

Non-Government Reform Support Strategic Plan

2019-2022

Association of Independent Schools of NSW

Non – Government Reform Support Fund

Association of Independent Schools of NSW – Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

The AISNSW is committed to supporting the implementation of existing and new national policy initiatives and state-specific reforms in NSW independent schools through project activities funded by the Non-Government Reform Support Fund.

Independent schools in NSW are engaged in a wide range of activities to implement national policy initiatives and state-specific reforms, which vary according to the context of the school. The *Non-Government School Reform Fund* allows schools to access projects that both compliment and supplement the existing activities undertaken by schools in implementing the common goals of schooling. Projects are designed to support independent schools address their needs in the reform areas together with consultation structures designed to derive insight and feedback from the sector utilising AISNSW expertise. Communication and engagement with the NSW Department of Education, NESA and Catholic Schools NSW is also an intended feature, particularly in working collaboratively to address the national initiatives being undertaken by Education Council, the NSW initiatives in the bilateral agreement.

There are several projects supporting the Non-Government Reform Support Fund priorities that will continue to be implemented throughout the duration of the funding period. These priorities are:

- quality assurance, moderation and support for the continued improvement of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
- implementation of online delivery of the National Assessment program and
- improving governance and financial management practices in Non-Government schools.

Other projects address state based initiatives as agreed in the bilateral agreement that include, focusing on meeting the needs of students at risk of educational disadvantage, implementing the NSW Curriculum, harmonising the Commonwealth/State administrative arrangements and strengthening accountability measure for non-government schools that receive state funding.

Further projects may be initiated to address local priorities that align with the Quality Schools agenda or priorities identified by the Minister from time to time.

Projects will also be evaluated throughout the funding period. Projects may be refined, expanded or amended on an annual basis based on the outcomes from the work plan, feedback from the evaluation, the current and additional Minister's priorities and the context of independent schools.

The strategic objectives of this plan will be evaluated by the AISNSW Research and Data Team using tools such as internal and external project evaluations, including the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data as part of the methodology. While projects for NAPLAN Online or the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data are relevant for every school, others including the range of governance and financial management activities are tailored to specific school needs. The projects are anticipated to have wider impacts beyond the participating schools and therefore further facilitate the implementation of the national and state-based reform initiatives.

Current context

The AISNSW is the peak body representing the independent school sector in New South Wales. The NSW independent school sector is vibrant and diverse, providing the community with choice while supporting the agreed common goals for schooling in Australia.

The independent school sector in NSW has more than 482 schools and campuses, enrolling almost 200,000 students and accounting for some 16% of NSW school enrolments in a wide range of communities. Two-thirds (67%) of independent schools in NSW have a socio-economic status score below 104, with 48% of all students in the sector enrolled in these schools. Half of the independent schools in NSW enrol fewer than 200 students, and approximately one-third enrol fewer than 100 students.

Many independent schools provide a religious or values-based education. Others promote a particular educational philosophy or education for specific cohorts of students. Independent schools include:

- Schools affiliated with Christian denominations, such as Anglican, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Seventh-day Adventist and Uniting Church schools
- Christian schools
- Islamic schools
- Jewish schools
- Montessori schools
- Rudolf Steiner schools
- Schools constituted under specific Acts of Parliament, such as Grammar schools
- Community schools, including in Aboriginal communities
- Schools that specialise in meeting the needs of students with disabilities and students at risk
- Schools with international students, as well as international schools affiliated with AIS (NSW)

Independent schools are not-for-profit institutions founded by religious or other groups in the community and are registered with the regulatory authority, the NSW Education Standards Authority. Most independent schools are set up and governed independently on an individual school basis.

However, some independent schools with common aims and educational philosophies are governed and administered as systems, for example those within the Seventh-day Adventist systems.

The AISNSW is committed to supporting independent schools to implement the reform priorities, which are:

- quality assurance, moderation and support for the continued improvement of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
- implementation of online delivery of the National Assessment program
- improving governance and financial management practices in Non-Government schools.

