

Every student succeeding  
State Schools Strategy 2016-2020



# Independent Public Schools 2017 Prospectus



## Director-General's foreword

Our goal is to provide a world-class schooling system in which all students can benefit from the opportunities that a quality education provides. Through the Independent Public Schools initiative, Queensland is able to offer dynamic, flexible and innovative school environments that maximise student learning outcomes.

Through the Independent Public Schools initiative the whole system is enabled to better meet the opportunities and challenges of educating children in the modern world.

While innovation and capacity to improve practice are not exclusive to Independent Public Schools, these high-potential schools are afforded operational flexibility to enable the trialling of innovative practice. They are then supported to share their evidence-based achievements with colleagues locally, across the state and further afield so that their successes can be replicated in all state schools.

The Independent Public Schools initiative is about enabling school leaders to take responsibility for decisions that influence teaching and learning, while the department supports capacity and capability building and provides an authorising environment built upon collaboration and shared responsibility.

Independent Public School principals are empowered to collaborate with their school communities to improve student outcomes and school performance, taking into account all of the unique complexities, challenges and local features of their school environment.

I look forward to joining with you as we work together to improve learning outcomes across our state school system.

**Dr Jim Watterston**  
Director-General  
Department of Education and Training



## Continual improvement

Following an independent evaluation conducted in June 2015, the Independent Public Schools Policy Framework was developed to set out the key features of the initiative in Queensland, and the system supports that enable it to deliver its full potential.

The implementation of the Independent Public Schools initiative has been closely monitored since its inception in 2013 with a rolling evaluation to be completed by December 2016.

A further evaluation of the 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.



## Maximising possibilities

Independent Public Schools are a catalyst for positive system-wide change that leads to improved services and learning outcomes for all state school students.

They partner with their school community to create and pursue a shared strategic direction that focuses on student wellbeing and improved student outcomes.

Since 2013, 180 schools have commenced as Independent Public Schools. In 2017, additional high-potential schools will have the opportunity to become Independent Public Schools and:

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





## Enhanced local governance

Community engagement is an essential feature of any high-functioning school, and central to the operation of an Independent Public School.

All Independent Public Schools should establish a school council within 12 months of becoming an IPS.

The school council is a vital means of engaging with, and being held to account by, parents, school staff and the community.

School councils approve and monitor the school's strategic direction, further strengthening collaborative local decision-making.

## Role of the school council

The council must perform its role in accordance with legislation and in a way that achieves the best learning outcomes for the school's students.

The school council:

- should be established within 12 months of becoming IPS
- monitors the school's strategic direction
- approves and monitors the implementation of school plans and policies of a strategic nature (including the annual estimate of revenue and expenditure for the school)
- advises the school principal about strategic matters.



## Advancing innovation

Independent Public Schools are high potential schools afforded some operational flexibility to test new ways of working.

With this flexibility is the expectation that they share the innovative practice that lifts the performance of their own school and supports positive change across the entire state schooling system.

Once becoming an Independent Public School, 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 strong evidence-based practice about the most effective measures and interventions in various schooling contexts
- share the learnings and drive positive, evidence-based reforms across the system.

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

Independent Public Schools will then help facilitate system reform by using system networks that will encourage wider adoption of evidence-based initiatives and ideas.

Independent Public Schools benefit from:

- a direct line of communication with the Director-General and other senior executives who help prioritise innovation by paving a smooth path through departmental processes
- the opportunity to recruit staff and to build a team that is fit-for-purpose to local needs
- flexible management of infrastructure, financial resources and human resources
- opportunities to explore innovative ways to connect with local businesses, industry and other community organisations
- an option to pursue creative models of sponsorship, industry partnerships and infrastructure partnerships
- increased flexibility to shape curriculum offerings that suit the needs of their students for example, International Baccalaureate programs, extracurricular programs, gateway programs and centres of excellence
- freedom to shape and deliver innovative educational practices that maximise outcomes for students.





## Public accountability, transparency and performance

Independent Public Schools 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.

As part of Queensland's strong state education system, Independent Public Schools comply with state and national legislation, industrial instruments, directives, delegations, whole-of-government policies and national agreements.

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 Independent Public Schools, and the operational flexibilities they may enact, require some specialised accountability arrangements.

### **IPS Policy Framework**

The framework sets out the key features of the Independent Public School initiative in Queensland and the system supports that enable it to deliver to its full potential.

### **Delivery and Performance Agreement**

Entered into with the Director-General and the chair of the school council, this agreement outlines key expectations, roles and responsibilities, and the performance and accountability expectations of the school.

### **Local consultative and accountability structures**

There are three key local consultative and accountability structures of relevance to Independent Public Schools – the Local Consultative Committee (LCC), the P&C and the school council.

### **Regular school review**

Under the School Performance and Assessment Framework, all state schools will have a review at least every four years. All Independent Public Schools undertake the same School Improvement Unit reviews as other state schools.

### **Tenure**

The Independent Public School 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 Independent Public Schools 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 initiative.

### **School council**

The school council plays a role in monitoring and informing the school's strategic direction in a way that achieves the best learning outcomes for the school's students.

### **Principal performance and development**

Independent Public School principals are responsible for developing and managing a process for their own professional performance and development that best meets their needs. They are accountable to the school community and Director-General for their performance and that of the school.

## Locally tailored workforce

Independent Public Schools have additional autonomy for greater flexibility in staffing options through:

- direct recruitment of classified and non-classified teaching staff (NB: Protocols regarding the implementation of this option are currently being considered)
- direct allocation of staffing resources expressed in notional full-time equivalent staff
- local management of their staffing profile.

