

Education Act reform

Information sheet for parents and carers

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

- Explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment and ensuring that the best interests of children are the paramount consideration in schools and preschools
- Improving teacher standards by modernising arrangements to deal with unsatisfactory teacher performance in a fair way
- 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
- Updating the way schools share information about student progress and development with parents and carers
- Recognising the important contribution that parents and communities make to children's education and promoting the involvement of parents in schools
- Recognising that public schools are secular in nature and that parent consent is required for religious seminars
- Introducing new powers and increasing penalties to ensure schools are safe environments for all staff in government and non-government schools
 - Tougher penalties for people who behave in an offensive manner on school premises and use abusive, threatening or insulting language – up to \$2500
 - New penalty for people who trespass on school sites and the ability to bar individuals – up to \$2500.



Reasons for change

- 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.
- 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.

What this means for you as a parent/carer

- The important contribution that parents and caregivers make will be recognised and respected.
- It will be easier for local schools to work with allied health professionals and support staff, so that your child will receive high quality support if they need it.
- By supporting principals to uphold the highest standards in schools and preschools, every child will get the best start in life.
- All schools and preschools across sectors will benefit from tougher penalties for poor behavior of adults on school sites.

