Wellbeing of secondary school students

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In accordance with section 38E of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*, I present a report titled **'Wellbeing of secondary school students'.**

Ian Goodwin
Acting Auditor-General
23 May 2019

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OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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contents

Wellbeing of secondary school students

Section one

Wellbeing of secondary school students

Executive summary

The Department of Education's (the Department) purpose is to prepare young people for rewarding lives as engaged citizens in a complex and dynamic society. The Department commits to creating quality learning opportunities for children and young people, including a commitment to student wellbeing, which is seen as directly linked to positive learning outcomes. Wellbeing is defined broadly by the Department as "the quality of a person's life…It is more than the absence of physical or psychological illness". Student wellbeing can be supported by everything a school does to enhance a student's learning—from curriculum to teacher quality to targeted policies and programs to whole-school approaches to wellbeing.

Several reforms have aimed to support student wellbeing in recent years. 'Local Schools, Local Decisions' gave NSW schools more local authority to make decisions, including schools' approaches to support student wellbeing. In 2016, the 'Supported Students, Successful Students' initiative provided $167 million over four years to support the wellbeing of students. From 2018, the 'Every Student is Known, Valued and Cared For' initiative provides a principal-led mentoring program, and a website with policies, procedures and resources to support student wellbeing.

This audit assessed how well the Department of Education supports secondary schools to promote and support the wellbeing of their students and how well secondary schools are promoting and supporting the wellbeing of their students.

Conclusion

The Department has implemented a range of programs and reforms aimed at supporting student wellbeing. However, the outcomes of this work have yet to be measured or reported on at a system level, making it difficult to assess the Department's progress in improving student wellbeing.

Secondary schools have generally adopted a structured approach to deliver wellbeing support and programs, using both Department and localised resources. The approaches have been tailored to meet the needs of their school community. That said, public reporting on wellbeing improvement measures via annual school reports is of variable quality and needs to improve.

The Department's wellbeing initiatives are supported by research and consultation, but outcomes have not been reported on

The Department's development of wellbeing policy, guidance, tools and resources has been transparent, consultative and well-researched. It has drawn on international and domestic evidence to support its aim to deliver a fundamental shift from welfare to wellbeing at the school and system level.

However, the key performance indicator to monitor and track progress in wellbeing has yet to be reported on despite the strategic plan including this as a priority for the period 2018 to 2022. This includes not yet reporting a baseline for the target, nor how it will be measured.

The Department's wellbeing resources are mostly well targeted but there is room for improvement

The Department's allocation of resources to deliver wellbeing initiatives in schools is mostly well targeted, reflects a needs basis and supports current strategic directions. This could be improved with some changes to formula allocations and clearer definitions of the resourcing required for identified wellbeing positions in schools. The workforce modelling for forecasting supply and demand, specifically for school counsellors and psychologists, needs to separately identify these positions as they are currently subsumed in general teacher numbers.

Schools' reporting on wellbeing improvement measures is of variable quality and needs to improve

Schools we visited demonstrated a variety of approaches to wellbeing depending on their local circumstances and student populations. They make use of Department policies, guidelines, and resources, particularly mandatory policies and data collections, which have good compliance and take-up at school level. Professional learning supports specific wellbeing initiatives and online systems for monitoring and reporting have contributed to schools' capacity and capabilities.

Schools report publicly on wellbeing improvement measures through annual school reports but this reporting is of variable quality. The Department plans to improve the capability of schools in data analysis and we recommend that this include the setting and evaluation of improvement targets for wellbeing.

The implementation of the 2015 Wellbeing Framework in schools is incomplete and the Department has not effectively prioritised and consolidated tools, systems and reporting for wellbeing

Schools' take-up of the 2015 Wellbeing Framework is hindered by it not being linked to the school planning and reporting policy and tools—the School Excellence Framework. At some schools we visited, this disconnect has led to a lack of knowledge and confidence in using it in schools. The Department has identified the need to improve alignment of policies, frameworks and plans and has commenced work on this.

We found evidence of overburdening in schools for addressing student wellbeing—in the number of tools, online systems for information collection, and duplication in reporting. Following the significant reforms of recent years, the Department should consolidate its efforts by reinforcing existing effective programs and systems and addressing identified gaps and equity issues, rather than introducing further change for schools. In particular, methods and processes for complex case coordination need improvement.

1. Key findings

The Department's performance indicator for wellbeing has not been reported on

The Department's performance measure for wellbeing, 'Increased proportion of students reporting a sense of belonging, expectations for success and advocacy at school', uses the Tell Them From Me survey. The survey has a mixed experience in schools with some schools we visited reporting low participation and low value from the survey participation and reporting. The survey is long, and the schools we visited had a range of response rates (41–91 per cent), limiting its effectiveness as a tool to monitor whether the Department's wellbeing programs are effective. The indicator has also not yet been reported, making it difficult to assess the Department's progress in improving student wellbeing.

The Department relies on items from the survey to report at system level on student wellbeing. Due to the variable participation across schools, the Department should consider and address the impact of bias in reporting using this measure.

Some funding for wellbeing is inflexible with gaps that can increase the risk of inequitable outcomes

The Department has implemented needs-based funding for recent initiatives and some ongoing programs. Allocations of wellbeing resources are informed by research and indicators of student disadvantage and need; consultative processes are used when developing new methodologies. However, there are exceptions. The Student Wellbeing Support Program 2018–2020 was introduced outside the established funding models. This program offers little flexibility and has separate evaluation and accountability arrangements. The Core School Counselling Allocation and Flexible Funding for Wellbeing Services Allocation include 'hard' entitlement cut offs. For example, no school is entitled to greater than 1.0 FTE school counsellor, schools where enrolments equal or exceed 850 students are capped at the maximum allocation of 1.0 FTE.

School counsellors and psychologists play a key role in supporting students with identified mental health needs and extra positions have been funded recently. But the Department does not specifically forecast supply and demand as part of workforce planning and this limits the ability to plan for future demand for these positions.

Any new funds to address gaps in supporting students should be allocated to schools with substantial cases of funding need, such as growth in enrolments or formation of new classes for students meeting criteria for disability support, or those who just miss out on eligibility for funding.

Schools need better alignment of the wide range of policy and resources

The Department issues a wide range of policies on student wellbeing, covering whole-school approaches, attendance, behaviour, discipline, counselling, resilience programs as well as equity programs, disability and learning support, and more traditional welfare, child safety and health care policies. The evidence base for newer policy is sound, documented and evaluation is ongoing. Some longstanding policies now need review to improve alignment with these evidence-based frameworks and plans.

Some schools we visited were unclear on the status and value of the 2015 Wellbeing Framework. On the other hand, we observed a sound understanding and commitment to the School Excellence Framework (SEF), a continuous improvement system linked to school level planning and reporting, with a wellbeing element.

Schools need a clear service model to deliver effective support for wellbeing

There is currently no service model describing how schools should approach wellbeing. Schools we visited reported a lack of clarity in the interface between the Department's policies, guidance and systems to support student wellbeing. The Department needs to consolidate wellbeing initiatives and develop a clearer service model, to be implemented in all secondary schools. A service model could give consideration to and clarify:

- roles of a Learning and Wellbeing Team—to provide a balance between individual case management, and planning and review of targeted programs and whole-school interventions
- role of a Head Teacher Wellbeing
- role of school counsellors and psychologists and the balance between universal, targeted and intensive support
- role of a Student Support Officer
- role of a Year Advisor in Wellbeing
- models to better coordinate complex cases.

The Department has not effectively prioritised and consolidated tools, systems and reporting to support student wellbeing

We found evidence of overburdening in schools for addressing student wellbeing—in the number of tools, online systems for information collection and duplication in reporting. Schools have access to a range of tools to identify current performance and gaps. For example, both the Wellbeing Framework and School Excellence Framework have a self-assessment tool. The Department also offers several online platforms to schools to record student information, including behaviour, and these provide analysis capability via dashboards and data presentations.

Two criteria need to be prioritised when developing further tools intended for school level use to ensure no further burdening:

- the gap or need the tool is aimed at, and its alignment with current policy and other tools
- the time burden of using them, potentially displacing other efforts.

Complex case management requires specific models and resourcing

We found that schools need a clearer model and more support to coordinate and manage complex cases. Schools are working with other agencies and services in an integrated way, rather than referring students to external services, particularly for complex cases. This is possible in areas with significant local community-based services but challenging for schools in areas with few services available. Case coordination models set out clear relationships and responsibilities for each partner agency in an approach which puts the student, and their needs, at the centre of care.

The Network Specialist Facilitator has a specific role in complex case coordination in secondary and central schools. Some schools we visited in both metro and regional NSW reported little or no service from their assigned Network Specialist Facilitator due to high demands for this service. A Department review in 2017 found that despite the introduction of the Network Specialist Facilitator role, schools want more support to manage students with complex needs. A departmental project to improve complex case coordination commenced in 2018.

Schools link with a large number of external providers to support students

The Learning and Wellbeing Team in a school divides its activities between program planning and review and case management of individual students. Schools link with a large number of external service providers that work with students—in one case this exceeded 13 programs and 31 agencies for coordination and liaison. Managing and coordinating so many external inputs places burdens on staff and may distract from day-to-day learning programs.

The Department has commenced a project to assess the quality of programs available in schools from external providers, including setting specific quality standards. This may help simplify schools' processes for selecting external program providers and increase the use of quality assured programs in schools.

Around two-thirds of sampled schools did not have adequate student wellbeing performance measures

Schools develop annual plans which set the strategic direction of the school over three years. Our review of a sample of 30 secondary schools' plans found that while most schools had nominated a performance measure for wellbeing, only around one third of schools had a measure that was specific, nominating a target or benchmark for which the school could quantify improvement.

The Department has not provided adequate guidance on student suspension rates

Principals reported using their own standards of what is an acceptable level of suspensions in their school, mainly informed by their own experience. Trends over time were viewed as important—a downward trend representing effectiveness of the overall school approach to wellbeing. School executives assess their schools as having 'high' or 'low' levels of suspensions for similar rates, without reference to any state average or desirable benchmark. This is an area where further refinement in the indicator, and the establishment of benchmarks for different types of schools or different levels of disadvantage, may assist principals in using this data to guide their wellbeing priorities, activities and improvement measures.

