

**Submission  
No 2**

**EXAMINATION OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S PERFORMANCE AUDIT  
REPORTS AUGUST 2019 - JUNE 2020**

**Organisation:** Department of Education

**Date Received:** 15 October 2020



Education

Mr Greg Piper MP  
Chair Public Accounts Committee  
Parliament of NSW  
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DGL20/634

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Dear Mr Piper

Thank you for your letter of 14 September 2020, regarding the Auditor-General's report – *Ensuring teaching quality in NSW public school*, tabled on 26 August 2019.

Please find enclosed the Department of Education's response to the audit.

Yours sincerely



Mark Scott AO  
**SECRETARY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

15 October 2020



### IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)	
4	Improve the Performance and Development Framework by	accepted	a) providing guidance that supports aligning goals, professional development, observations and reviews to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers	Early 2020	<p>Delayed due to COVID-19 and pending finalisation of consultation with key stakeholders.</p> <p>The Department remains committed to ensuring the Performance and Development process for teachers supports the ongoing improvement of student outcomes through continuous professional development of a skilled, effective and professional teaching workforce. The Department continues to consult with key stakeholders around a revised PDF and PDP template that strengthens key elements, including aligning to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.</p> <p>Updated guidance and resources have been developed and are the subject of continued stakeholder consultation. Guidance is anticipated to include professional learning and resources to support capability uplift in relation to goal setting, observations, evidence and feedback.</p>	People Group

RECOMMENDATION		ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
			b) strengthening the quality of observations of teaching practice and requiring at least one observation to be conducted by a supervisor	Early 2020	See above	People Group
			c) providing guidance that supports supervisors and principals to effectively use the framework to improve teacher performance before formal performance management	Early 2020	See above.	People Group
			d) monitoring implementation of the Framework through collection of de-identified Performance and Development Plans, observations and reviews	Early 2020	See above. A draft process for monitoring improvements in the quality of performance and development plans has been developed. This is subject on ongoing consultation with key stakeholders.	People Group
5	Improve the School Excellence policy by		a) clarifying the quantity and quality of evidence required for external validation		Completed external validation procedures have been updated to include explicit details on the quantity and quality of evidence for external validation.  Sample evidence sets have been updated to provide better examples of evidence.	School Excellence

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				The tagging of external validation evidence in SPaRO will support schools to select and save the best possible evidence, as part of the ongoing monitoring of their Strategic Improvement Plan. (SPaRO is the online tool used for end-to-end management of school planning and reporting and external validation)	
			b) requiring tailored written feedback from external validation panels, allowing schools to better use insights for future planning	Completed 30 minutes has been added to the external validation panel meeting to facilitate a discussion and feedback between the panel and schools regarding actionable next steps. The focus of this is to use the advice of the panel to inform future school planning. From 2021, external validation will automatically trigger the development of a new Strategic Improvement Plan, ensuring that the insights from external validation are explicitly used by each school. The School Excellence policy has been revised to make this an explicit requirement.	School Excellence

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
			c) aligning the external validation process to the school planning and reporting cycle to allow schools to better use the insights gained from the external validation process	<p>Completed</p> <p>A revised School Excellence cycle and policy (external validation, the Strategic Improvement Plan, self-assessment and annual reporting) was rolled out to schools in Term 3 2020 (on 20 July 2020), and for implementation from 2021.</p> <p>The new 2021-24 School Excellence cycle, which aligns the external validation and school planning cycle, on a single 4-year cycle was formally launched to schools on 20 July 2020.</p> <p>This explicit alignment of external validation and the school planning cycle will enable the insights gained from the external validation process to inform the next planning cycle which begins in 2021.</p> <p>This included new School Excellence in Action resources for schools available on the Department's website.</p>	School Excellence

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)	
6	Develop and implement a strategy on how to more effectively use Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers to improve teaching quality across the state	Accepted	a) piloting support for accreditation at higher levels for 'Best in Class' teachers who have been identified as outstanding and are working in positions that support system-wide application of evidence-based teaching practices.		<p>On track.</p> <p>There are a range of programs in the Department that utilise outstanding teachers to support evidence-based teaching practices and lead professional development to improve the practice of teachers. These include 'Early action for success', 'Mastery of Teaching' and a variety of programs within 'Best in Class'. These programs have used a variety of methods to identify and recruit outstanding teachers and their effectiveness is being evaluated.</p> <p>The Department has consulted with NESAs on the Highly Accomplished and Lead Accreditation policy and supported the improved and streamlined application and assessment process. Department staff with responsibility for assessing HALT accreditation applications have completed the online training.</p> <p>The Department is continuing to scope and consult on options for</p>	People Group

