Schools for All Report

Association of Independent Schools of the ACT

Quarterly Report – February 2017

Introduction

As noted in the Preamble of the ACT Government Response to the Expert Panel recommendations, "…AIS (has) considered each recommendation and acknowledge a strong desire to build on existing reforms, improvements and initiatives in so far as it is practical and possible. As an independent governing body representing 18 independent schools that are separate and autonomous entities, AIS notes all the recommendations and the ACT Government response."

An indication of this desire to build an existing reform, and to respond to the recommendations, is evidenced in the agenda of both AISACT Board and Executive Committee meetings. Further, the Executive Committee has established a Schools for All Subcommittee to provide it with advice on strategies, opportunities and approaches in direct reference to the Schools for All Report, and the responses to the recommendations from the Association. The establishment of this Subcommittee was noted and endorsed by the full Board of AISACT.

Progress on the Recommendations specific to Independent Schools and/or to AISACT

Policy and School Governance

Recommendation 3.2
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, develop practical and readily accessible guidelines to enable school leaders and staff to understand and comply with their core legal obligations with respect to human rights, discrimination, work health and safety, and privacy; including how to reconcile potentially competing obligations.
AISACT Response
The AIS will support member schools to review relevant policies and procedures and will access the ETD resources to provide to ACT Independent Schools.
Key Activities
All AISACT Member Schools have access to the University of Canberra Disability Standards for Education online course. With over 425 Staff in AISACT Member Schools engaging with the online course.

A number of Member Schools have included or plan to include the course in their end of term/year professional learning schedule for staff.

Member Schools have access to a range of resources to understand and comply with their core legal obligations via the Associations website. Additionally, the Association will continue to collaborate with external agencies and consultants to support Member Schools in this area as requested.

Recommendation 4.1

That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, review their policies and procedures with respect to students with complex needs and challenging behaviour to ensure that all schools have a comprehensive suite of relevant policies and procedures.

AISACT Response

The AIS will support member schools to review relevant policies and procedures and will access the ETD resources to provide to ACT Independent Schools.

Key Activities

A number of Member Schools have begun the process of reviewing their procedures and policies with respect to students with complex needs and challenging behaviours through a whole school approach.

AISACT is supporting Member Schools through professional learning; for example an event titled *Managing Challenging Behaviours in Schools* presented by Education Psychologist Tim Dansie.

AISACT has developed two sets of guidelines for Member Schools, Managing NDIS externally funded service providers and Assistance Animals in ACT Independent Schools. The guidelines and any additional guidelines will be made available, along with other relevant resources via the AISACT's website.

Independent Schools engage in a rigorous re-registration process every five years. A significant part of the process requires each school to critique current policies and guidelines and ensure that each both complies with legislation, and best meets the needs of the school's community.

Recommendation 11.1

That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, develop practical guidelines on the appropriate use of voluntary withdrawal spaces, seclusion, and physical restraint.

AISACT Response

ETD will share these resources with CE and AIS and will collaborate to develop future resources to support all students.

Key Activities
AISACT will collaborate with ED and CE in developing possible future resources. AISACT is currently looking to work with a number of organisations in developing partnerships and developing guidelines and assist schools in further planning. Through discussions with Member Schools, these guidelines will be developed using the following principles: - One space does not fit all students - A physical space may not be the best fit for all students, a piece of sensory equipment or an action (e.g. walking, listening to music) may be more suitable - Communicating with the student is key to determine on an agreed method to assist them - Removing the focus away from the physical structures and direct the focus towards what works for the student - Ensure that if there is a dedicated space that it is normalised within the school community - Ensure that whatever method is used it can be fitted within an existing structure. A summary of examples of policies and guidelines already used within Member Schools is outlined below: - The Executive of the school works in conjunction with pastoral care staff and a student's family to better support students emotional needs through the development of individual plans. - The adaptation of a Relationship Management policy allows for educators and students to discuss, problem-solve and negotiate alternative solutions for challenging situations.

Recommendation 11.2
That ETD and CE establish procedures that (a) enable ETD and CE to approve and monitor any behaviour support plans that propose the use of restrictive practices for an individual student; (b) require member schools to report each occasion of the use of restrictive practices to a nominated officer within ETD or CE; and (c) monitor the use of restrictive practices and identify trends in order to inform service improvement. That each Independent School establish procedures that enable any behaviour support plans that propose the use of restrictive practices to be approved by the school leadership or management.
AISACT Response
AIS notes that where such procedures are not in place already, the AIS will support member schools to establish such procedures.
Key Activities
As autonomous bodies each Independent School is responsible for the establishment of procedures and the development of plans. Schools may incorporate behaviour plans into student's individual plans, mental health plans or equivalent. School executives are responsible

for the writing and implementation of such plans. Schools regularly review these plans and restructure them to ensure they are workable documents.