2. Recommendations

By December 2019, the Department of Education should:

1. integrate the Wellbeing Framework with the School Excellence Framework, and align other related wellbeing policies, such as behaviour and discipline policies, to achieve consistency

2. define a service model, and commensurate resourcing models, so that schools can better deliver wellbeing activities in a coordinated way.

By March 2020, the Department of Education should:

3. implement measures to support the targeting of wellbeing resources by:

    • addressing allocation cut-offs in the formula to allocate school counsellors and psychologists to schools with growing enrolments and/or high needs

    • redesigning the workforce demand and supply forecasting to specifically identify counsellor/psychologists separately from general teaching positions.

From 2019 onwards, the Department of Education should:

4. consolidate any new funded policy initiatives into established evidence-based programs, such as whole-school approaches, school counsellors and flexible funding for wellbeing

5. integrate requirements to monitor wellbeing activities and outcomes into current systems and platforms.

By December 2019, the Department of Education should:

6. increase the use of quantifiable wellbeing improvement measures in school planning and reporting by assisting schools to design and use targets and benchmarks

7. include the following key operational indicators in the performance dashboards which inform school improvement and oversight by Directors Educational Leadership:

    • Trends in suspension numbers and rates against normative benchmarks, either NSW averages or like school comparators.

    • Student attendance, contacts with the Child Wellbeing Unit.

    • Activity measures for counsellors/psychologists and for identified student wellbeing positions, such as the Student Support Officer.

By December 2019, the Department of Education should:

8. publicly report on the wellbeing key performance indicator 'Increased proportion of students reporting a sense of belonging, expectations for success and advocacy at school' including its design and 2018 performance as a baseline for measuring progress in wellbeing.

▤ 1. Introduction

1.1 Wellbeing of secondary students

The NSW Department of Education commits to creating quality learning opportunities for students. This includes strengthening students' physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. The Department sets out to enable students to be healthy, happy, engaged and successful.

Welfare and wellbeing

The Department's approach has significantly shifted from student welfare to wellbeing of the whole child and young person. Wellbeing is defined in departmental policy and strategy documents broadly, and as directly linked to learning and positive learning outcomes. "Wellbeing can be described as the quality of a person's life…It is more than the absence of physical or psychological illness…Wellbeing, or the lack of it, can affect a student's engagement and success in learning…"

Student wellbeing can be supported by everything a school does to enhance a student's learning—from curriculum to teacher quality to targeted policies and programs to whole-school approaches to wellbeing. Distinctions between wellbeing and welfare in the school context are outlined below.

Exhibit 1: Welfare and wellbeing

Welfare	Wellbeing
Operates from a basis of student need and doesn't always take into account a whole child view.	For all students.
Rather than building on the strengths of students, operates from a deficit model of individual student problems or negative behaviours.	Goes beyond just welfare needs of a few students and aims for all students to be healthy, happy, successful and productive individuals who are active and positive contributors to the school and society in which they live.

Source: Department of Education 2018 'Wellbeing is here' presentation.

1.2 Support for schools

Policies and guidance

The Department's Strategic Plan 2018–2022 identifies student wellbeing as a priority. Every Student is Known, Valued, and Cared For in our Schools is one of ten goals—a commitment to student wellbeing at the strategic level. Under the goal, the Department commits to increasing the proportion of students reporting a sense of belonging, expectations for success and positive advocacy at school.

The School Excellence Policy and Framework (SEF) is the key policy for the promotion of excellence in NSW schools and was implemented as part of a package of reforms called Local Schools, Local Decisions in 2015. The wellbeing domain is one of six and comprises four themes—caring for students, a planned approach to wellbeing, individual learning needs, and behaviour. Schools develop a three-year school plan with up to three strategic directions and associated improvement measures. Schools determine milestones each year and implement and monitor the school plan and track progress. Schools are provided with a self-assessment tool to assist them with planning, and guidance documents. The SEF and other items form the basis of the schools' Annual Reports.

The Department issued the Wellbeing Framework for Schools in 2015. All schools are required to have a planned approach to wellbeing in place that addresses the elements of the Wellbeing Framework. The Framework is broken down into the three themes—see Exhibit 2. The framework is supported with a dedicated website—Wellbeing for Schools and tools and resources (including an optional wellbeing self-assessment tool). An important feature of the Wellbeing Framework is the three-tiered approach to interventions—all (universal), some (targeted) and few (intensive).

Exhibit 2: The Wellbeing Framework for schools

CONNECT	SUCCEED	THRIVE
Our students will be actively connected to their learning, have positive and respectful relationships and experience a sense of belonging to their school and community.	Our students will be respected, valued, encouraged, supported and empowered to succeed.	Our students will grow and flourish, do well and prosper.

ENABLE

The school environment is pivotal to the growth and development of our most important assets – our children and young people. Our schools strive for excellence in teaching and learning, connect on many levels and build trusting and respectful relationships for students to succeed.

Source: Department of Education, Wellbeing Framework for Schools.

Other policies and guidance

There are many areas which make a contribution to the wellbeing of specific groups within the secondary school population and these are supported with targeted or identified policy, guidance, support and structures. Resource Allocation Model (RAM) funding supports specific target groups such as refugee students, students who have recently arrived in Australia and students with disability. RAM equity loadings support students from low socio-economic backgrounds, Aboriginal students, students with disability and students with English as an additional language. Examples of universal, targeted and intensive programs are shown in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3: Examples of specific policies and programs – Universal, targeted and intensive

Universal	Targeted	Intensive
• Anti-racism • Anti-bullying • Attendance • Health and physical care • Behaviour code for students • Healthy canteens • Student voice mechanisms	• Refugee programs • Programs for Aboriginal students • Disability learning support • Suspension and expulsion	• Child protection • Support classes in schools • Case coordination led by a network specialist facilitator

Source: Audit Office analysis.

Funding and resources

The Local Schools, Local Decisions reform gave NSW schools more local authority to make decisions that best meet the needs of all students, including in schools' approaches and programs to support student wellbeing. From 2018, school principals were able to vary staffing mix in their school and employ additional staff to meet student needs, including for wellbeing. Some wellbeing staff positions and programs are funded through the RAM. Other targeted wellbeing programs also operate on a needs basis via a formula model or on submission by schools. Key funding and resources for wellbeing are shown in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4: Main funding sources for student wellbeing in secondary schools

	Resource allocation model (RAM) funding	School counsellor allocation	Flexible funding for wellbeing services allocation	Student wellbeing support program
Description	Schools can use RAM funding flexibly to vary staffing mix (including wellbeing staff) or to fund wellbeing initiatives.	Schools receive an allocation for a school counsellor or psychologist (allocation ranges between 0.05 FTE to 1.00 FTE).	Additional funding allocation which can be used flexibly including for a Student Support Officer.	Additional funding by application only, to be used for a Student Support Officer. Cost shared model (requires school and community funding).
Received by all secondary and central schools?	Yes	Yes	No – 213 out of 460* in 2018.	No – 83 out of 460* in 2018.

* Figures obtained from Learning and Wellbeing Unit, Department of Education and Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) NSW public school census FTE enrolments—460 secondary and central/community schools in NSW (excludes distance education and Intensive English Centres).
Source: Audit Office analysis.

In 2016, the Supported Students, Successful Students' initiative provided an additional $167 million over four years to support the wellbeing of students in public schools. The package included:

- $80.7 million to employ 236 additional school counselling service positions bringing the total to 1026 positions
- $51.5 million of flexible funding, equivalent to an additional 200 Student Support Officers
- $8.0 million to provide more than 500 graduate scholarships to boost the recruitment to the school counselling service and other wellbeing positions
- $8.0 million to implement the Connected Communities Healing and Wellbeing program
- $4.0 million to support refugee students who have experienced trauma and their families
- $15.0 million to support the implementation of Positive Behaviour for Learning in public schools across NSW.

1.3 Student wellbeing in schools

Under the Wellbeing Framework, schools are required to have a planned approach to wellbeing. Schools use their funding and resources to meet the needs of their students including to support their wellbeing. This can involve whole-school approaches to wellbeing, targeted and intensive programs, the use of external providers, behavioural systems (such as Positive Behaviour for Learning) and curriculum and learning.

School staff

There are several school staff that have specific roles and responsibilities for student wellbeing:

- School Principal and Deputy Principals.
- Head Teacher Wellbeing – Schools receive an entitlement allocation for head teacher positions when their student enrolment reaches a certain level, and may use this to create the position of Head Teacher Wellbeing. Schools can use their RAM funding to create or supplement the position if they do not have an allocation.
- School Counsellor or Psychologist – Each secondary or secondary school is centrally allocated a school counsellor or psychologist up to a maximum of 1.0 full-time equivalent. These positions have their own professional supervision by senior psychologists.
- Student Support Officer – May be funded under RAM, or flexible funding, or the Student Wellbeing Support Program (see above).
- Year Advisor – Usually a key wellbeing role but involvement in wellbeing systems and programs differs between schools.

Each of the 11 schools we visited as part of the audit has a Learning and Wellbeing Team. Schools decide the members and the structure of their Learning and Wellbeing Team. As such the role and functions of the team varies from school to school. In some schools the Learning and Wellbeing Team is integrated with the Learning and Support Team.

Wellbeing programs

Schools offer a range of wellbeing programs direct to students—through partnerships with government agencies, and non-government service providers, through private practitioners and not for profit and for profit organisations.

There are several health-funded services that provide wellbeing support to secondary age students. Schools can refer or recommend the use of these services to their students and can work with these services to support students with ongoing wellbeing needs—either directly on school premises or externally. For example, Headspace, a provider of mental health support to young people aged 12–25 years, offers clinical assessment and support by doctors, health workers and mental health professionals. Headspace offers free online or telephone support, through eHeadspace. There are also resources and programs designed specifically to support schools.