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>		<b>ACCEPTED OR REJECTED</b>	<b>ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN</b>	<b>DUE DATE</b>	<b>STATUS</b> (completed, on track, delayed) <b>and COMMENT</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
					career pathways that would recognise and reward expert teachers who remain in the classroom and work with other teachers to improve their practice.	
7	Evaluate the Quality Teaching, Successful Students program to determine whether it has been implemented in accordance with guidelines and is achieving its intended outcomes.		Evaluation of the Quality Teaching, Successful Students program in 2020 to determine whether it has been implemented in accordance with guidelines and is achieving its intended outcomes.	December 2020	An evaluation of the QTSS program is well underway and on track to be finalised by December 2020.	Strategic Schools Resourcing Unit, Strategic Resource Management



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Dear Mr Piper

Thank you for your letter of 12 October 2021, regarding the Auditor-General's performance audit report – Ensuring teaching quality in NSW public Schools – Department of Education.

The Department of Education and NSW public schools are committed to the provision of high-quality educational opportunities for each and every student. Since the publication of the Auditor-General's performance report in 2019 the Department has made significant advances in its pursuit of excellence in NSW public schools.

The Department has instigated a whole-of-system evidence led reform program in the form of the School Success Model. The School Success Model aims to strengthen shared accountability across the system by putting in place clearer targets for school improvement, lifting capability through the design of new system support and sharing best practice across the system.

Likewise, renewed emphasis and effort has been placed on improving the School Excellence Policy which provides direction for schools in strategic improvement planning, self-assessment, external validation and annual reporting. The School Excellence Policy and associated support material were updated and provided to schools in early Term 3, 2020 in support of a long lead-time for all schools to prepare for implementation from 2021 when the new School Excellence cycle commenced. This significantly revised policy underpins the continuous improvement practices the Department expects of NSW public schools as they seek to lift the education outcomes of all students.

Consistent with these advances and other school improvement initiatives I am pleased to provide the additional information that you requested regarding Recommendations 4, 6 and 7 of the audit report.

#### **Recommendation 4**

The Department has developed comprehensive, new, fit-for-purpose support for the current Performance and Development Framework including:

- Universal support in the form of website advice on the Framework which includes exemplars, how-to and conversation guides and planning templates;
- Website design for a variety of users, including clear pathways that contain tailored content for teachers, school leaders, and supervisors of the performance and development process including Directors, Educational Leadership;

- A new suite of professional learning courses to be offered in 2022, focused on building teachers' capacity to engage in key aspects of the performance and development cycle, including:
  - establishing the plan,
  - gathering evidence of professional development,
  - observations and feedback, and
  - annual reviews.
- Comprehensive communications for all teachers, executives and principals via the Department's internal social media platforms to enable staff to access responsive advice when they need it. This will be supported by policy experts and non-school-based teaching staff providing strategic implementation support.

Building on the initial work of the Auditor General, a large PDP sampling project was undertaken by the Department in 2020 and 2021. All operational directorates were involved, volunteering a total of 871 PDPs - collected from 658 teachers, three Head teachers, 33 Assistant Principals, 16 Deputy Principals and 161 Principals. The purpose of the study was to better understand engagement with the Performance and Development process, identify areas for targeted support and inform the development of relevant guidance to ensure effective use of the tools. In partnership with an external data analysis firm and the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE), the Department is in the process of analysing the data and finalising the report. Recommendations will be made available in the new year.

A critical element of developing targeted support for the workforce has been to engage directly with the workforce to strategically embed pulse checks and data collection. Through collaboration with the School Leadership Institute, the Performance and Development (P&D) unit has obtained insight from 378 principals and deputy principals regarding their specific needs when leading implementing and leading performance and development process. We are using this data to ensure our work across P&D is focused on the immediate and anticipated needs of teachers and school leaders.

