

Behaviour Management in Schools

Report 4: March 2014

Background

Student behaviour directly affects educational outcomes. Orderly classrooms and schools are associated with high student engagement and academic success. The Department of Education (DoE) educates more than 276 000 students in 792 schools across Western Australia and is responsible for ensuring that schools have a safe and orderly learning environment. To achieve this DoE needs to make sure that schools manage student behaviour effectively.

Our audit assessed if schools are implementing behaviour management strategies in line with DoE's policy directions and achieving the intended outcomes.

Key Findings

- There are information gaps and a lack of good measures of behaviour that limit DoE's understanding of how schools are implementing its behaviour management approach, if it is working and if changes are needed.
- DoE's behaviour management strategy, policies and information for schools are not yet aligned. DoE has started reviewing these to improve access for principals and teachers.
- All 19 schools in our sample had aligned their policies with DoE's positive behaviour approach. Positive changes in the behaviour of particular cohorts or across the school were evident in five schools. These schools used their resources flexibly, had sound attendance strategies, collected and used school behaviour data, and focused on improving academic outcomes.
- A survey we conducted of school leaders, teachers and other school staff working with students found that 44 per cent of the 1 857 respondents considered that student behaviour is improving. A further 38 per cent considered that it is getting worse and 18 per cent were undecided.



Office of the Auditor General Western Australia

- Challenging student behaviour can seriously impact on principals' and teachers' time. Thirty-nine per cent of survey respondents said that they spent at least 20 per cent of their school day on behaviour management.
- Regional Education Offices focus on underperforming schools and provide only limited support to others in implementing behaviour management strategies. They have little capacity to prevent or address emerging behaviour issues until these start negatively affecting school performance.
- Training for teachers in classroom management is an important DoE strategy; it is supported by research and well regarded by schools. But the training is not targeted to the schools and teachers with greatest need.
- DoE's allocation of behaviour management funding and other support does not always match student and school needs. Funding has been based on outdated information and generic formulas. DoE is changing the way it funds schools in 2015.
- The amount of school psychologist time allocated to schools does not consistently meet the needs of schools or their students. In 2013, the average ratio for school psychologists to primary and pre-primary students was 1:1069, 1:896 for secondary and district high schools, and 1:492 for remote community schools. Schools can buy additional psychologist time, but availability of school psychologists in non-metropolitan areas is limited.
- Behaviour Centres and Curriculum and Re-engagement in Education schools are key sources of support for students with exceptionally challenging behaviour. DoE modelling estimates that between one and five per cent of students may require intensive and individualised support, but only 629 students in 2012 accessed these.



Follow us on
Twitter @OAG_WA



Download QR Code
Scanner app and scan code
to access more information
about our Office