

Independent Public Schools



Questions and answers for schools

Fact sheet

How do Queensland Independent Public Schools differ from other state schools?

Queensland Independent Public Schools have greater flexibility to enable innovation that improves performance through:

- managing their planning and review processes
- determining staffing options
- determining the departmental policies and procedures that best suit their individual communities.

All Independent Public Schools remain part of the strong state system. They have a responsibility to work within the system to support growth, and share learnings and practices to build collective capacity.

How can schools 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 2016 through an open Expression of Interest (EOI) process.

Prior to submitting an EOI, it is essential that principals undertake broad consultation with their school communities.

Principals may use existing consultative groups to ensure the whole school community has the opportunity to provide input and to gain an understanding of all stakeholder views.

Schools can begin their consultation at any time.

Consultation will gauge community interest in becoming an Independent Public School.

School consultation should involve stakeholders such as:

- staff

- parents, including the Parents & Citizens' Association and school council (if established)
- the wider community, for example local business, industry and community groups.

The written application must demonstrate:

- the consultation that has occurred across stakeholder groups, 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.

All applications must be submitted using the online e-form which is available on [OnePortal](#) during the submission period.

How are schools selected for the initiative?

Applications will be considered by a panel comprising:

- the Principal Education Officer, School Autonomy (chair)
- Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) representative
- principal associations' representatives
- existing Independent Public School principals' representatives.

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

Please refer to the prospectus on [OnePortal](#) for detailed information on the selection criteria.

How many schools are involved?

There is an opportunity for a total of 250 schools to become Independent Public Schools over a five-year period from 2013 to 2017. There are currently 130 schools involved in the program.

A further 60 schools will join the initiative in 2016 with the final 60 schools commencing in 2017.

What does school governance look like in an Independent Public School?

Independent Public Schools are required to have a school council. This enables greater involvement of the school community and other stakeholders, such as industry, in setting the strategic direction of the school. School councils approve and monitor the school's strategic direction, strengthening local decision-making. Refer to the [Queensland school councils](#) fact sheet for further detail.

Are Independent Public Schools funded differently?

Independent Public Schools receive a one-off \$50,000 grant in Term 4 of the year prior to commencement as an Independent Public School to assist with their transition. In 2016 all Independent Public Schools will also receive a further \$50,000 in funding.

How do staffing processes differ for Independent Public Schools?

Principals at Independent Public Schools can directly recruit teachers (where vacancies exist) as well as filling vacancies through existing department applicant pools or the transfer system. They can also access the relocation process for classified teaching staff.

Independent Public Schools can shape their workforce to align with strategic directions set at a local level that respond directly to the needs of their students. Schools have

additional autonomy for greater flexibility in staffing options through:

- direct recruitment of classified and non-classified teaching staff
- local management of their staffing profile.

The Independent Public School initiative does not impact staff permanency. If a permanent employee does not wish to remain in an Independent Public School, they have the opportunity to transfer to another state school within the same geographic area.

All permanent employees are required to confirm in writing if they are opting out from their school within one month of the notification that the school will be included in the Independent Public Schools initiative.

The transfer system is available for Independent Public School teachers who wish to move to other locations. Refer to the [Human Resources](#) fact sheet for more information.

How are Independent Public School facilities managed?

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
- can contract and manage their own maintenance using Building and Asset Services (BAS) or contractors
- develop a Strategic Infrastructure (Assets) Plan in direct consultation with Central Office
- submit requests for capital works projects directly to Infrastructure Services Branch (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 would also continue to be managed centrally by the department. For more information refer to the [Infrastructure Services](#) fact sheet.

How are principals of Independent Public Schools employed?

Principals of Independent Public Schools are employed under existing conditions. This means they apply for relocations or promotions through existing processes.

The Independent Public Schools initiative has no impact on the banding of the principal position.

The school council chair or their nominee is included in the selection panel of a principal in an Independent Public School.

How are Independent Public Schools accountable?

As part of Queensland's strong state education system, Independent Public Schools are required to comply with all national and state legislation, industrial instruments, directives, delegations, whole-of-government policy and national agreements. They are also required to participate in all departmental audits and school reviews.

While Independent Public Schools are not required to follow a number of operational procedures, they are required to:

- determine and manage their planning and review processes for the school
- participate in system audits and school reviews
- provide systemic data and use corporate systems, for example OneSchool and MyHR

- purchase IT products that are compatible with the department's managed operating environment.