A strong feature of the new support is on the quality of the observation of practice which is a key aspect of the Performance and Development Framework. In order to strengthen support and improve practice in this area, the Department has launched key initiatives:

- Website material has been developed that provides guidance for best practice when teachers and colleagues undertake and complete observations. This includes universal information about effective observations alongside a guided journey for key elements to consider before, during and after the observation.
- A suite of professional learning is in development, which will include workshops for both teachers and supervisors focused on quality observations of practice. These workshops will be complemented by additional professional learning workshops focused on:
  - teachers' meaningful engagement in the PDP process
  - principals' meaningful engagement in the PDP process
  - non-teaching staff members' meaningful engagement in the PDP process
  - supervisors' effective leadership of the PDP process for teachers in their schools.
- A joint survey with NSW Teachers Federation was conducted in December 2020 to find out more about the observations of professional practice that are carried out as part of the Performance and Development Framework. Of the 5000 responses received, a significant proportion of respondents (44.3%) did not participate in any documented observations led by supervisors in 2019. 10% of respondents had no formal observations at all. Enhanced support to build efficacy in observations as part of the Performance and Development Cycle will be released in 2022.

- Supervisor-led observations pilot study will commence in 2022. Preparations are currently being finalised for a pilot to implement supervisor-led observations as part of the performance and development process. This study will assess the impact of supervisor-led observations on teacher professional development and inform the targeted system support supervisors need to effectively conduct observations and provide high-quality feedback to improve teacher practice.

The Department has entered a period of award negotiations with the NSW Teachers Federation, which includes clarification of the clause surrounding the Performance and Development Framework. It is expected the anticipated revisions to the Framework will be finalised through consultation and user testing during 2022.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Department is currently scoping work to complete preliminary pathway mapping for teachers accredited at the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher levels. We are awaiting the release of the updated Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Accreditation policy from the NSW Education Standards Authority to confirm timelines for the review and revision of departmental policy and procedure.

Through newly established working group meetings with NESAs, the Department has ensured collaboration and professional sharing on potential pathways for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers. We are also planning ways of expanding knowledge of the new HALT processes and what constitutes teacher quality at HALT level through updated resources and expansion of the identification and training of assessors. The Department anticipates increased numbers of teachers applying for higher levels of accreditation as we explore opportunities for enhanced system support and guidance under the new policy framework in 2022.

Should you require further information in relation to Recommendations 4 and 6, please contact [REDACTED], Director, Performance and Development, by telephone on [REDACTED], or email at [REDACTED].

### **Recommendation 7**

An internal evaluation of Quality Teaching, Successful Students (QTSS) was conducted in 2020 in accordance with Recommendation 7 of the Auditor-General's performance audit report – Ensuring teaching quality in NSW public schools. The evaluation has shown that QTSS has been implemented in accordance with guidelines and is achieving positive impacts on student learning, teacher capacity and effective collaboration in schools with primary students. Principals and Directors, Educational Leadership (DELs) report that it is achieving its intended outcomes.

Key findings of the evaluation include:

- Principals and DELs report a very high level of agreement that QTSS has
  - led to positive impacts on student learning
  - led to increases in the capacity of teachers
  - enabled effective teacher collaboration.
- Most (97 per cent) of schools spend all of their QTSS funding allocation on staffing in the year in which it is allocated.
- The majority of schools report in their annual report that QTSS is used for the intended purposes (77 per cent of sampled 2019 annual reports).

The following examples demonstrate how schools have used QTSS to improve teaching practice:

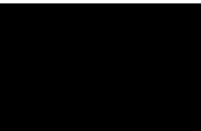
- Curl Curl North Public School expanded their instructional leader program to work with each grade one day per week to provide demonstration lessons, programming support and mentoring to improve learning outcomes in literacy.
- At Blairmount Public School, each assistant principal was provided with a day's release each week to coach the members of their team. As a result, 94 per cent of teachers engaged in coaching on a variety of projects to enhance evidence based practices.
- Exeter Public School provided all staff with time to participate in classroom observations, and some were also able to observe teaching at other schools. School executive had release time to refine the whole school assessment schedule and analyse student data to drive improved learning outcomes.
- Lane Cove West Public School employed a specialist instructional leader with a focus on students' learning outcomes in writing, using teacher mentoring and team teaching.

Next step actions proposed include:

- Improved guidance to school principals and DELs on the intended purpose and most effective use of QTSS. This has been implemented in the 2022 SBAR Resource Hub, which is live and available to schools and DELs now.
- Improved methodology for QTSS allocations will be considered to assist small schools (especially in rural and regional areas).

Should you require further information in relation to Recommendation 7, please contact [REDACTED], Director Strategic Schools Resourcing by telephone on [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



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**SECRETARY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
18 November 2021

