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A new approach to becoming an Independent Public School

Information for schools
and communities



Department of
Education

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FROM THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

I am very pleased to provide school communities with details about the State Government's new approach to greater school autonomy.

Independent Public Schools are leading the way in the reform of public education in Western Australia. More and more school communities are realising the benefits that flow from having the autonomy to make their schools more distinctive and shaped by the needs and aspirations of their students.

For those school communities that have not been selected as Independent Public Schools in previous years, or those that have not yet applied, a new approach from 2014 heralds a fresh opportunity to take on greater autonomy.

In the future, any school community that wishes to become an Independent Public School will be able to participate in a new development program to build readiness to achieve their aspirations.

Instead of expressing interest through written applications that are either accepted or rejected by a panel, schools will be assisted to meet the rigorous standards required to become Independent Public Schools.

The development program will involve principals of current Independent Public Schools – one of the ways the expertise in these schools is being harnessed to further this initiative and support all schools.

Importantly, the new workshops in the development program are being shaped specifically by the evaluation of the Independent Public Schools initiative which was conducted by The University of Melbourne.

I am delighted to be taking this important initiative in school autonomy in Western Australia to the next exciting phase.



Hon Peter Collier MLC
Minister for Education

August 2013



FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

School communities are invited to consider this new and exciting opportunity to become Independent Public Schools.

Under the leadership of their principals and with the support of their communities, 255 Independent Public Schools are now operating with a degree of autonomy that is unprecedented for public schools in this State.

School staff and members of the community are working together in new and innovative ways to forge exciting learning opportunities for students.

This prospectus details the new process to become an Independent Public School. As in previous years, it remains each school community's choice to seek to become an Independent Public School or not.

The new development program will assist interested schools to be ready for the challenge. An initial briefing day and specifically tailored professional support workshops will build school readiness for autonomy described by the existing entry criteria for Independent Public Schools.

The final element of the development program will provide successful schools with the operational information necessary to fully transition to Independent Public Schools.

Independent Public School principals have played a pivotal role in the enhancement of the initiative to this point and I am confident this will continue into the future. Principals have helped to shape the new development program so far and will continue to do so. They will also be actively involved in its delivery.

While Independent Public Schools are leading the movement to greater school autonomy, all schools will continue to benefit from the extension of flexibilities and greater capacity for local decision making.

I invite school communities to consider being part of this new approach to becoming Independent Public Schools.



Sharyn O'Neill
Director General





BECOMING AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOL

School communities wishing to become Independent Public Schools in 2015 are able to participate in a new development program.

The new program has three elements – a briefing day, development workshops and comprehensive transition training.

1. Briefing day

In each school the principal, chair of the school council and one other staff member are invited to a one day briefing in 2013 that captures the philosophy, nature and leadership requirements of autonomy in Independent Public Schools.

The briefing includes a detailed overview of the development workshops and transition training, and is conducted in both metropolitan and country locations in October and November 2013.

To attend the briefing day, the principal should send an email to register no later than Friday 13 September 2013:

E: IPSEOI@education.wa.edu.au

With the benefit of information gained at the briefing day, a school community that wishes to proceed with the process of becoming an Independent Public School goes on to the next element of the development program that assists them to build their readiness for autonomy.

The principal, with the support of the school council, informs the Director General of the school community's intention to participate in the workshops. Alternatively, the principal may wish to defer participation to a future time.

To participate in the workshops in 2014 (after the briefing day in 2013 and following consultation with the school community), the principal should complete and forward the information on page 10 no later than Friday 6 December 2013.

2. Development workshops

These workshops involve tailored professional support that takes into account each school's individual circumstance and context. It involves up to three days over five months and is delivered in both metropolitan and country locations.

The principal and one other staff member have the opportunity to attend each day, with the school council chair involved in some aspects. Participants engage in contextualised on-the-job learning informed by principals' stories and workshops.

This support assists schools to meet the three entry criteria for Independent Public Schools, which remain unchanged:

- capacity of the school to assume greater responsibility for its own affairs
- level of local support, including staff support
- potential benefits to students and the broader school community.

Principals of Independent Public Schools and/or respected education practitioners play a key role in this aspect of the program by providing participants with guidance, support and structured feedback.

3. Transition training

For schools that successfully complete the initial development requirements, the final element of the program provides them with the operational information necessary for full transition to Independent Public Schools.

Key staff participate in this training that familiarises schools with the processes required to enact their new decision-making powers, and meet their new responsibilities and heightened accountability requirements. This includes human resource management, financial management and procurement.