NSW Health's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provides services to children, adolescents and young people. CAMHS have a range of health professionals including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and nurses. Referrals to CAMHS can be made by a school, a health professional or the young person or their parents.

In addition to external health services, schools can contract with health professionals such as nurses, speech therapists and dentists to provide services in the school.

Schools run wellbeing programs, training, presentations and events for students through external providers who usually come into the school. These events can be run by government entities, community funded organisations or private companies, usually at a cost to the school. These cover a range of topics from mental health and suicide to building resilience. In addition, schools may implement longer-term programs targeted to specific students. In some cases, these programs are built into a student's school timetable. Examples of these longer-term programs include 'Boys to Men', a program where male students are matched with an adult mentor from the local community, and the 'Rock and Water' program which aims to provide young people with greater self-awareness, confidence and social functioning.

School information systems

There are a number of information systems and software used by schools to capture information on and monitor (individual and collective) students' wellbeing. Some of these include:

- **Education Business System (ebs:Central)** – Student information system. The Department's system for schools to record and monitor student information including attendance and student wellbeing. Schools are not required to use this program to record attendance or positive student behaviour; some schools use a third-party system such as Sentral, Millennium or Academy for this purpose. Schools can use ebs:Central or a third-party system to record incidents of student behaviour (positive and negative), and at some schools this is tied to Positive Behaviour for Learning and student merit systems. Schools are required to record or upload attendance data into ebs:Central and must record suspensions in ebs:Central.
- **SCOUT** – Education data and analysis platform for schools developed to provide better information in one central place.
- **School Planning and Reporting Online (SPaRO)** – System used to undertake and complete school planning, self-assessment, annual reporting and external validation under the SEF.

In addition, the Department plans to implement the following systems in schools from 2019:

- **Online Counselling Record System (OCRS)** – An electronic records management system tailored for the work of the school counselling service which will include systems for capturing counselling reporting and activities.
- **Client Relationship Management System (CRM)** – Relationship management system for schools to inquire/seek support from Education Services of the Department.

1.4 Audit scope

For the purposes of the performance audit, we have focused on specific initiatives, policies and programs aimed at promoting, ensuring and improving student wellbeing. These are found in a broad range of activities in schools, including:

- whole-school approaches to wellbeing
- attendance, behaviour and engagement policies and programs
- counselling and psychology services
- child protection, health and physical care—not in depth (see below)
- professional learning to support teachers' capabilities in student wellbeing
- working with other agencies and providers.

The audit also examined the monitoring of performance and activity for student wellbeing at school and system level.

As part of the audit we visited 11 secondary/central schools in NSW to observe their approach to wellbeing and reviewed a sample of 30 school annual plans for wellbeing improvement measures.

There are several policy areas which contribute towards student wellbeing that were not a specific focus of this audit. Some areas have been subject to external or internal reviews, audit and quality improvement processes. Our procedures did not identify any material concerns or findings in these areas:

- Healthy canteens policy and implementation – We observed the status or progress of case study schools towards implementing a healthy school canteen.
- Individual policies regarding health care and the provision of health services with education e.g. school dental scheme.
- Child protection – Legislation, policy, interagency collaboration and performance.
- Specific provisions under the Aboriginal Education Policy.
- Refugee schooling – Provisions relating to Intensive English Centres and supports for refugee students and families.
- Policies and provisions for students with disability and learning and support needs and polices and reasonable adjustment within teaching and learning in schools.

Further detail on the audit scope can be found in Appendix five – About the Audit.

2. Support for schools

2.1 Evidence-based policies and guidance

A wide range of policy and resources is available to support schools

The Department implemented major reforms and programs between 2015 and 2018, aimed at increasing the ability of schools to promote and support the wellbeing of all students.

There are key policies that guide the Department's approach to the wellbeing of students including:

- the School Excellence Policy and Framework
- the Wellbeing Framework for Schools

    the Department's Corporate Strategic Priority - Every Student is Known, Valued, and Cared For in our Schools - and associated program of initiatives, research, monitoring and support (these policies are described in Appendix two – Key policies, guidance and systems)
- specific policies for attendance, behaviour, suspension and expulsions, anti-bullying, anti-racism, equity programs, disability learning and support, child protection and others.

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) is active in supporting schools and central policy units in designing and implementing wellbeing initiatives, through:

- a literature review and environmental scan with associated resources, including registered professional learning
- evaluations of elements of the Supported Students, Successful Students package
- analytic tools for the Tell Them From Me (TTFM) range of surveys, the main feedback tool for both the system and schools on wellbeing of students
- analyses from the Department's major data collections and analysis, including the attendance and suspensions/expulsions collections
- case studies and other research demonstrating wellbeing best practice among department schools.

There is sound evidence, and strong support in schools for particular programs

School leadership teams in case study schools had a sound understanding of policies and processes of the 'School Excellence Framework' (SEF). An analysis of 30 school plans shows the majority of plans incorporate improvement measures for wellbeing activities however there is room for improvement as only a third of these plans nominated a target or benchmark for which the school could quantify improvement.

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), a whole-school approach to behaviour in schools, is being implemented in around 247 secondary and central schools in NSW with support under the Supported Students, Successful Students package. PBL is based on a substantial international and local evidence base. (PBL is also known as PBIS, PBS, or another name chosen by the school connecting PBL with the schools local context). It includes:

- setting expectations of behaviour
- how to teach these expectations
- how the school responds when students aren't meeting these expectations
- using data to see what's happening.

We also found examples of other specific programs which had a strong evidence base, were subject to evaluation and in some instances had external involvement of academics or universities. Program examples include the NSW Anti-Bullying Strategy and Youth Aware of Mental Health.

In schools we visited, we observed examples of programs that had evaluations which were used to determine improvements or changes in program offerings.

The Department plans to make quality improvements for the wellbeing programs delivered by both departmental and external providers in 2018/19. The Department aims to create a single quality assurance process with criteria and standards which may help schools in navigating the wide variety of program and providers available to them.

The implementation of the Wellbeing Framework is incomplete

The SEF is the key policy for the promotion of excellence in NSW schools and was implemented as part of a package of reforms called Local Schools, Local Decisions in 2015. Some school leaders we spoke to were unclear on the link between the SEF and the 'Wellbeing Framework'. They were also unclear on the status and purpose of the Wellbeing Framework—viewing it as support material and referring to it as having a 'soft launch'. Additionally, some schools have chosen not to complete the self-assessment tool, a mapping template accompanying the Wellbeing Framework which is designed to assist schools evaluate their approach to wellbeing.

From 2018, schools receiving specific allocated funding for wellbeing are required to show in their annual reporting how they have used this funding to support the school's planned approach to student wellbeing, as outlined in the 'Wellbeing Framework'. Further promotion and professional learning on the content of the Framework and best practice approaches to wellbeing are needed to ensure consistent implementation across secondary schools.

The Department has advised that a process is underway to better integrate the Wellbeing Framework with the SEF by linking both forms of planning. If done well, this should help in aligning the various frameworks and tools for school level use.

Some policies and resources require alignment to the new approach

'Wellbeing' has a broad definition encompassing many policies, including attendance, behaviour and discipline, equity and disability, learning support, as well as more traditional welfare, child safety and health care policies. Some longer standing policies do not reflect the contemporary evidence-based concepts and rigour of the Department's recent policy initiatives for wellbeing. For example, the Behaviour Code for Students is an example of a more recent policy statement which does not have good alignment with other instruments, such as whole-school approaches to wellbeing (PBL and PBS). Schools generally have their own school values and link rewards and sanctions to this. Only two of the 11 schools visited were actively using the NSW Behaviour Code, although all schools had student behaviour codes as part of a whole-school approach to behaviour, or they use a school-developed code which links to school policies and approaches.

The most important policies relating to wellbeing are slated for review as projects under 'Every Student is Known, Valued, and Cared For in our Schools'. Priority is being given to a combined behaviour and suspension policy.

2.2   Targeting resources according to need

Schools use three main sources for supporting wellbeing of their students:

- School staffing entitlements, including the positions of deputy principal, Head Teacher Wellbeing, year advisors and school counsellors and psychologists.
- Resource Allocation Model (RAM) funding, in particular the equity loadings which adjust funding based on a number of factors such as the socio-economic status of students.
- Specific initiatives funding—the Flexible Funding for Wellbeing Services Allocation, the Student Wellbeing Support Program 2018–2020.

Schools also have access to field-based departmental staff, programs provided in partnership or from other government agencies (FACS, Health, Juvenile Justice) and programs provided by external providers—individual practitioners and service providers.

The Department's wellbeing resources are mostly well targeted but there is room for improvement

The Department has implemented needs-based allocations for recent initiatives and some ongoing programs. Examples include equity loadings under the RAM model and allocations for school counsellors. The Department consulted widely before introducing these changes and has representative advisory structures in place. The methodologies are made available publicly— though at a level of summary that results could not be replicated.

Some of the schools we visited were not aware of all of the Department's funded programs for wellbeing, and the basis of the funding allocations was not widely understood.

The Core School Counselling Allocation and Flexible Funding for Wellbeing Services Allocation include 'hard' entitlement cut offs. For example, a school is not entitled to greater than 1.0 FTE school counsellor if enrolments exceed 850 students. This affects more than a quarter of secondary/central schools in NSW, and creates the risk of inequitable outcomes.

Many schools have less than one full-time counsellor, because they do not meet the benchmark of need for an additional allocation. The Flexible Wellbeing Services Allocation compensates these schools by providing a top-up allocation, however the basis of the allocation is a lower paid staff position (Student Support Officer) and the roles are substantially different. Schools with access to both funding streams can maximise this combination of resources by focusing clinical and expert psychological work in the counsellor position, and allocating other roles, such as youth counselling and group work, to the Student Support Officer position. This strategy is not available to schools below the entitlement cut-off or smaller schools.

New funding or initiatives from 2019 should consolidate existing programs, address gaps and give priority to high performing programs

The Department has made progress in supporting schools in implementing new or established approaches to wellbeing. Its efforts should now be consolidated over the next few years. Any new funds to address gaps in need should be allocated to schools who just miss out on eligibility or those with cases of extenuating circumstances such as significant growth in enrolments or formation of new classes for students attracting disability support funding.