The Association will continue to support schools in the development and review of the procedures.

Recommendation 11.7
That the ACT Government seek an amendment to the Education Act 2004 (ACT) to require Catholic and Independent Schools to report data of suspensions and exclusions of students, including the proportion of students with a disability and students in out of home care, to the Registrar of Non-Government Schools.
AISACT Response
ETD is committed to transparency of reporting and will consult with CE and AIS to determine if this level of reporting can be achieved. CE and AIS have an agreement to report to the Minister for Education the number and nature of critical incidents that occur in schools.
Key Activities
AISACT has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the ACT Government to report to the Minister the nature and number of critical incidents every six months.

Recommendation 12.6
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, develop guidelines which regulate access to schools by NDIS service providers.
AISACT Response
AIS will where appropriate work with member schools to support the development of guidelines related to NDIS providers in schools.
Key Activities
Two staff members from AISACT sit on the NDIS Education and Employment working group which meets on a monthly basis. AISACT has developed guidelines relating to NDIS provision in Schools. These guidelines are available to Member Schools via the AISACT website. Additionally, Member Schools can access advice and support from the Association should they wish.

Recommendation 15.1

That ETD and CE, and each Independent School, make clear in their strategic plans a) how their student-centred vision and principles are operationalised with respect to priorities, targets and indicators; and b) how the various components, services and programs that they provide contribute to the implementation of their student-centred vision.

AISACT Response

AIS notes the strategic plans are developed by the governing body of a school to best set the directions and priorities, and reinforce the culture of schools. The office of AIS will, where appropriate, work with and support schools in their consideration of this recommendation.

Key Activities

Schools for All is an item at each AISACT Board Meeting in order to update Board Members on the progress and strategic implications of the work being conducted in Member Schools.

Additionally, a Schools for All Executive subcommittee has been developed to provide additional support and guidance to Member Schools and the Association.

Recommendation 13.2

That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, ensure that the program of induction for all permanent and temporary teachers includes components on the teaching of students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.

AISACT Response

AIS will work with and support member schools in this area where appropriate.

Key Activities

Discussion and information gathering from Member Schools will be facilitated through the AISACT Schools for All Executive Committee Subcommittee. Work is ongoing.

Community and Culture

Recommendation 6.1
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, encourage all school leaders to implement KidsMatter (for primary schools) and MindMatters (for high schools) as part of their overall strategy to support positive school culture, student wellbeing, and behaviour.
AISACT Response
KidsMatter and MindMatters are also actively promoted across all AIS member schools. AIS will continue to support these programs and identify other recognised programs appropriate for each independent school's context.
Key Activities
Each Independent School develops pastoral care policies and programs to suit the culture and ethos of the school and the needs of the students. The Association and Member Schools have embraced KidsMatter and MindMatters as a program for student wellbeing. Thirteen Member Schools have implemented either/or both programs, with many of these and others taking aspects of the programs to fit the respective school's culture and existing pastoral care program. A summary of examples of how Member Schools have integrated KidsMatter and/or MindMatters in the school pastoral care program is outlined below: - The School has a Pastoral Care Program which involves aspects of MindMatters and other programs to promote a positive school culture, student well-being and behaviour. The School has targeted programs for each Year level which are reviewed and updated each year. - KidsMatter is integrated within the school's values of education and informs all school activities. - Primary students who are identified as being anxious about the transition are sent a letter from the School Psychologist with a transition magazine that is individualised with their name and their photo, telling them all about 'Big School', who their teacher will be and what to expect. - The school is also currently in the process of introducing MindMatters into the High School. Both a parent group and a student advisory group has been formed. The school is planning to launch the program soon and teachers are currently completing the training modules. - The School has adopted the Mind Matters framework to strengthen its use of evidence based decision making models when identifying, evaluating, and implementing new student mental health and wellbeing practices. The results of applying this framework into the school environment has seen the inclusion of dedicated Student Wellbeing Time (SWELL TIME) in which students are encouraged to engage in mindfulness and relationship building activities with school staff.

Recommendation 6.3
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, develop and promote practical resources to assist all schools to effectively engage with parents/carers of students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.