SCOPE OF INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Independent Public Schools have flexibility and responsibility to make decisions across a wide range of school operations.

While each Independent Public School can select from the *flexibilities* it wishes to exercise, it is obliged to meet a number of mandated *responsibilities*.

Curriculum

- Flexibility to adopt a range of curricula providing legislative requirements are met.
- Flexibility to determine the timing of some school development days, including negotiating with staff and the school board to trade off some days for after-hours professional learning throughout the year.

Student support

- Flexibility to appoint student support staff including, but not limited to, school psychologists, speech pathologists and social workers.
- Flexibility to determine expenditure of special needs funding allocated as part of the one-line budget.
- Flexibility to exclude students for reasons currently permitted under the *School Education Act 1999* with a choice of central or regional support to help manage exclusion processes and find alternative placements for excluded students.

Human resources

Staff management

- Responsibility to determine the staffing profile (administrative, teaching and school support staff) within the one-line budget.
- Responsibility to approve leave (including leave without pay).
- Flexibility to manage all relief costs for staff leave in the one-line budget.
- Flexibility to approve intrastate and interstate travel for staff.

Recruitment and selection

- Responsibility to select and appoint all staff, including fixed-term staff, and manage expressions of interest.
- Flexibility to be exempted from the requirement to consider redeployment and teacher transfer pools. This does not preclude staff in these pools from applying for positions advertised by Independent Public Schools, or Independent Public Schools accessing staff in these pools.
- Flexibility to make early offers of placement to student teachers and school psychologists on their final year practicum.



"Before becoming an Independent Public School, I often carried out decisions made by others. Now I make decisions that address the needs of our students and our community. Our challenges have become opportunities for innovative thinking."

Carol Strauss
Principal, Ashdale Secondary College

SCOPE OF INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS (CONT)

Payroll

- Responsibility to approve and enter electronically (HRMIS) information on commencement, termination, leave, variation and movement of staff (payment of staff salaries remains with the Education and Training Shared Services Centre).

Financial management and procurement

- Responsibility to manage salaries and contingencies through the one-line budget.
- Responsibility for the principal to award contracts and dispose of assets valued at up to \$150 000 (GST inclusive); and exercise or decline contract extensions and approve price variations for contracts specifically awarded for the school where the contract value is \$150 000 (GST inclusive) or less.
- Flexibility to manage utilities (electricity, water, gas and waste management) and retain all savings.
- Flexibility to manage faults (breakdowns and repairs) and engage contractors using funds in the one-line budget.
- Flexibility to determine accounting and financial procedures and practices, provided they meet compliance and reporting requirements of financial and regulatory/legislative frameworks such as the Treasurer's Instructions.
- Flexibility to establish a wider range of reserve accounts (such as salary, and buildings and facilities).
- Flexibility to choose to exclude the school from using a range of whole of Department contracts based on value for money decisions.

Buildings and facilities

- Responsibility to submit requests directly to central office for capital works.
- Flexibility to employ facilities management, maintenance, cleaning and/or gardening staff. This is in addition to the allocated school cleaning and gardening staff, complying with Government policy.
- Flexibility to contract and manage property services contracts using funds in the one-line budget (for example window cleaning, mowing and associated services).
- Flexibility to contract and manage routine maintenance using funds in the one-line budget (for example RCD testing, fire extinguishers, gutter cleaning).

"The flexibilities of being an Independent Public School invite creative thinking, a solutions focus and a shift from external to internal control. Balanced with increased accountability, it sharpens the focus on the importance of positive school culture, strategic thinking and truly working with your school community."



Lee Musumeci
Principal, Challis Early Childhood Education Centre



BENEFITS OF BEING PART OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

An Independent Public School remains part of the Western Australian public school system.

It is able to access associated benefits and support including but not limited to:

- regional services and school networks including network principals
- graduate teacher support and induction
- professional learning offered by the system
- primary and secondary behaviour centres
- support from Standards and Integrity
- management of critical incidents
- communications and marketing
- attendance officers and participation staff
- attendance panels
- student exclusion support
- employee support services
- payroll support
- school staffing services
- school recruitment services
- Notebooks for Teachers program
- ICT helpdesk
- computer software licenses
- provision of facilities
- resourcing and budgeting
- financial services and support.



SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

New Independent Public Schools are supported through a range of initiatives.