Due to the diversity of NSW independent schools, there are varying degrees of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the Non-Government Reform Support Fund reform priorities.

Under priority one, all independent schools provide data for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data and are aware of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data process. The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data quality assurance processes have highlighted the need for greater consistency of teacher judgement across Australia. All schools vary in terms of their experience and knowledge in implementing the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data. AISNSW will liaise with individual independent schools to tailor school based professional learning and support to deepen knowledge of the DDA, DSE and Nationally Consistent Collection of Data and moderation processes.

In support of priority 2, the NSW independent sector is on track for all schools to transition to NAPLAN Online by 2020. AISNSW supported 67 schools to transition in 2018 and based on information provided by the sector, a total of 149 schools plan to transition in 2019. All remaining schools plan to transition in 2020.

Within priority 3, the range of outcomes from the participating schools in the 2018 governance and financial management projects has provided the baseline from which to develop and tailor these projects to meet the needs of schools throughout the funding period.

The Non-Government Reform Fund enables the AISNSW to assist schools to implement the reform priorities. All NSW independent schools have the opportunity to access relevant projects under the reform funds as determined by their areas of need. In the priority areas such as NAPLAN Online and NCCD, all schools will access some support over the funding period.

AISNSW has successfully managed the Students First Support Fund and other initiatives through projects tailored to support independent schools to implement national and state priorities.

NSW independent schools are engaged in a wide variety of activities that contribute to implementing the national priorities. These activities are as broad as the sector itself and often vary in accordance with the context of the school. The projects proposed provide activities that go well beyond the normal provision of services by AISNSW, which is based on subscriptions received from member schools. The projects would not have been possible, without the funding of the Non-Government Reform Support Fund.

National Policy Initiatives

Over the term of the funding, the AISNSW will address the 3 key national reforms from the Non-Government Reform Support Fund Guidelines. These reforms target essential areas for each and every independent school. The balance of focus may vary as schools build capacity and potentially, additional new priorities identified by the Minister in future years. AISNSW plans to address the following national reforms from the Non-Government Reform Support Fund priorities:

- quality assurance, moderation and support for the continued improvement of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
- implementation of online delivery of the National Assessment program
- improving governance and financial management practices in Non-Government schools.

As the national initiatives outlined in Schedule B of the National School Reform Agreement are progressed by Education Council, AISNSW will work collaboratively with the NSW Government and sectors on implementation.

In addition, AISNSW will continue to work with the NSW Government to support the implementation of the agreed national policy initiatives, under the following reform directions:

- Supporting students, student learning and student achievement
- Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement, and
- Enhancing national initiatives

Further activities under these initiatives were identified and prioritised by proposed implementation year in the Bilateral Agreement between NSW and the Commonwealth on Quality Schools Reform. The bilateral agreement identifies the activities in which the AISNSW will work collaboratively with the NSW Government and sectors. These activities are identified in the section below, State-based Reforms.

State-based Reforms

The AISNSW plan addresses key reforms from the bilateral agreement. These reforms will be met through a range of funding sources, in particular Commonwealth and State government funding. The following section outlines the breadth of activities from the bilateral agreement, which will form the basis of the cross sector collaboration. The broad timeframe is indicative of the proposed sequence of state-based activities and is described below in short term and medium to long term plans.

Reform Direction A – Support students, student learning and achievement

Short term

Deliver the review of the K-12 curriculum to ensure the school education system is preparing students for the challenges and opportunities for the future

- AISNSW will contribute to the State consultation process during 2019.

Medium – long term

Implement the refreshed curriculum post 2019 review; ensuring teachers are supported to implement a streamlined curriculum, including timely and formative assessments.

- AISNSW will work with NESA and the other education sectors to contribute to the NSW Government's implementation plan from 2020.