There is a substantial task in bedding down revised roles and structures in the School Counselling Service. This is scheduled to proceed through 2019 with a new online records management system which will included systems for capturing counselling activities and reporting.

Work is also needed to review the status of programs with low take-up. For example, we looked at the Student Wellbeing Support Program 2018–2020, which is a grant program that allows schools to apply for funding in a cost-shared model with a community provider. There is little flexibility in the program and it has its own evaluation and accountability arrangements. There is low take-up of these grants, with only 83 of 460 secondary and central schools in 2018 receiving an allocation of $7,000. Only one of eleven schools we visited has taken up this opportunity to match its own funds and find a community partner.

2.3   Department's support to assess needs and identify gaps

There is a range of tools to assist schools identify current performance and gaps including the SEF self-assessment tool, the external validation process (every five years) which is part of the SEF cycle, the Wellbeing Framework self-assessment tool and monitoring and reporting through whole-school wellbeing approaches, such as Positive Behaviour for Learning.

Schools have various channels to approach the Department and seek funding for additional supports when unmet need is identified. These channels may be enhanced through the proposed Client Relationship System project, which aims to document and action support requests and providing an overview of gaps and issues in and across schools.

The Department has not effectively prioritised and consolidated tools, systems and reporting to support student wellbeing

Some schools we visited reported some value in the processes required by External Validation as part of the SEF, but this value diminishes over time. External validation occurs every five years and involves a panel of a school's peers reviewing their school practices. Where a validation is four years old it becomes less relevant to current operations. Where tools and resources are linked to a whole-school approach, such as PBL, there is a high level of reported value and use across the school.

The Department's Education Business System (ebs:Central) is offered to schools as a platform to record and monitor student information including information on student wellbeing. The 11 schools we visited all procure an external system called Sentral however other third-party systems are used in different schools. While both systems perform similar functions, schools viewed the Sentral system as better suited to their needs. The Sentral system was embedded in many schools' practices and processes for monitoring behaviour, attendance and suspensions and generates useful reports. While case study schools have chosen not to adopt the ebs:Central system, they are still required to update the Department's system with information on attendance and suspensions. School staff noted that this double handling of data was time consuming.

In addition to the information that can be viewed in Central or Sentral, a separate platform (SCOUT) was developed by the Department for schools to view data and reports. Schools are required to use the SPaRO (School Planning and Reporting Online) system when completing school planning, the SEF self-assessment and annual reports. The Department is also in the process of developing an online system for school counselling record keeping, and a relationship management system for schools to use to make contact with Education Services staff easier and capable of being tracked and aggregated to identify gaps and service needs.

In the schools we visited, we observed that this multitude of tools, systems and reporting creates duplication of effort and confusion at school level.

The Department's policy review processes are rigorous and inclusive

The Department identifies overall gaps or deficits in service delivery through processes of policy review which are rigorous and based on evidence and with the involvement of school principals and key staff. An example is the policy review process for Behaviour, Discipline and Suspensions. The major restructuring of the School Counselling Service was in response to gaps identified.

2.4 Roles and responsibilities to support students' wellbeing

The Department's Educational Services division has overall responsibility for student wellbeing policies and programs and focuses on the delivery of support and services to schools. Executive directors and directors have responsibilities across different aspects and programs for wellbeing. The main relevant directorates are Learning and Wellbeing; School Services; Aboriginal Education and Communities; Learning and Teaching. Other directorates such as CESE, Educational Services Review, Learning and Business Systems, also support wellbeing programs and initiatives.

Central and field-based support for schools is dispersed and needs streamlining

The Department commissioned a review in 2017 to examine the functioning of the Educational Services Division and make recommendations for improving services and support to schools. A blueprint of action was developed in 2018. A program of projects across 'improvement themes' has been developed and strong governance arrangements are in place to ensure projects remain focused and on track.

Some schools we visited reported difficulty in knowing who to contact for specific issues and are still adapting to the new organisational structures. At times, requests for information and directions come from various areas of the Department showing no overall coordination. There is no role delineation for the various units charged with responsibility for wellbeing. This has some impact at school level on understandings of supports available to schools. This finding reflects the external review findings that staff and school leaders needed greater clarity on the role of the new Educational Services Division and greater collaboration within and across units/divisions to enable seamless implementation. The Department has committed to clarifying the role of the division and encouraging greater levels of coordination and collaboration.

The Department has commenced a customer service project to streamline direct services to schools and improve customer relationship management through an integrated Client Relationship Management system. The aim of the system is to allow enquiries through various channels (phone calls, emails, web links, apps and web forms) and track requests and support provided. The system was piloted in late 2018.

Head Teacher Wellbeing role requires clearer role definition and recognition of the scope of responsibilities

A school's Learning and Wellbeing Team generally comprises school-based staff and meets regularly to monitor individual students and plan interventions and activities. Sometimes this function is combined with the Learning and Support Team in a school, which focuses on the needs of students requiring additional learning support. This flexibility allows schools to determine the best mix of staff and governance to use resources efficiently and ensure a coordinated approach in a school.

An appropriately skilled Head Teacher Wellbeing is essential to an effective team and requires adequate time away from classroom duties to perform the role. This role requires more consistent definition and identification of the time required to fulfil the role.

Some schools choose to allocate more head teacher resources to the role through RAM allocation or other school funding sources. Only one school visited has retained the Head Teacher Welfare title. We found the wellbeing approach less embedded in this school.

School counsellor/psychologist roles are evolving and need greater support

The school counsellor or school psychologist is an important member of the Learning and Wellbeing Team. Recent changes to the school counselling service have allowed for the recruitment of qualified psychologists (non-teaching background) to fill this role, along with significant investment in scholarships and additional training to fill vacancies and new positions.

Notwithstanding this investment the maximum allocation of counsellors/psychologists to a school is 1.0 FTE, even for large schools (exceeding 850 enrolments). This has been supplemented by youth worker positions for schools meeting a threshold of need. Schools can supplement the counselling resources through RAM and other sources and examples were provided of innovative solutions to increase counsellor time.

School counsellors and psychologists have a range of significant responsibilities. These include providing:

- intensive support for identified students—this must be limited and in some schools a limit of four sessions per student is applied
- a drop-in service for students either referred by teachers or self-referred
- an assessment gateway to intensive services
- program planning and delivery.

Most counsellors we met reported workload in excess of capacity and hours available, with processes in place to prioritise students based on need. Where there is a funded Student Support Officer, the drop-in service and small group work can be re-allocated to this person and a triage system applies for counsellor time.

School counsellors and psychologists have reporting responsibilities including a mandatory assessment for all long suspensions, assessments for access to support classes, child protection reporting and involvement in case management in tandem with the Learning and Wellbeing Team.

Schools need a clear service model to deliver effective support for wellbeing

Schools we visited reported a lack of clarity in the interface between policies, guidance and systems to support wellbeing. The Department currently has a facilitative approach to ensuring effective wellbeing structures are in place in every school. This approach is in line with Local Schools, Local Decisions reform.

The Department's main strategies to promoting effective models for wellbeing services delivery in schools is through:

- the Principals in Residence program for the Every Student is Known, Valued and Cared For
- highlighting of good practice in case studies
- professional learning and sharing in principal forums
- supports for particular whole-school programs, such as Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL).

A clearer statement of a best practice service model should be developed for implementation in each secondary school.

A service model could give consideration to and clarify:

- roles of Learning and Wellbeing Team—to provide a balance between individual case management, and planning and review of targeted programs and whole-school interventions
- role of a Head Teacher Wellbeing
- role of school counsellors and psychologists and the balance between universal, targeted and intensive support
- role of a Student Support Officer
- role of a Year Advisor in Wellbeing
- models to better coordinate complex cases.

The Department's work as part of the Educational Services review implementation may partly address this issue of a service model for wellbeing, improving consistency in the delivery of wellbeing services and clarifying the role of the Network Specialist Facilitator.

2.5 Cross-agency collaboration

Cross agency collaboration supports students with more complex needs

Complex cross agency collaboration in the area of child protection is governed by legislation, regulation, central and local level governance arrangements and a dedicated unit in the Department—the Child Wellbeing Unit. Schools are aware of and make use of the processes for mandatory reporting, case coordination and referral. Schools we spoke to reported a high level of confidence and high use of the processes and supports provided by the Child Wellbeing Unit.

There is collaboration with service providers other than government agencies at state-wide level, which are also managed through MOUs, contracts for service and incorporate evaluation. Examples include:

- Lifespan – partner Black Dog Institute
- Project Air – partner University of Wollongong
- Youth in distress training – partner Black Dog Institute.

⚄ 3. Schools' support for student wellbeing

3.1 Schools' use of Departmental policies and guidance

Schools integrate resources to develop a school approach to wellbeing

Schools use a wide range of policies, resources and tools to promote and support wellbeing, tailored to their local needs. Schools we visited stated that the School Excellence Framework (SEF) and whole-school approaches such as Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) were important to their local wellbeing approach.

In schools we visited with full implementation of PBL, incident management action - both positive and negative - and data are recorded in the online system Sentral. The system is used by all teaching staff, the Learning and Wellbeing Team and executive for the administration of discipline polces and reward systems.

PBL is optional and has engaged around 247 secondary and central schools which are implementing PBL. It is supported by funding for three years under the Supported Students, Successful Students package which funds coaches, mentors and training in the program.

Effective schools integrate their approaches in all aspects of wellbeing and communicate this well to staff, students and families as described in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5: Examples of integrated approaches to wellbeing

Schools have developed local approaches to implementing well-integrated systems

One high school we visited has three tiers of communications for students, families and staff. The same communication is adapted for each audience, branded alike and communicated through various modes, so that all are 'singing from the same song sheet'. A single policy and procedures document is developed and updated each year for each targeted audience showing the links between all aspects of wellbeing in the school. It is a PBL (PBS) school.