Principals of Independent Public Schools:

- can directly recruit teachers (where vacancies exist) as well as filling vacancies through existing department applicant pools or the transfer system (NB: Protocols regarding the implementation of this option are currently being considered)
- can access the relocation process for classified teaching staff.

## Increased financial flexibility

Like all state schools, Independent Public Schools can flexibly direct their budget to best meet their students' individual needs.

Schools manage their appropriation budget based on their identified needs.

## Building for the future

Independent Public Schools can formulate infrastructure plans and industry links to shape a physical environment that best matches the strategic vision for their school. Schools can:

- make local decisions about joint facility agreements and partnerships
- contract and manage their own maintenance using Building and Asset Services (BAS) or contractors
- develop a Strategic Infrastructure (Assets) Plan in direct consultation with Infrastructure Services Branch (ISB)
- submit requests for capital works projects directly to ISB.

An Independent Public School that is subject to a Public Private Partnership (PPP) is obligated to comply with the PPP contract conditions. For example, a PPP school is not required to formulate a maintenance or Infrastructure (Asset) Plan as these are incorporated into the PPP arrangements. The PPP contract continues to be managed centrally by the department.





## Supporting our Independent Public Schools

In Queensland, Independent Public Schools drive their own school improvement design, maximise student outcomes within their schools and contribute to change across the system. The initiative is strengthened by system supports that enable them to fulfil their role.

Independent Public Schools receive a one-off \$50,000 up-front establishment grant to assist with their transition, and \$50,000 per annum for functions associated with becoming an Independent Public School.

Independent Public Schools remain part of the state school system and they continue to have access to:

- existing liability insurance
- legal and media advice
- financial and procurement advice
- industrial relations advice and support
- Curriculum into the Classroom
- OneSchool
- MyHR
- WorkCover Queensland support
- central and regional office support
- high-quality professional development opportunities.



## How to become an Independent Public School

All Queensland state schools, irrespective of size, geographical location or school type, can apply to become an Independent Public School in 2017.

During the consultation phase of the process it is important for schools to discuss their capacity to assume greater autonomy with their assistant regional director or regional director.

Following the consultation phase schools are required to submit a written application using an online e-form available via a link on OnePortal.

The written application must demonstrate:

- the consultation that has occurred across stakeholder groups, particularly the Local Consultative Committee, members of the Queensland Teachers' Union, the P&C Association and the region, including a summary of their views
- the school's capacity to assume greater responsibility for its affairs
- the potential benefits for students and the broader school community for the school to become an Independent Public School
- the innovative educational programs or practices that the school will implement to improve student performance.

Applications close on Friday 11 November 2016.

Late applications will not be accepted.





## Application checklist

Before applying to become an Independent Public School has the principal:

- Discussed becoming an Independent Public School with the assistant regional director or regional director?
- Led an extensive consultation process with the school community including the Local Consultative Committee, members of the Queensland Teachers' Union, the P&C Association?

When submitting the written application:

- Has the application template available on OnePortal been used to complete the written response?
- Does the written response address each criterion?
- Has supporting information (if required) been attached to the document?
- Has the substantive principal signed the application?
- Has the document been submitted to the online e-form on OnePortal by the due date?
- Has the confirmation message of successful submission been retained by the school?

Following the submission of applications, a selection process will be conducted by the department.

## Selection process

Applications will be considered by a panel comprising:

- Executive Director, School Autonomy and Improvement
- Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) representative
- principal associations' representatives
- existing Independent Public School principals' representatives.

The panel will consider applications using a five-stage process:

### Stage 1: Regional support, consultation and financial controls

#### a) Input from the region

*Purpose is to enable the panel to consider input from the school's assistant regional director, via the regional director, in relation to the school's capacity to assume greater autonomy.*

#### b) Demonstrated quality consultation across stakeholder groups

*Purpose is to identify school community support for the IPS application.*

The school has demonstrated that a quality consultation process has occurred across stakeholder groups, including a summary of their views. A majority vote by each of the following key stakeholders — QTU members, Local Consultative Committee (Together Union and United Voice if no LCC exists) and P&C Association — is compulsory.

#### c) Identification of suitable financial controls

*Purpose is to identify schools where suitable financial controls exist.*

The panel will liaise with Internal Audit to ascertain if the latest school audit result is rated above 'minimal'.

Schools unable to provide a majority vote from the compulsory stakeholder groups or a suitable audit result will not progress past this stage.

### Stage 2: Set criteria

*Purpose is to identify pools of schools to join the IPS initiative utilising the evidence provided by the school in their written application, and any relevant school performance data.*

#### Criterion One

The school has demonstrated in the application the capacity to assume greater responsibility for its affairs.

#### Criterion Two

Evidence of the school being able to assume greater responsibility for its affairs as shown by improved school performance demonstrated in the application and the 'School Data Profile', or other differentiated areas of exemplary performance (for example, industry partnerships).

#### Criterion Three

The application details the potential benefits for students and the broader school community for the school to become an IPS.

#### Criterion Four

The application details the innovative educational programs or practices that the school will implement to improve student performance.



### **Stage 3: Equity consideration**

*Purpose is to meet the program requirements regarding the inclusion of a broad cross section of schools from across Queensland. Special consideration will be given to schools from areas of socioeconomic and geographic disadvantage.*

### **Stage 4: Ethical standards consideration**

*Purpose is to verify if there are outstanding matters at the school that may impact on the school's operation as an IPS.*

### **Stage 5: Director-General Approval of 2017 cohort**

The panel will make recommendations to the Director-General for approval.