Transition process

- Each school is allocated additional funding (\$20 000 to \$40 000) before starting as an Independent Public School to help prepare and plan for the transition.
- Principals, staff, registrars/business managers and representatives of school councils participate in a training program to support transition to an Independent Public School.
- Where existing staff are not in agreement with the ethos and direction of Independent Public Schools, they may choose to 'opt out' of their school within one semester of a school starting as an Independent Public School.
- Schools are immediately removed from current staffing processes and may start their own processes to establish staffing profiles.
- Where a school wishes to alter its staffing profile while transitioning to an Independent Public School, costs associated with redeployment continue to be supported centrally.
- Central support remains available to place redeployees generated because of significant declines in student enrolments or other reasons outside a principal's control.

Leadership support

- The School Innovation and Reform Unit provides support during the transition period and beyond.
- There are strong and well established collegiate relationships among principals of Independent Public Schools, providing support and guidance in the area of leadership.
- Central business units actively support and assist Independent Public Schools to manage specific matters.
- School leaders may choose to access ongoing leadership development programs, including coaching and mentoring, through the Institute for Professional Learning and other providers.

Administration support

- Each school receives ongoing additional funding (\$25 000 to \$50 000) for administrative support for human resource and financial management.

Legal and industrial matters

- Independent Public Schools are represented in industrial negotiations and are supported in legal and industrial matters.

OBLIGATIONS OF INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Independent Public Schools operate within the parameters detailed below.

Compliance

Modification, replacement or opting out of Department policies, procedures and compliance processes is subject to adherence to:

- all legislation including, but not limited to, the *School Education Act 1999*, *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, *Financial Management Act 2006* and *School Curriculum and Standards Authority Act 1997* as well as all industrial instruments
- whole of government policies and initiatives that apply to all public schools
- agreements between the Australian Government and State Government
- provision of data to meet Statewide reporting obligations (for example suspensions, exclusions, attendance, on entry assessments, finance)
- the school audit program
- registration and screening of staff, and Working with Children requirements
- participation in the Department of Education Services' independent review process in the final year of the Delivery and Performance Agreement
- application of *Excellence and Equity: Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2012–2015* and subsequent strategic plans.

Delivery and Performance Agreement

Each Independent Public School has a Delivery and Performance Agreement which:

- is signed by the principal, Director General and chair of the school board
- identifies resources the school will receive, support that will be provided, programs contracted to be delivered, and performance and accountability of the school over the life of the agreement
- forms the basis of the Principal's Professional Review.

Public accountability

Each Independent Public School:

- has an independent review in the final year of its Delivery and Performance Agreement, with the report made public
- produces an annual school report signed by the chair of the school board
- undertakes ongoing self assessment which is reported to the school board.

Governance

- The principal ensures the school has an effective school board that includes business and industry representatives.
- The Delivery and Performance Agreement is endorsed by the chair of the school board, principal and Director General.
- The one-line budget and business plan are endorsed by the chair of the school board and principal.
- The principal provides quarterly reports to the school board on the school's performance.
- The school board participates in the selection of the principal when a vacancy arises.
- The role and function of Parents and Citizens' Associations continues to be supported.

PARTICIPATION IN THE BRIEFING DAY 2013

To attend the briefing day, the principal should send an email to register no later than Friday 13 September 2013:
E: IPSEOI@education.wa.edu.au



“The staff and school community have embraced the opportunity to apply flexibilities inherent in the Independent Public School model and take ownership of key decisions. Our school community has been energised and we have created a warm, respectful, optimistic and achievement-oriented learning environment.”

Geoff Metcalf
Principal, Roseworth Primary School



PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS 2014

Complete this form after attending the briefing day and
after consulting with the school community.

School: _____

School type: Primary Secondary District high Education support Other (please specify)

School level: _____

Name of principal: _____

Signature of principal: _____

T: _____ M: _____ E: _____

If an acting principal, please also include details of substantive principal.

Name of substantive principal: _____

Signature of substantive principal: _____

Name of chair, school council: _____

Signature of chair, school council: _____

T: _____ M: _____ E: _____

Is this a cluster application? Yes No

(If a cluster of schools, each school is required to complete this form if they wish to participate.)

If yes, name of cluster if applicable: _____

List of other schools in cluster: _____

Submit this form no later than Friday 6 December 2013:

E: IPSEOI@education.wa.edu.au

For queries or clarifications:

School Innovation and Reform Unit

T: 9238 2282

W: det.wa.edu.au/independentpublicschools



det.wa.edu.au/independentpublicschools

The Independent Public Schools website includes this prospectus and information for staff, parents and communities.