with disabilities in regular and special classes and use the results of these to guide service planning 	Accepted	The Special Education Handbook is currently being revised. A replacement handbook will be developed and implemented during 2007 that will address this recommendation.
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establish a consistent approach to the operation and professional development of learning support teams 	Accepted	The Special Education Handbook is currently being revised. A replacement handbook will be developed and implemented during 2007 that will address this recommendation.
9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establish minimum standards for annual student reviews including assessing teacher training needs and documenting outcomes 	Accepted	The Special Education Handbook is currently being revised. A replacement handbook will be developed and implemented during 2007 that will address this recommendation.
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ develop a suite of performance indicators to monitor these programs at a school, region and state level 	Accepted	A range of performance indicators will be developed and progressively implemented during the 2008 school year.
11.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ encourage regions to review aspects of their special education services in primary schools 	Accepted	The newly developed Student Services Handbook will guide regions in every aspect of special education programs from 2008, including special education reviews.
12.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ include specific special education performance indicators and targets in the performance agreements of regional directors and school educational directors 	Accepted	From 2007 performance agreements for regional directors and school educational directors will address this recommendation.

13.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">examine achievements in special education through the school's use of resources and outcomes as part of the primary Principals' Annual Review	Accepted	From 2007 the principals' annual review will detail this as a requirement.
14.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">report on special education results at a school, regional and state level	Accepted	The Department's standard annual reporting process will be progressively amended over the 2007/2008 period to address this recommendation.
15.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">encourage schools to obtain feedback from students, parents and carers on the quality of special education programs as part of the annual student review	Accepted	The Special Education Handbook is currently being revised. This recommendation will be addressed through this work.
16.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">obtain feedback from teachers and principals on the quality of special education programs and use this to improve planning and service delivery	Accepted	The Special Education Handbook is currently being revised. This recommendation will be addressed through this work.

Attachment 2

Recommendation	Action steps address issue?	Reported progress
1	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Satisfactory. Delays in completion are reportedly due to the broader implications of changes to IT systems.
2	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Satisfactory. On track with original milestone.
3	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Satisfactory.
4	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Completed.
5	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Delayed. Trial of assessment tool will not be completed until end 2008.
6	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Delayed until end 2008.
7	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Delayed although more work is needed to address problem that originally anticipated.
8	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Delayed.
9	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Delayed. Now to be completed by end 2008.
10	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	On track. Progress satisfactory.
11	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	On track. Progress satisfactory.
12	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	On track. Progress satisfactory.
13	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Delayed. Implementation now to be completed in 2008.
14	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	Linked to recommendation 10. On track. Progress satisfactory.
15	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	On track. Progress satisfactory.
16	Yes. Reported outcome consistent with intent of recommendation.	On track. Progress satisfactory.