Another high school we visited has developed a Plan on a Page approach to provide staff a tool for the full range of student needs, outlining 'where to go for what'.

A number of Learning and Wellbeing Teams have developed traffic light systems to manage the case management role of the team, ensuring timely interventions and no slippage in support for students needing or receiving support.

Source: School visit evidence provided to the audit team.

Schools link to a large number of external providers but need guidance on quality of providers

Dedicated wellbeing staff - counsellors, psychologists, wellbeing support officers, head teacher wellbeing - all maintain extensive contacts for case management, for program delivery and for in-school interventions and programs.

Some schools provided the audit with lists of the external service providers that work with students—in one case this exceeded 13 programs and 31 agencies for direct support, coordination or referral. Managing and coordinating so many external non-teaching staff places burdens on wellbeing staff and may distract from day-to-day learning programs.

In two case study schools, timetabling of wellbeing programs, both internal and external has been consolidated into one session per week. Another school has mapped the objectives and outcomes to the PDPHE curriculum for years seven to ten and integrated universal wellbeing programs into the study time of this subject.

The Department has commenced work on a quality assurance process for external providers to schools which aims to streamline administration and improve quality of outcomes.

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3.2 Capacity and capability of schools

Schools assess students' wellbeing needs and plan support at three levels

Schools assess students' wellbeing needs, at the individual, group and whole-school levels. Each of the mandatory and optional tools outlined have a role to play in assessing needs and taking action. Wellbeing staff also use external assessment and planning tools. Examples of external tools include the Australian Department of Education's wellbeing 'School Audit Tool', the Australian Council for Educational Research 'National School Improvement Tool'.

The Learning and Wellbeing Team in a school is the focus of assessing wellbeing needs and divides its activities between case management of individual students and planning and program review. Formal in-school referral systems operate in all the schools visited for students needing intensive and targeted support.

The Tell Them From Me (TTFM) student survey collects student opinions on wellbeing and assists in assessing students' needs. Some of the schools we visited are using this feedback to inform decisions about wellbeing and to review and revise wellbeing programs. Schools also develop local surveys for staff, parents and students' perspectives.

On a day-to-day basis many principals and wellbeing staff rely on incidents reported by teachers through incident management systems (collected and reported through Sentral).

Professional learning for teachers is built into wellbeing initiatives

The Department routinely incorporates professional learning elements in program reforms and initiatives, providing a package of support and ongoing opportunities for training or refresher courses. Schools supplement these with local or externally provided training making use of expertise from other disciplines.

Each teacher has access to a personal learning program (MyPL) contributing to recognised training for levels of accreditation. Wellbeing training is well-represented in these plans. In June 2018, there were around 63 training programs on MyPL relevant to student wellbeing including specific programs on issues such as racism, behaviour and trauma. A number of these courses have a focus on elements of learning with less apparent links to wellbeing, however the Department advises that wellbeing is linked to all facets of student learning.

A quality assurance process has commenced to assess all professional learning offerings to decide whether they align with policy goals, comply with quality principles and have an evaluation component. In 2018 the Department reviewed 26 professional learning programs relevant to student wellbeing and found most met the standards of quality and will be continued, amendments were recommended for six and one program is to be discontinued.

Physical spaces to support student wellbeing are being adapted in schools

A number of schools visited have established or are planning a wellbeing or wellness centre—a physical space for students to go to and engage in wellbeing programs, interventions or time out from stressful situations. The spaces may be a location for counselling or support staff, for visiting external providers or used for small group work. Virtual hubs are being developed and shared by one innovative school, taking advantage of some people's preference for accessing information online.

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Exhibit 6: Elements of a 'Wellbeing Hub' in a secondary school

- A 'drop in' space designed for students that is neither a classroom or a lunch room.
- Staffed by a student support officer at times during the day to provide support to students with wellbeing needs.
- Acts as an additional learning space to run wellbeing programs for students and wellbeing team meetings for staff.

Source: Adapted from descriptions of actual and proposed wellness hubs or centres provided at case study schools. School visits. 2018.

3.3 Working with students with mental health or complex needs

Wellbeing staff have responsibilities for planning and coordinating with other services for students with identified and/or assessed wellbeing needs. School counsellors and psychologists work with vulnerable students or those with identified mental health issues on an individual basis and plan and coordinate service provision with the family and student. Learning and Wellbeing Teams operate using a case management approach, often involving outside practitioners or agencies.

Complex case coordination requires specific models

At the schools we visited we found high usage of Individual Support Plans/Individual Behaviour Plans/Pathways Plans using departmental templates, which allow the team to plan and track progress.

Schools we visited were working in an integrated way, using case coordination and integrated approaches with outside services, not just relying on referral, particularly for complex cases. We found examples of quality service provision by specialist health providers, delivered at school on a planned basis. This is possible in communities with significant community-based provision. Even if additional support is available, it may be hard to access and not well coordinated with other services.

Case management usually involves the school counsellor or psychologist and other wellbeing staff linking into local services and ensuring the school's role is well documented and agreed, involving the family and student at all steps. The Educational Services Review reported that principals felt the need for improved support for managing complex cases and for students with significant needs. Counsellors we met reported the preparation of reports, which involve case management and coordination plans with other services, are time consuming and take time away from direct contact time with students.

The Network Specialist Facilitator is a field-based position with a role in complex case coordination. The program, originally a rural and regional initiative, is now adapted locally to address local contexts. Some schools we visited reported little or no service from their assigned Network Specialist Facilitator due to work demands. The role requires a clear definition of its place in complex case coordination, to ensure schools access this service, or alternative support equitably.

The Learning and Wellbeing Unit is reviewing complex case coordination, including the roles and responsibilities of different field and school-based positions. The project aims to develop greater consistency in how they work together supporting the school around complex cases.

When students are referred to an external agency for management of mental health needs, progress reporting back to the school has been variable and, in some cases, very limited. Amendments to the child protection legislation in 2016 (Section 16 A of the *Child Protection Act*) have assisted exchange of information where there are safety, welfare or wellbeing concerns.

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📈 4. Measuring performance

4.1 Measuring and reporting performance at school level

School plans nominate a set of improvement measures for each of three strategic directions and an evaluation plan to achieve the desired results. Reporting against the plan provides information and accountability to students, staff, parents and the community for school performance in wellbeing and other areas of teaching, learning and leading.

Around two-thirds of sampled schools did not have adequate student wellbeing performance measures

A review of a sample of 30 secondary schools' public plan reports (including the case study schools) indicates that most schools have included a wellbeing measure, with 27 of the 30 samples schools doing so. Of the 30 schools sampled, 20 schools received flexible wellbeing funding. The three schools sampled that did not report a wellbeing improvement measure were schools that also did not receive flexible wellbeing funding and therefore may not be as attuned to the relatively recent wellbeing agenda.

The Department requires that improvement measures nominated by schools be measurable. A review of a sample of school plans found that 21 out of 30 plans had measurable wellbeing improvement measures. Only around one third of plans contained a wellbeing improvement measure that was specific, nominating a target or benchmark for which the school could quantify improvement.

This gap may require further capacity building with schools to address, as part of the work program on data and analysis, to be delivered by the CESE.

Analysis of student survey data is not linked to school reporting on wellbeing

The CESE also supports school in accessing and analysing their TTFM survey results. A comparative analysis is available for schools within the same Principal Network (geographic) and with state results. These reports show the proportion of students in each school who report positive outcomes on selected TTFM indicators—positive expectations for success, sense of belonging and advocacy at school. We noted only one school plan uses its TTFM survey data to evaluate the success of their emotional health and wellbeing strategy.

Executive directors and directors can use TTFM reports to gain an overview of individual school performance compared to other schools within a Principal Network or state level results. These reports are for internal use only.

Activity data relating to wellbeing positions and programs varies. School counsellors and school psychologists will use a new online information and reporting system from 2019. There is no consistent activity data collected by student support officers and other designated wellbeing positions. Program data - including participation and outcome data - is collected locally by schools and used to inform program review activities.

Principals rely on a small number of indicators to monitor wellbeing

Principals in case study schools nominated a small number of indicators as important to their assessment of wellbeing at their schools. Indicators most commonly cited by principals are:

- incidents notified by teachers through incident management systems (collected and reported through Sentral and ebs:Central)
- attendance and suspensions/expulsions data (reported through Sentral and ebs:Central).

Child wellbeing contacts were rarely cited as an indicator of wellbeing, although one of the funding formulas includes contacts with the Child Wellbeing Unit as a need indicator.

Principals also reported using the TTFM survey and school-initiated surveys as important sources of information on wellbeing, from the students' perspective.

Schools are using a benchmark of 85 per cent in attendance of individual students, below which action is taken to refer to the Home School Liaison Program. In some schools this benchmark is used for year group or the school as a whole, to trigger particular interventions.

The Department has not provided adequate guidance on student suspension rates

Schools we visited use the Department's suspension policy and report suspensions and expulsions, but not publicly. There is a very wide range of numbers and rates across schools. At one school we visited suspensions rarely occur. Principals reported using their own standards of what is an acceptable level of suspensions, mainly informed by 'years of experience'. Trends over time were viewed as important, as a downward trend is seen as indicating effectiveness of the overall school approach to wellbeing. Absolute numbers were used rather than rates. One school did have a target reduction of four percentage points as an improvement measure to be achieved over the three years of the school plan.

The Department publicly reports on suspensions and expulsions by Family And Community Services region, and includes rates (number of incidents per school enrolment and number of students per school enrolment as a percentage) for short and long suspensions.

School principals and executive reported they assessed their schools as having 'high' or 'low' levels of suspensions for similar rates, without reference to any state average or desirable benchmark. This is an area where further refinement in the indicator and the establishment of benchmarks for different types of schools or different levels of disadvantage may assist principals in using a metric to guide their priorities, activities and improvement measures.

Despite the importance given to suspension numbers and rates by school principals, the Department provides no normative benchmarks for comparison purposes.