AISACT Response
Improving parent engagement with students is an ongoing priority for ETD, CE and independent schools. (Reference to the ARACY cross-sectoral project)

Key Activities
AISACT continues to work with Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools to engage with the Parents and Friends committees in Independent Schools. The Association will continue to support APFACTS to support parents of students in Independent Schools. AISACT hosted NDIS information night for Independent School parents in Term 3 to inform them about the NDIS and how to connect their child's NDIS plans with their educational program. A summary of examples of how Member Schools already effectively engage with parents/carers of students with complex needs and challenging behaviours is outlined below: - The school has a transition to school KidsMatter Program which provides parents information about what to expect when their children come the school. Parents are provided with an information pack with KidsMatter handouts, and there are parent meetings where new parents can meet each other, ask questions and gain support. - Parents are encouraged to attend parent teacher interviews, each semester, to discuss their child's progress and to evaluate the student's personal, social and emotional goals.

Recommendation 6.4
That ETD, CE, and AIS, negotiate a partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with the Community Services Directorate to better meet the needs of students who live in out of home care, drawing on models such as the Victorian 'Out of Home Care Education Commitment'.

AISACT Response
CSD will lead the development of the partnership agreement with ETD, CE and AIS. CE and AIS acknowledge that the partnership could be strengthened in this area and welcome the recommendation.

Key Activities
A member of staff from the AISACT office sits on the Improving Educational Outcomes committee (for young people on care and protection and youth justice).
The IEO committee has asked that AISACT request from Member Schools examples of ILP's for the committee to discuss. Eight schools have currently shared their ILPs with AISACT.
The Association continues to support schools in better meeting the needs of students who live in out of home care upon the request of a school.

Recommendation 9.1
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, (a) endorse School-Wide Positive Behavioural Support; (b) resource and support schools to implement the program for a minimum of three years; and (c) evaluate the success of the program.
AISACT Response
AIS notes that Member Schools may have very similar approaches to that of Positive Behavioural Support as the theoretical foundation of this program is to create learning environments that are perceived by the student to be safe, welcoming and engaging. AIS will work with member schools to inform them of Positive Behavioural Support. Should individual schools wish to adopt the Positive Behaviour Support model, they could use the available resource support to implement the program for a minimum of three years.
Key Activities
AISACT is continues to work with the Galilee School to providing its Trauma Informed Positive Behaviour Support model to other Member Schools. This work is ongoing.

Recommendation 12.1
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School (a) develop and implement a case management framework for students with complex needs and challenging behaviour; and (b) support all schools to identify or recruit suitably qualified staff to act as case managers, including, for example, social workers, welfare officers, and/or community development workers.
AISACT Response
AIS notes that if schools are interested in exploring this recommendation it would be necessary to verify the resource support available for implementation.
Key Activities
Further discussion and information gathering from Member Schools will be facilitated through the AISACT Schools for All Executive Committee Subcommittee. This work is ongoing.

Recommendation 12.3
That ETD, CE, AIS, the Community Services Directorate, and ACT Health, collaboratively develop mechanisms to ensure that service provision with respect to children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviour, and their families, is offered in a strategic and client focused manner and demonstrates effective communication among all parties.
AISACT Response
CE and AIS welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively on client services in this area.
Key Activities
Independent Schools currently work together to assist children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviours, and their families, through networks and through the assistance of AISACT. On an executive level informal communication occurs with feeder schools, particularly between CE schools and non-systemic Catholic Independent Schools. Additionally, Schools build relationships with other Non-Government Schools through the Non-Government Schools registration process. Ideally, Independent Schools would like to see a more formalised process for students who transition between schools to ensure that students do not 'fall though the gaps' or are not being provided with the support they have previously been provided. Member Schools feel that communication with parents is key, particularly in relation to providing schools with previous ILPs and behaviour plans to ensure that the student can be supported. The Association will continue to work with schools, the Directorate, CE and other ACT Government directorates to ensure effective communication is demonstrated among all parties. This work is ongoing.

Recommendation 15.3
That ETD, CE, and AIS co-fund a tertiary institution, or other relevant research institute, to undertake a longitudinal study on post-school outcomes for students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.
AISACT Response
ETD, CE and AIS are open to an approach to support or facilitate research from tertiary institutions. …….independent schools will consider possible partnerships for analysis of….data.
Key Activities
AIS are open to an approach to support or facilitate research from tertiary institutions. Independent schools will consider possible partnerships for analysis of this data.

