



Media contact: Natasha Farrell

Mobile: 0427 953 993

Email: natasha.farrell@audit.wa.gov.au

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Department of Education needs to improve its planning of school psychology services to better ensure student needs are met

The Auditor General today tabled in Parliament the [*Delivering School Psychology Services*](#) report.

Auditor General Ms Caroline Spencer said school psychologists are a vital part of identifying and supporting students who need extra assistance.

‘We wanted to know if the School Psychology Service, a service that we know is highly valued and in high demand, is being delivered optimally,’ Ms Spencer said.

‘We found that while there are many excellent features of the service, with many dedicated professionals and support staff doing their best to assist students, the administration of the service can be much improved.

‘Some schools are ending up with impracticably small allocations of psychologist support, and whether a student’s needs are met often depends more on local factors than consistent delivery of an effectively planned range of services across the State education system. One in 5 schools have psychological services for half a day a week or less, and 75% of schools have psychologists allocated for less than 2 days per week, including some large schools of over 700 students.

‘Resources are further stretched by school psychologists supporting students who should be receiving support from more specialised external mental health services but can’t get timely access to those services.

‘The Department needs to clearly define the psychology services it provides in schools, and work with external entities to better support timely availability of services and efficient student referral pathways,’ Ms Spencer said.

This will help to redirect school psychologists back to proactive and preventative intervention which is most effective at the whole-school level while making sure students in need of more intensive and specialised support do not fall through the gaps.

Ms Spencer said school psychologists can’t be everything to everyone. Trying to do everything leads to unrealistic expectations, unclear support and referral pathways, demand outstripping supply, and inequitable outcomes for both schools and students.

‘The Department understands that current school psychology provision is inadequate to meet needs, and Government has funded the recruitment of 100 extra school psychologists over the next 4 years. However, unless the department significantly improves its administration of the service we will not, as a community, receive the best value from the School Psychology Service to ensure that it is well positioned to support schools, students and their families,’ Ms Spencer said.

Report resources

- [PDF version](#)
- [summary video](#)