The school council monitors and endorses school performance against planned targets.

Do Independent Public Schools follow departmental policies?

While Independent Public Schools are not required to follow a number of operational procedures, they are required to operate within legislation, industrial instruments, directives, delegations, whole-of-government policy and national agreements.

For further detail refer to the [Legislative and policy requirements](#) fact sheet.

What curriculum do Independent Public Schools deliver?

Within a curriculum framework approved by the Minister, Independent Public School principals plan the learning experiences offered to students at a school. This means implementing the Australian Curriculum, the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority syllabuses and mandatory languages other than English in Years 5 to 8.

What are the enrolment processes for Independent Public Schools?

Independent Public Schools manage their enrolments within existing capacity and enrolment management plans. Special school principals involved in the Independent Public Schools initiative make recommendations to the Assistant Director-General - State Schools regarding the enrolment of students at their school.

Can Independent Public Schools charge additional fees?

As with all state schools, Independent Public Schools determine student resource scheme amounts, voluntary contributions or set fees for specialised programs.

Can Independent Public Schools change their name?

No. The authority to change the name of a state school remains with the Minister.

What support is provided to Independent Public Schools?

Independent Public Schools benefit from the strengths of the Queensland state education system through access to:

- existing liability insurance
- legal and media advice
- financial and purchasing advice
- industrial relations advice and support
- Curriculum into the Classroom
- OneSchool
- MyHR
- Workcover support
- central and regional office support.

How do school councils operate?

School councils in Independent Public Schools operate under the existing legislation as applied to all state schools. The establishment of school councils allows greater involvement of the school community in determining the school's strategic direction.

School councils comprise at least six, but not more than 15 members. A school council must include at least one elected parent member and one elected staff member (the number of elected parent members and elected staff members of a school council must be equal).

A school council (for a school that provides Years 10, 11 or 12) must include at least one but not more than two elected student members and two appointed members. Elected student members can only be students from Year 10, 11 or 12 at the school. Schools may appoint coopted students from younger year levels; however these students are unable to vote.

In general, the school council plays a role in approving and monitoring the school's strategic direction in a way that achieves the best learning outcomes for the school's students. The size of the school will determine representation of staff and students on the school council.

For more information read the [Queensland school councils](#) fact sheet.

How does the role of a school council differ to that of a P&C Association?

The school council has an accountability role and is responsible for informing and monitoring the school's strategic direction. Members are responsible for approving strategic documents that set the direction, culture and tone of the school.

The Parents and Citizens' (P&C) Association has a support and advice role and is responsible for school fundraising activities.

The Independent Public Schools initiative does not impact on the functions of P&C Associations.

Is the Independent Public Schools initiative supported by research?

Research on school autonomy shows its success relies on a range of factors such as what support is provided, types of autonomy, and accountabilities.

However, research also shows that while there should not be a 'one-size fits all' model for autonomy, there is a link between high-performing systems and school autonomy.

In addition, a 2011 study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development reports that a combination of autonomy and accountability is related to better student outcomes.¹ While a 2015 review of the evidence undertaken by Caldwell reports that the impact of school autonomy on student achievement becomes stronger the longer a school has made use of a higher level of autonomy.²

The level of autonomy required by schools is dependent on a complex mix of variables such as community aspiration, student cohort, and geography. The increased level of autonomy that will be offered by the Independent Public Schools initiative has the potential to enable local solutions for better learning and ultimately, improving student outcomes.

How is the Independent Public Schools initiative evaluated?

The implementation of the Independent Public Schools initiative is being closely monitored. A rolling evaluation is being undertaken and will be completed by December 2016.

A short-term independent evaluation was also commissioned in June 2015 to inform the continued roll out of the Independent Public Schools initiative.

Findings from this evaluation are currently being considered. Decisions from this evaluation may impact on the conditions under which all Independent Public Schools operate in the future.

Contact

For more information about the Independent Public Schools initiative visit the department's website at:

www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/independent-public-schools/index.html

or email: IPS@dete.qld.gov.au.

¹ [School Autonomy and Accountability: Are they Related to Student Performance?](#)

² [Impact of school autonomy on student achievement in 21st century education](#)