

# Education Act reform

## Information sheet for school and preschool leaders

A new Bill has been drafted to reform and update the Acts of Parliament that form the basis of our public education and care system here in South Australia. Education and early childhood services will now come under a single Act.

The State Government has been progressively reforming our education system to ensure children get the best start in life. In recent times, an independent regulator for schools and early childhood services such as preschool and long day care facilities was introduced and, as part of a \$548 million investment in education in the 2016-17 State Budget, the SACE is set to be modernised to ensure the general capabilities, innovation and entrepreneurship are strongly promoted to students.

The draft Education and Children's Services Bill 2016 aims to bring about a number of changes to provide students with the support services they need, further increase autonomy in schools and share information more effectively with parents and other schools.

### The Bill at a glance

- Stronger penalties for student non-attendance (truancy) including new family conferences and requiring parents to provide valid reasons for a child's absence within 5 days
- Making it easier for schools to work with allied health professionals and other support staff to ensure that students get the local services they need
- Providing for better staff attraction and retention packages to assist schools to attract and retain high-quality teachers in difficult-to-staff areas of the state
- Making it easier for all schools to keep good staff so that they can focus on great teaching and learning
- Improving teacher standards by modernising arrangements to deal with unsatisfactory teacher performance in a fair way
- Updating the way schools share information about student progress and development with parents and each other
- Explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment and ensuring that the best interests of children are the paramount consideration in schools and preschools.

### Reasons for change

- Every child deserves the best start in life with quality education and access to the additional support services they need (eg child wellbeing practitioners, speech pathologists and other allied health professionals). Schools should be able to engage the local services they need to serve the best health and wellbeing interests of their children and young people.



- Strong professional standards will improve the public perception of and respect for teachers and educators.
- For every day that a child misses school, it puts them further behind and it becomes harder to catch up – by significantly increasing the penalties from \$500 to \$5000 for non-attendance and giving schools greater ability to engage parents in the process, rates of absenteeism in schools will improve.
- When students move between schools, whether government or non-government, the process should be smooth and seamless so that each child’s learning is not hindered and new schools are informed about developmental progress.

## What this means for you as a leader

- We have already increased the support services for principals to help manage unsatisfactory performance in staff. We will consider whether principals should have the power to both ‘hire and fire’.
- It will be easier for you to attract and keep good staff – so you can spend less time on administrative process and more time managing and leading your school or preschool.