Embed evidence-based practices (particularly to boost early achievement in literacy and numeracy), including implementing the Literacy and Numeracy Plan (LNAP).

- AISNSW will support independent schools participating in the NSW Government funded Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan in 2019-2020.

Long term

Meet the needs of students at risk of educational disadvantage (including students with disability, Aboriginal students, students with low English proficiency and students in rural and regional areas) through evidence-based pedagogy, quality teaching and leadership and innovation.

- AISNSW will initially focus on supporting students with disability through the NCCD project and Aboriginal students through a new project outlined in the section below under Objectives. Feedback from the monitoring of project outcomes will inform the priorities undertaken from 2020.

Reform Direction B – Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement

Short term

Decluttering the curriculum as part of the NESA Review.

- AISNSW will participate in the Review consultation process and inform the implementation of outcomes through participation in NESA's Curriculum Committee.

Medium to long term

Strengthen the mandatory content requirements of the ITE courses in identified areas of STEM, Literacy/Numeracy, Students with Special Needs and Classroom Management.

- AISNSW will support this NSW's priority through involvement with the NESA ITE Committee.

Identify and support cohorts of high quality teachers across sectors for certification at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Level.

- AISNSW will participate in cross sector dialogue with the State Government and within the sector to identify strategies to increase the number of teachers applying for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher.

Target initiatives to improve school effectiveness.

- AISNSW will address this activity through the reform project on improving governance outlined in the section below under Objectives.

Harmonising the Commonwealth/State administrative arrangements.

- AISNSW will participate in cross sector dialogue with the State Government to advance this reform including removing duplication such as the recent changes to the NSW February census.

The Commonwealth will work with NSW to address identified NSW teacher workforce needs.

- AISNSW will participate in cross sector dialogue with the State Government and follow up regarding impact and needs of the independent sector.

Strengthen accountability measures for Non-Government schools that receive state funding, initially through development of memoranda of understanding with the sectors.

- AISNSW will participate in cross sector dialogue with the State Government to advance this reform.

Activities to address state-based reforms will be reviewed annually according to the priority and within the limitations of funding available. Activities funded through the Non-Government Reform Support Fund will be documented in the annual work plans.

Objectives

Over the remaining four years of the funding term, the AISNSW will work to support the implementation of the Australian Government priorities in NSW independent schools.

The strategic plan identifies 4 broad areas of activities that are intended to be implemented over the course of the Non-Government Reform Support Fund. These projects meet the current 3 priority areas of the Non-Government Reform Support Fund and a further project on improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students from the bilateral agreement.

Projects are designed to directly align with the national and state priority areas and therefore support their implementation. School needs and priorities will determine the schools' selection and participation in these projects. Project activities are developed to support participating schools, in response to their specific needs. The activities include targeted professional learning opportunities for boards, principals, teachers and staff, tailored consultancy support, specially-developed tools, and high-quality resources. All participating schools will make contributions to the projects, usually through meeting staffing and/or travel costs for staff taking part in activities.

Based on the information available to date, the following activities form the foundation projects to be funded for four years under the Non-Government Reform Support Fund:

Quality assurance, moderation and support for the continued improvement of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on school students with disability

Objective

To improve the NCCD through quality assurance, moderation and support.

- Over the remaining four year period, schools will be supported to strengthen professional judgement and make consistent and reliable decisions about students' level of adjustment and category of disability. Explicit professional learning, facilitation of the collaborative planning process and moderation within and across schools are planned as key mechanisms to enable this to occur.

AISNSW National Assessment Program

Objective

To support the transition to NAPLAN online and delivery of the National Assessment Program.

- Initial emphasis during the 2019-2022 period will be placed on supporting all NSW independent schools to transition to NAPLAN Online by 2020, in line with the NSW Minister's transition timeline through training and professional learning. AISNSW will also assist schools to leverage the benefits from NAP assessments and reporting to inform teaching and learning and school improvement.