4.2   Measuring and reporting on performance at state level

The Department's major monitoring at system level of school performance in wellbeing is through:

- state-wide data collections and analysis of attendance, suspensions, expulsions
- contacts with the Child Wellbeing Unit
- results of the Tell Them From Me (TTFM) survey for those schools that participate.

The Department has yet to report on the performance measure for wellbeing

The Department's performance measure for wellbeing is 'Increased proportion of students reporting a sense of belonging, expectations for success and advocacy at school'. The Department is yet to publicly report on this measure.

The TTFM student survey will be used to construct the key performance indicator from three relevant measures:

- sense of belonging (six items)
- advocacy at school (six items)
- expectation for academic success (six items).

These measures are aggregated to deliver a single measure of wellbeing expressed as a proportion of students reporting positive outcomes.

The draft proposed measure does include an improvement target. This is in the form of a percentage point increase in the proportion of students reporting positive outcomes on the three measures—sense of belonging, advocacy at school, expectation for academic success—from a 2018 baseline figure.

The Department advised a draft specification for reporting on the wellbeing performance measure has been designed, but not yet approved at executive and Ministerial level.

The Department relies on an optional survey for its wellbeing performance measure
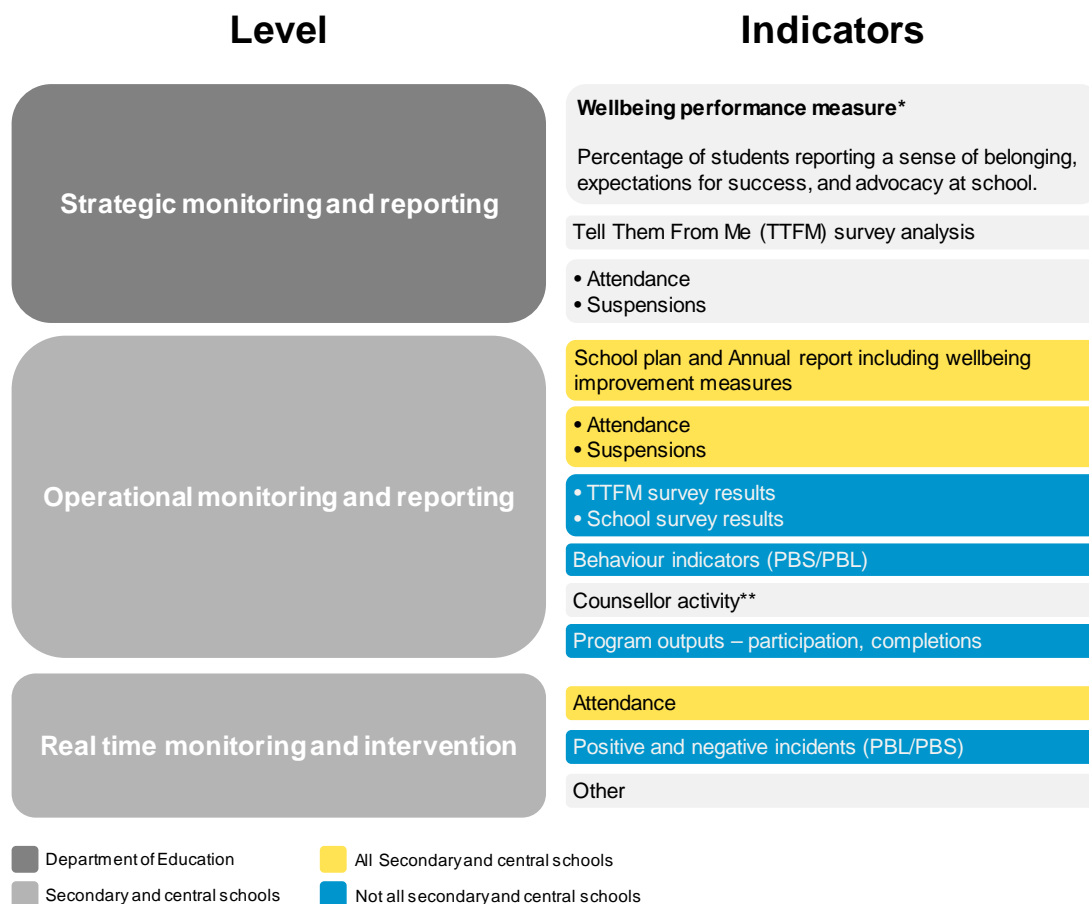
The TTFM student survey has a mixed experience in schools with some schools we visited reporting low participation and low value from the survey participation and reporting. The survey is long and the schools we visited had a range of response rates (41–91 per cent). However, schools with high response rates were able to demonstrate effective use of the data in review of strategies and continuous improvement in programs.

The Department's reliance on items from the TTFM survey to report at system level on the performance measure for wellbeing will require consideration of the optional status of the student survey. Questions of bias in the sample reported exist with an optional survey. School executive in case study schools speculated that lower response rates are evidence of poor levels of student engagement or staff commitment to student wellbeing. Statistical methods for adjusting survey results for bias or low response rates might be explored to address bias in analysis.

The wellbeing measure is one of ten performance measures for the strategic plan 2018–2022. Some progress reporting should be provided before the end of the 2022 period to ensure progress is on track and the indicator is a viable measure. Given a benchmark has been set at 2017/2018, benchmark reporting could be done within the 2019 year. The audit has recommended this be in a form of a special public report which explains the measures behind the indicator, the evidence base of the survey and the methods used to address the inherent bias in the findings due to partial coverage of the survey—both in the range and number of schools participating and the quantum and profile of students participating.

Exhibit 7 shows the current framework for performance monitoring at the state and school level.

Exhibit 7: Wellbeing performance monitoring framework

Level

Indicators

Strategic monitoring and reporting

Wellbeing performance measure*

Percentage of students reporting a sense of belonging, expectations for success, and advocacy at school.

Tell Them From Me (TTFM) survey analysis

- Attendance
- Suspensions

Operational monitoring and reporting

School plan and Annual report including wellbeing improvement measures

- Attendance
- Suspensions

- TTFM survey results
- School survey results

Behaviour indicators (PBS/PBL)

Counsellor activity**

Program outputs – participation, completions

Real time monitoring and intervention

Attendance

Positive and negative incidents (PBL/PBS)

Other

Department of Education

Secondary and central schools

All Secondary and central schools

Not all secondary and central schools

* Wellbeing performance measure is yet to be reported.

** Proposed.

Source: Audit Office analysis 2019.

Section two

Appendices

Appendix one – Response from agency

Ms Margaret Crawford
Auditor-General of NSW
Audit Office of New South Wales
GPO Box 12
SYDNEY NSW 2001

DGL19/292

Dear Ms Crawford

Thank you for your letter of 18 April 2019, providing me with a copy of the final report on the Performance Audit – Wellbeing of Secondary School Students, and seeking a formal response from the Department of Education to be incorporated into the published report.

The department has reviewed the final report of the performance audit and our response is attached.

Our Strategic Plan (https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/our-strategic-plan/strategic-plan) includes a goal that every student is known, valued and cared for. This is a key area of work for all of our schools. Our commitment to improving student outcomes covers not only their academic achievements but also their wellbeing. We will be monitoring this through our Tell Them From Me (TTFM) survey.

Wellbeing contributes significantly to the learning and other life outcomes of children and young people in our schools. It builds resilience, facilitates self-determination and participation. Wellbeing enhances our sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity.

The NSW Government has invested more than $290 million since 2015/2016 to support the wellbeing and mental health of students.

In 2019, an additional $88 million has been allocated over four years to provide every public high school with two dedicated mental health professionals so that students have access to vital mental health and wellbeing support. This funding will enable employment of up to 100 additional school counselling staff so that every public high school will have full-time psychology support on site. The department is looking at ways to provide regular and timely access through a dedicated fly-in fly-out telepsychology service in rural and remote NSW schools.

In addition, 350 new student support officers will be employed enabling every high school to have a full-time student support officer, providing an access point for students who might be experiencing issues such as bullying, stress, peer or family conflict.

The department is committed to the ongoing collection of student voice data through student surveys. We would like to add some contextual data to the observation made in the report's key findings about the department's student engagement and wellbeing TTFM survey.

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While it is true some schools achieve low participation rates among their students, we believe the surveys on the whole have been extremely successful. The average participation rate within schools is around 70 per cent; fewer than 10 per cent of schools have a participation rate of 40 per cent or less. On average, students take around 15 minutes to complete the surveys, which we believe is an appropriate commitment given the importance of the data collected.

The increasing take up of TTFM indicates broad and strong support of the survey, with close to 90 per cent of public high schools expected to complete the survey during 2019. The department will continue to provide support and work with schools to help them get the most out of the surveys and the valuable information it provides to each school.

The department will also continue to work with other government agencies and leading mental health organisations to support schools in delivering best practice prevention and early intervention mental health support.

Yours sincerely

Mark Scott AO
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
16 May 2019

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	Recommendation	Department of Education's response	Comments
1	**By December 2019** Integrate the Wellbeing Framework with the School Excellence Framework, and align other related wellbeing policies, such as behaviour and discipline policies, to achieve consistency.	Supported	The School Excellence Framework supports all schools in their pursuit of excellence. Wellbeing has been integrated into the updated School Excellence Framework and, from the beginning of 2019, all schools have been able to use the updated version. The department is working to simplify and align the Wellbeing Framework for Schools with the School Excellence Framework to support schools in understanding the systems requirements for wellbeing. In addition, the department will scope and review a range of policies and frameworks related to wellbeing, behaviour and discipline so they are better aligned, and schools can use them to inform wellbeing practices. This work has commenced and we are reviewing the school attendance and discipline policies in consultation with school principals, staff and a range of stakeholders. The updated policies will provide consistent requirements and approaches for schools.
2	**By December 2019** Define a service model, and commensurate resourcing models, so that schools can better deliver wellbeing activities in a coordinated way.	Supported	The department is working to improve its approach to supporting schools. We are doing this by: • Improving our systems so that we can track and monitor our engagement with schools and the impact this has. • Working in partnership with schools to provide tailored support on the areas that are of most importance to them. In 2019 we will provide support to 471 schools and 43 will be working on wellbeing related initiatives.