Student Wellbeing

Recommendation 6.2
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, develop and promote tools to assist all schools to meaningfully and regularly consult with all students about (a) their experiences at school; (b) decisions that affect them at school; and (c) the operation of the school.
AISACT Response
AIS acknowledge(s) that student satisfaction is an important indicator of student engagement.
Key Activities
As noted in previous reports each Independent School has their own policy and programs in place to support student voice. A majority of the schools have a student representative council or similar which are made up of a range of Year groups. A summary of examples of programs from Member Schools is outlined below: - A number of Member Schools have a Student Representative Council in addition to a number of student leadership positions. - With some Member Schools being International Baccalaureate schools students are constantly involved in developing essential agreements in classrooms and other areas of the school. - The school also has staff, parent and student satisfaction surveys that go out to the school community in rotation. The survey has provided useful information which has been acted upon and has made changes to the way the school conducts business. - Student leaders meet annually with the College Board and discuss issues of importance to students. Student leaders meet weekly with a member of the Executive. Leadership training is provided to all students in leadership positions to assist them in gaining the skills to articulate views on issues of importance to them and to other students.

Recommendation 11.5
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, provide alternative options to out-of-school suspension where appropriate and possible, including in-school suspensions with temporary additional staffing or support.
AISACT Response
AIS notes that ACT Independent School Boards and school leadership teams make decisions about how best to utilise their resources to meet the needs of their student community.
Key Activities
A summary of examples of alternate options to out-of-school suspensions from Member Schools is outlined below: - The School has strategies employed to avoid escalation of behaviours that might warrant an out of school suspension.

- The School, where possible, conducts most of its suspensions as in-school suspensions. Negotiations take place with parents to find an appropriate level of suspension for each individual case.
- The School limits out-of-school suspensions as much as possible and looks at ways it can have students at school working, but away from their peers for the specified time. A range of other interventions are considered before any form of suspension is applied in most cases.
- The school uses targeted early intervention that is pro-active in addressing issues, rather than reacting once a student has responded inappropriately to a challenging situation.

Recommendation 15.2

That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, complement the reporting of students' academic performance with reports on student progress towards the personal and social-emotional goals listed in school's vision statements and strategic plans.

AISACT Response

Each ACT independent school develops reporting formats which best reflect the ethos of the individual school. An individual student's progress in personal development and goals would be considered to be an integral part of the responsibility in reporting to parents in schools. AIS will, where appropriate, work with member schools as they consider this recommendation.

Key Activities

Each Independent School has developed methods of reporting on student outcomes appropriate to the needs and expectations of their communities.

A summary of examples of how Member Schools report on a students' academic performance and wellbeing is outlined below:

- The School considers the whole student when taking wellbeing into account. Each semester students review personal, academic, social and physical goals with their tutor.
- At the School student progress is reported to parents in the Junior School via see-saw. Snippets of work, photos/videos of student participation and activities are regularly uploaded to see-saw by the class teacher and a dialogue between teacher and parent can occur. If teachers have concerns regarding progress they may also email parents or request an additional meeting.

Environment

Recommendation 8.1
That ETD, CE and each Independent School, ensure that all existing schools have safe, calming/sensory spaces that are appropriate to meet the needs of students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.
AISACT Response
AIS notes the recommendation and will support schools to review current provision for calming/sensory spaces.
Key Activities
AISACT continues its work with Member Schools to review current provision for calming/sensory spaces. Students in Independent Schools access a variety of safe calming/sensory spaces, be they a quiet room next to the counsellors office or head of houses office, at the back of the class room, quiet study nooks within the classroom or library, or in the student services building. Each Independent School will have their own policies about safe, calming/sensory spaces. A summary of examples of Member School safe, calming/sensory spaces are outlined below: - The School has a Safe School room, the students had a naming competition which resulted in the room being called the Chill Pill room. - In the school's Student Services building there is a dedicated calming space with lounge chairs, sensory toys, calming music. It is in a safe and seclude place away from the other students so they can have privacy. The Deputy of Welfare and School Psychologist are on hand to assist if students need/want help, otherwise they can just sit and relax. - The School views the classroom and school environment as a 'third teacher' - the physical environment and the human environment both influence behaviour. This includes offering different areas in classrooms that invite different behaviours, e.g. quiet individual nooks through to spaces for energetic collaborative endeavours.

Recommendation 8.2
That ETD, CE and each Independent School, ensure that the design briefs for all new schools follow principles of universal design, and include an appropriate range of learning areas and facilities to meet the needs of students with complex needs and challenging behaviour. These may include flexible classroom areas with adjacent small group learning spaces, and inclusive playgrounds, as well as safe, calming/sensory spaces.
AISACT Response
ETD, CE and AIS accept the recommendation. ETD will share elements of universal design with CE and AIS.
Key Activities
AISACT is looking to work closely with Architect, Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects and multiple award winner for his designs of educational facilities, Paul Hede. Paul's architect firm, Hede Architects specialises in the design of buildings and interior spaces for people with disabilities and educational facilities. See Recommendation 11.1 for further activities.