Supporting School Boards to work with Principals to develop measures of outcomes in a range of areas

Objective

To improve governance and financial practices in Non-Government schools, through support for strategic planning, use of performance data and enabling leadership.

- AISNSW plans to support school boards to develop and monitor measures of outcomes most appropriate to their school context.

Assisting Board members to understand child abuse and the place of policies and procedures to minimise the risk.

Objective

To assist school leaders develop the skills and knowledge they need to be effective school leaders.

- AISNSW plans to support boards to refine their policies and procedures to minimise the risk of child abuse

AISNSW Professional Learning for Governance

Objective

To improve governance and financial practices in Non-Government schools, through support for school leadership to make informed decisions for the effective operation of the school.

- AISNSW plans to support school boards to enhance their governance practices through professional learning and access to high quality resources.

Improving financial management practices in independent schools

Objective

To improve governance and financial practices in Non-Government schools, through the provision of support and resources designed to increase transparency and accountability for the way in which government funding is used.

AISNSW plans to support boards to enhance their financial management practices through professional learning, resources and targeted support offered to schools.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education program

Objective

To meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at risk of educational disadvantage, through evidence based pedagogy, quality teaching and leadership and innovation.

- AISNSW plans to support schools to develop and implement school-wide and individual learning strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and cultural competence for school leaders and staff.

These projects are responsive to the needs of independent schools. Over the funding period, it is possible that the Minister may change the priorities or school needs may change. In light of this, AISNSW has identified two areas, which based on the current information at hand; appear to be potential future priorities if permitted within the annual priorities, school needs and the funding envelope of the Non-Government Reform Support Fund.

The priority areas for future years may include:

Implementing the NSW Curriculum

- To support teachers to implement the streamlined curriculum post 2019, including timely and formative assessment.

Meeting the needs of disadvantaged students with a language background other than English (LBOTE)

- To meet the needs of students with low English proficiency through evidence based pedagogy, quality teaching and leadership and innovation.

Notwithstanding this, other priorities from the bilateral agreement or the Minister may rise in prominence over time. Needs identified by schools and evaluation will also be considered in determining future priorities.

Projects that are continuing to achieve outcomes will be refined and extended, to allow these projects to operate with sufficient intensity to have an impact. Some projects may cease, where another project is determined to be more beneficial to implement national and state reform priorities or following the evaluation of project activities. The number of projects operating at any one time may increase to address new priorities or reduce to sharpen the focus of particular projects.

There will be transparency in funds allocated to all projects and acknowledgement of other sources of contribution, to maximise the benefit from the aggregated funds.

Measurement and Evaluation

The AISNSW is committed to leveraging the Non-Government Reform Support Fund to meet strategic, long-term objectives that enhance the implementation of the Australian Government priorities in NSW independent schools through successful projects achieving set outcomes for participating schools and extend to have wider impacts through the production of information and insights that may provide benefits more broadly.

The AISNSW Research and Data Team will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the AISNSW management of the funding allocation from the *Non-Government Reform Support Fund 2019-2022* over the remaining four years, to support NSW independent schools to implement national and state reform priorities.

The evaluation will seek to determine whether the objectives of the AISNSW Strategic Plan have been met, including reviewing the outcomes and performance indicators in the annual workplans. The evaluation will utilise internal and external evaluations as the tools to measure project success, including the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data gathered throughout the duration of each project.

An external evaluation is scheduled for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander project and Australian Government Department of Education data will be used to inform the evaluation of the National Collection of Consistent Data project.

In addition, the NSW Department of Education is undertaking an evaluation of the implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan from 2018-2020. This NSW government evaluation will inform future planning in meeting the needs of students at risk of educational disadvantage.

The evaluation will also use information provided to the Research and Data Team by the project teams and interviews with project managers and participating school leaders. The evaluation will assess the nature, intent and quality of the activities provided by project teams using the allocated funds against the objectives of the strategic plan and work plan.