	Recommendation	Department of Education's response	Comments
			• We will be reviewing the program funding and positions in place to support elements of the Wellbeing Framework to determine whether this funding should be provided more flexibly to schools to support their local wellbeing priorities.
3	**By March 2020** Implement measures to support the targeting of wellbeing resources by: • addressing allocation cut-offs in the formula to allocate school counsellors and psychologists to schools with growing enrolments and/or high needs	Supported	The department is implementing measures that will provide significant enhancements in wellbeing resources for high schools. We are doing this by: • employing up to 100 additional school counselling staff over four years (2019-20 to 2021-22) so that every high school will have full time school counselling support on site. • an additional 350 student support officers will be employed over four years (2019-2020 to 2021-2022) so that every high school will have a student support officer. • Addressing allocation cut-offs in the formula to allocate school counsellors and psychologists.
3	**By March 2020** Implement measures to support the targeting of wellbeing resources by: • redesigning the workforce demand and supply forecasting to specifically identify counsellor/psychologists separately from general teaching positions.	Supported	Demand forecasting will initially focus on attrition rates as well as forecasted attrition rates based on the workforce demographics and geographic need. In addition, data generated from the department's School Services strategic initiatives project will be used to inform key areas of need in schools, and shape future resources and training requirements. More broadly the department is undertaking work on its staffing methodology and how it can best support student outcomes.
4	**From 2019 onwards** Consolidate any new funded policy initiatives into established evidence-based programs, such as	Supported	The department is committed to providing evidenced based programs and services for our schools and has work underway to address this recommendation through new funded initiatives. An example is the NSW

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NSW Auditor-General's Report to Parliament | Wellbeing of secondary school students | Appendix one – Response from agency

	Recommendation	Department of Education's response	Comments
	whole school approaches, school counsellors and flexible funding for wellbeing.		state budget investment of an additional $88 million over four years (2019-20 to 2021-22) to provide every public high school with both a school counsellor/school psychologist and a student support officer so that students have access to vital mental health and wellbeing support. These staff will be trained to deliver evidenced based interventions in high schools. As part of this investment, the Department of Education will also partner with other government agencies and leading mental health organisations to support schools and specialist staff in delivering evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs.
5	**From 2019 onwards** Integrate requirements to monitor wellbeing activities and outcomes into current systems and platforms.	Supported	School planning and reporting processes will be reviewed to explore inclusion of explicit student wellbeing targets and related monitoring and reporting as an element in current systems and platforms.
6	**By December 2019** Increase the use of quantifiable wellbeing improvement measures in school planning and reporting by assisting schools to design and use targets and benchmarks.	Supported	School planning and reporting is a priority for the department. The department's 50 Principal School Leadership (PSL) positions as part of their role will support schools to set appropriate targets and benchmarks, and include wellbeing improvement measures as an area of focus for support.
7	**By December 2019** Include the following key operational indicators in the performance dashboards which inform school improvement and oversight by Directors Educational Leadership: • trends in suspension numbers and rates against normative benchmarks, either NSW averages or like school comparators	Supported in principle	Directors Educational Leadership have access to suspension data to inform school planning and improvement through a dashboard. The department is currently working to improve the visibility of data, including suspension data, to better inform planning in schools and across schools in local networks. The work is complex with a number of factors impacting on the capacity to identify normative benchmarks for all schools:

	Recommendation	Department of Education's response	Comments
			• privacy legislation requires the department to ensure that any presentation of suspension data on dashboards protects the privacy of individual students • developing reliable trends and normative benchmarks is difficult due to the volatility of suspension data in many schools from year to year. This is a particular issue for small schools that have few suspensions. While suspension data will continue to be included in dashboards for directors for these schools, performance reporting and normative benchmarks would not be appropriate for small schools or schools with very few suspensions.
7	**By December 2019** Include the following key operational indicators in the performance dashboards which inform school improvement and oversight by Directors Educational Leadership: • student attendance, contacts with the Child Wellbeing Unit	Supported	The department has been working on ways to provide important data to Directors to guide their planning and support for schools. The department's Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation has developed a Directors Portal which shows attendance rates and the proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time for each school, using data harvested from the department's IT platform (known as ebs: central). For high schools the data is presented for each term, by years 7-10 and 11-12. The portal was released to directors at the beginning of Term 2 2019 and includes comparison of 2019 attendance rates with 2018 rates. The department's Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation is developing school level targets for the proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time.

	Recommendation	Department of Education's response	Comments
			The department's Child Wellbeing Unit currently provides Executive Directors and Directors, Educational Leadership a range of data around contacts with the Child Wellbeing Unit.
7	**By December 2019** Include the following key operational indicators in the performance dashboards which inform school improvement and oversight by Directors Educational Leadership: • activity measures for counsellors/psychologists and for identified student wellbeing positions, such as the Student Support Officer.	Supported	Planning for the introduction of a new online system for the school counselling service is underway. A 'user group' has identified detailed business requirements for the system which includes reporting functions that capture key activity measures for school counsellors/psychologists. We are employing an additional 350 Student Support Officers over four years (2019-20 to 2021-22) so that every public high school will have a student support officer. The student support officers will be provided high level training, resources and tools to identify and deliver evidence-based wellbeing initiatives and activity measures.
8	**By December 2019** Publicly report on the wellbeing key performance indicator 'Increase the proportion of students reporting a sense of belonging, expectations for success and advocacy at school' including its design and 2018 performance as a baseline for measuring progress in wellbeing.	Supported with comment	The department will report on the wellbeing indicator in its 2019 Annual Report which will be published in May 2020. This will align with the department's annual reporting cycle and ensure the wellbeing indicator is reported along with other performance measures.

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Appendix two – Key policies, guidance, and systems

Key policies and guidance

Policies and guidance	About
School Excellence Policy and Framework (SEF)	Key policy for the promotion of excellence in NSW schools. The framework contains six key domains: learning culture, wellbeing, curriculum, assessment, reporting and student performance measures. The wellbeing domain comprises four themes—caring for students, a planned approach to wellbeing, individual learning needs, and behaviour.
	Schools develop a three-year school plan with up to three strategic directions and associated improvement measures. Schools determine milestones each year and implement and monitor the school plan and track progress.
	Schools are provided with a self-assessment tool to assist them with planning, and a suite of guidance documents.
Wellbeing Framework for Schools	Key framework for wellbeing launched in 2015. The framework is broken down into the three themes of connect, succeed, thrive and six elements of wellbeing: teaching and learning; behaviour discipline and character education; learning and support; professional practice; effective leadership; and school planning.
	The framework is supported with a dedicated website, tools and resources (including an optional wellbeing self-assessment tool for schools).
Every Student is Known Valued and Cared For	One of the Department's Strategic Priorities and its associated program of initiatives, research, monitoring and support.
Specific policies for a range of wellbeing issues	Including attendance, behaviour, suspension and expulsions, anti-bullying, anti-racism, disability learning and support, child protection and others.

Key systems

System	About	Implemented
Ebs:Central	Student information system. The Department's system for schools to record and monitor student information including on student wellbeing. Schools that have chosen to use third party systems are required to upload data/information into the Department's ebs:Central.	✅
SCOUT	Education data and analysis platform for schools developed to provide better information in one central place.	✅
School Planning and Reporting Online (SPaRO)	System used to undertake and complete school planning, self-assessment, annual reporting and external validation under the SEF.	✅
Online Counselling Record System (OCRS)	Online database for counselling records, reporting and activities.	No. Planned implementation 2019.
Client Relationship Management System (CRM)	Relationship management system for schools to inquire/seek support from Education Services of the Department.	No. Planned implementation 2019.

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NSW Auditor-General's Report to Parliament | Wellbeing of secondary school students | Appendix two – Key policies, guidance, and systems

Appendix three – Funding and resources for schools

School counselling allocation

Every school receives an allocation for a qualified counsellor or psychologist. School counselling allocations range from 0.05 full-time equivalent to one full-time equivalent. From 2016–2018, 206 (45 per cent) of 460 secondary and central schools in NSW received a full time counselling allocation. Most of the schools receiving a full-time counselling allocation (74 per cent) had student enrolments in 2015 equal to or exceeding 850 students.

Exhibit 8: School counselling allocation in secondary and central schools 2016 to 2018
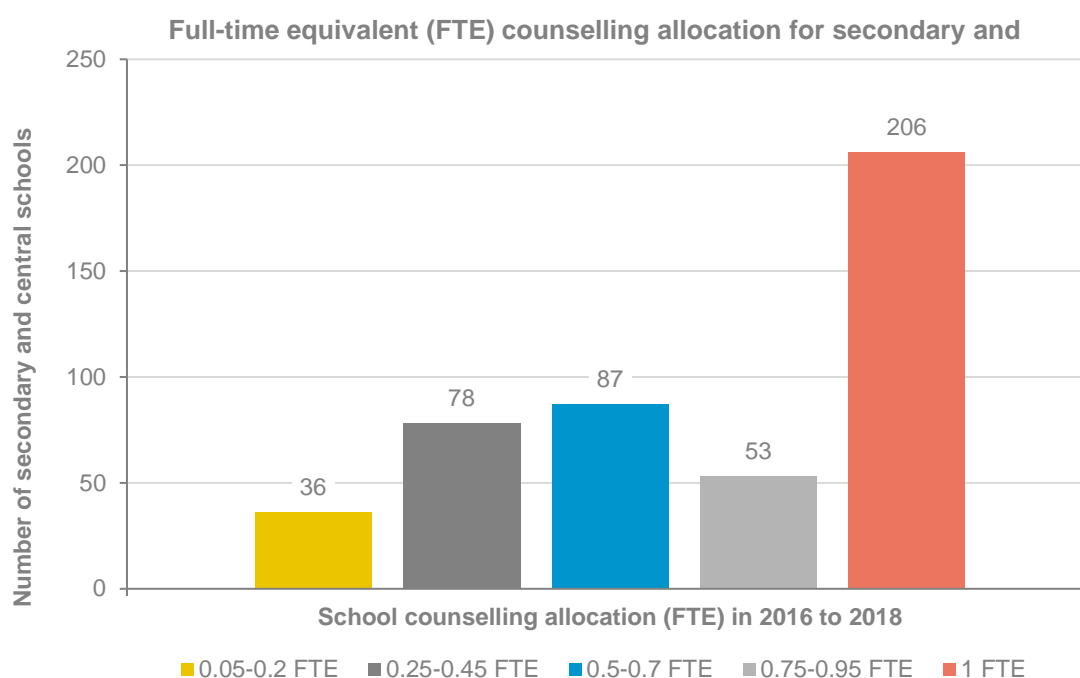
Source: Audit Office Analysis based on data provided by the Department of Education.