Professional Learning

Recommendation 10.7
That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, commit to the professionalisation of LSAs and ensure that by 2018 (a) all LSAs hold, or are in the process of obtaining, at least a Certificate IV in School Age Education & Care or equivalent; and (b) all LSAs working in a Learning Support Unit or specialist school hold, or are in the process of obtaining, at least a Certificate IV in Education Support or equivalent.
AISACT Response
AIS notes the recommendation and will work with the other sectors to explore strategic options for workforce planning.
Key Activities
AISACT recognises that to commit to professionalisation of LSAs will require close work with schools to adjust their employment agreements. AISACT previously has provided opportunities for LSAs to gain higher qualifications through the More Support for Students program. Further discussion will occur through the AISACT Schools for All Executive Subcommittee.

Recommendation 13.1
That ETD, CE, and AIS, liaise with the Australian Catholic University (Canberra Campus) and the University of Canberra to review and improve the theoretical and practical relevance of teacher education units with respect to teaching students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.
AISACT Response
Key Activities
A staff member from AISACT sits on a cross sectoral committee in relation to this recommendation. AISACT welcomes further opportunities to assist in the development of the education of pre services teachers.

Recommendation 13.4
That ETD, CE, and AIS, cooperate to (a) make available to all member schools existing online learning modules in: autism spectrum disorder; dyslexia and significant reading difficulties; motor coordination difficulties; speech, language and communication needs; understanding and managing behaviour; understanding hearing loss; and/or other courses as identified by member schools; and (b) ensure that these learning modules are complemented by follow-up support including face to face assistance, workshops and coaching components.

AISACT Response
ETD will make the resources available to all government and non-government schools.

Key Activities
AISACT is working with ED to identify options for Independent Schools to access OLT modules.

Recommendation 13.5
That ETD, CE and AIS, (a) develop, and liaise with the Teacher Quality Institute to accredit, a suite of professional learning options relevant to teaching students with complex needs and challenging behaviour. This would include, but not be limited to, modules on: de-escalation and safe use of restraint; trauma; autism spectrum disorder; mental health; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; and/or learning difficulties; and (b) establish mechanisms to monitor staff and school participation in these programs.

AISACT Response
ETD, CE and AIS will develop a suite of professional learning programs for staff in schools, which will explicitly address teaching students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.

Key Activities
The Association has a representative on the TQI led working group, which discuss matters in relation to this recommendation and recommendation 13.1. AISACT has provided a TQI accredited (5 hours) PL titled *Managing Challenging Behaviours in Schools* presented by Education Psychologist Tim Dansie. All Member Schools had representatives attend this PL. AISACT will continue to support schools and develop PL opportunities for staff. Through discussions with Member Schools PL is sort in the following areas: - How to communicate with students who have challenging behaviours/complex needs - Seeking further assistance, who should staff refer students and families to for further assistance - Further developing pastoral care systems in schools - Further developing ILPs to ensure it is a workable document - Behavioural techniques for student who have challenging behaviours/complex needs - Assisting staff and students through those transition stages at school - Direct and indirect discrimination and staff responsibilities (this is already being provided through the UC e-learning modules) - Coaching and mentoring new staff to the school and preservice teachers in education students with challenging behaviours/complex needs.

AISACT will continue, in partnership with ED and CE, to explore that specifically addresses this recommendation.

Recommendation 13.7

That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, (a) prioritise scholarships and sabbaticals for school leaders and teachers to undertake formal study in relation to students with complex needs and challenging behaviour; (b) create opportunities for school leaders and teachers to visit and see in action practices in schools with a reputation for creative and resourceful approaches to teaching students with complex needs and challenging behaviour; and (c) create opportunities for these school leaders and teachers to become mentors and facilitators within networks, sectors, and schools.

AISACT Response

Key Activities

AISACT has an established Students with Disability network who meet once a term at a different Independent School each term. At the beginning of each meeting the host school provides an overview of the types of programs they have in place for students with disability and students with complex needs and challenging behaviours.

For the past two years AISACT has provided two scholarships for staff from Member Schools to attend the ACEL disability summit. AISACT plans to provide similar opportunities in 2017 to the summit or similar conferences.

Member Schools will also have the opportunity to have staff members be trained as an Everyone Everyday trainer in early 2017. The trainer will provide PL to other Member Schools and Government and CE staff through cross sectoral training sessions.