Flexible funding for wellbeing allocation 2016 to 2018

In 2016 to 2018, 213 secondary and central schools in NSW received an additional funding allocation under flexible funding for wellbeing services. The value of allocations for 2016 to 2018 are shown in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9: Allocations of flexible funding to secondary and central schools

Funding bracket	Number of schools receiving funding
$33,000–$34,999	96
$35,000–$43,000	17
$45,000–$50,000	62
$82,000–$83,000	38
Total	**213**
Total secondary and central schools in NSW	**460**

Source: Department of Education 2018. CESE NSW public school census FTE enrolments 2018 (460 secondary and central/community schools in NSW excludes distance education and intensive English centres).

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NSW Auditor-General's Report to Parliament | Wellbeing of secondary school students | Appendix three – Funding and resources for schools

Flexible funding can be used to employ additional staff including student support officers, school counsellors additional to the core allocation and other staff to support wellbeing. Schools can also use the funding to support the capacity of staff to meet the wellbeing needs of their students e.g. though professional learning. Exhibit 10 details schools use of flexible funding for wellbeing in 2017.

Exhibit 10: Wellbeing services and activities on which secondary schools spent their flexible funding in 2017

Expenditure category	Percentage (%) of schools reporting spending on category
Employment of specialist staff	55
Other whole of school wellbeing program	36
Employment of wellbeing exec/staff	29
Professional learning in wellbeing approaches	24
Wellbeing program for students in need	25
Engagement of third party provider	10
Other	12
Services targeted towards Aboriginal students	8
Services targeted towards refugee students	4
Employment of a school psychologist	2
Employment of a counsellor	1

NB: responses non-exclusive, totals exceed 100 per cent.

Source: Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) 2018.

Student Wellbeing Support Program 2018 to 2020

The Student Wellbeing Support Program has a total budget for $3.0 million over three years (2018 to 2020). The program is open by application to all NSW Government schools. The program aims to help schools to fund a student wellbeing support officer. Successful applicants will be provided annual funding of $7,000 by the Department however the schools must contribute $7,000 of their and source $7,000 from the school community annually over the course of the three programs. In 2018, the Department received 90 applications from secondary and central schools in NSW. All applications for the program were approved. Seven schools out of the 90 withdrew from the program without spending any funds. Refer to Exhibit 11.

Exhibit 11: Student Wellbeing Support Program expenditure

	2018	2019	2020
Program expenditure	$574,000*	$602,000***	--
Participating schools	83**	86***	--
Total secondary and central schools	460	460	--

* Program expenditure has been adjusted to account for $49,000 of returned funds from schools that withdrew from program.

** Ninety successful applications to program, seven schools withdrew and returned funds to the Department.

*** Department of Education expected expenditure and number of participating schools for 2019.

Source: Department of Education 2019. CESE NSW public school census FTE enrolments 2018 (460 secondary and central/community schools in NSW excludes distance education and intensive English centres).

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NSW Auditor-General's Report to Parliament | Wellbeing of secondary school students | Appendix three – Funding and resources for schools

Appendix four – Measuring wellbeing

Tell Them From Me survey

Tell Them From Me (TTFM) is a suite of surveys for measuring student engagement and wellbeing. There are three surveys: student survey, parent survey and teacher survey. The surveys are used to capture student, parent and teacher voices and provide evidence for schools to use in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The surveys are conducted online in school terms one and three and are offered to schools as a free resource.

The student survey asks secondary students a range of a range of questions relevant to student wellbeing. School leaders receive data on their school results which can be used to help understand students' perspectives of their school experience, provide areas of strength to support self-assessment and reporting, help identify strategic direction for school improvement, and establish quantitative improvement measures and help schools track their achievement.

Every Student is Known, Valued and Cared For

The Department's Strategic Plan 2018–2022 identifies ten strategic goals. This includes the goal 'Every Student is Known, Valued and Cared For'. The Department has determined a performance measure for this goal, that is, an 'increased proportion of students reporting a sense of belonging, expectations for success and advocacy at school'.

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NSW Auditor-General's Report to Parliament | Wellbeing of secondary school students | Appendix four – Measuring wellbeing

Appendix five – About the audit

Audit objective

This audit assessed how well the Department of Education supports secondary schools to promote and support the wellbeing of their students.

Audit criteria

We addressed the audit objective with the following criteria:

1. Does the Department support schools to effectively promote and support the wellbeing of students?
   a) The Department has evidence-based policies and guidance to support schools in promoting the wellbeing of students.
   b) Roles and responsibilities to support student's wellbeing are well defined.
   c) The Department effectively targets resources so that secondary schools are supported to promote the wellbeing of students.
   d) The Department identifies gaps in how schools are promoting the wellbeing of students and assists schools to address them in a timely way.
   e) The Department facilitates cross-agency collaboration to support timely and easy referral processes to relevant services.
2. Are secondary schools promoting and supporting the wellbeing of students?
   a) Schools effectively use the Department's policies, guidelines, resources and links with other agencies to promote the wellbeing of their students.
   b) Schools have the required capacity and capability to promote the wellbeing of their students.
   c) Schools assess their students' wellbeing needs and address them in a timely way.
   d) Schools refer students with identified/assessed wellbeing needs to relevant services and work with these services to assist on student's progress.

Audit exclusions

The audit did not:

- examine support for the wellbeing of students at TAFE, non-government secondary schools and primary schools
- examine Commonwealth Government programs for mental health and wellbeing (e.g. the National School Chaplaincy Program)
- examine NESA's registration or curriculum requirements
- examine school for specific purpose, connected communities schools, hospital schools, schools in the Juvenile Justice establishment, distance education, home schooling or specialist support classes in schools
- examine programs offered by other agencies or service providers in an environment external to schools (e.g. the service provision in specific mental health hospital units, services offered by Headspace outside school)
- question the merits of government policy objectives.

Audit approach

Our procedures included:

1. Interviewing:
   a) key staff in the Department of Education responsible for promoting and supporting student wellbeing
   b) key staff in selected schools responsible for promoting and supporting student wellbeing
   c) key stakeholders, representatives of principals, youth services, school counsellors, school psychologists, teachers, and student support officers.
2. Examining:
   a) the Department's strategy, plans, resources, policies and guidance on planning and promoting the wellbeing of their students
   b) different wellbeing positions in the Department and schools and their key roles and responsibilities
   c) the Department's methodology and formulas used to allocate wellbeing staff and resources in schools
   d) the Department's processes for identifying gaps in how schools are promoting the wellbeing of students
   e) the Department's arrangements with other agencies to support timely and easy referral processes to relevant services
   f) school's use of the Department's policies, guidelines, resources and links with other agencies to promote the wellbeing of their students
   g) the capacity and capability of wellbeing staff in schools
   h) school's processes to assess their students' wellbeing needs and address them in a timely way.
3. Analysing data:
   a) on wellbeing staff, wellbeing funding and wellbeing indicators.

The audit approach was complemented by quality assurance processes within the Audit Office to ensure compliance with professional standards.

Selection of schools

As part of the audit we visited 11 secondary/central schools in NSW. The selected schools were used to highlight different approaches to school wellbeing and implementation of the Wellbeing Framework at the local level. They were intended to form limited case studies rather than being an indicative sampling of the school population. The objective of our selection was to obtain a mix of schools based on ASGS remoteness, student population, indigenous student population, ICSEA value and other school characteristics. We visited six schools in major cities and five schools in regional areas. The selection included one central school, one single sex school and one selective school.

Audit methodology

Our performance audit methodology is designed to satisfy Australian Audit Standard ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements and other professional standards. The standards require the audit team to comply with relevant ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance and draw a conclusion on the audit objective. Our processes have also been designed to comply with requirements specified in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided by the Department of Education.

Audit cost

Including staff costs, travel and overheads, the estimated cost of the audit is $275,000.

Appendix six – Performance auditing

What are performance audits?

Performance audits determine whether state or local government entities carry out their activities effectively, and do so economically and efficiently and in compliance with all relevant laws.

The activities examined by a performance audit may include a government program, all or part of an audited entity, or more than one entity. They can also consider particular issues which affect the whole public sector and/or the whole local government sector. They cannot question the merits of government policy objectives.

The Auditor-General's mandate to undertake performance audits is set out in section 38B of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983* for state government entities, and in section 421D of the *Local Government Act 1993* for local government entities.

Why do we conduct performance audits?

Performance audits provide independent assurance to the NSW Parliament and the public.

Through their recommendations, performance audits seek to improve the value for money the community receives from government services.

Performance audits are selected at the discretion of the Auditor-General who seeks input from parliamentarians, state and local government entities, other interested stakeholders and Audit Office research.

How are performance audits selected?

When selecting and scoping topics, we aim to choose topics that reflect the interests of parliament in holding the government to account. Performance audits are selected at the discretion of the Auditor-General based on our own research, suggestions from the public, and consultation with parliamentarians, agency heads and key government stakeholders. Our three-year performance audit program is published on the website and is reviewed annually to ensure it continues to address significant issues of interest to parliament, aligns with government priorities, and reflects contemporary thinking on public sector management. Our program is sufficiently flexible to allow us to respond readily to any emerging issues.

What happens during the phases of a performance audit?

Performance audits have three key phases: planning, fieldwork and report writing.

During the planning phase, the audit team develops an understanding of the audit topic and responsible entities and defines the objective and scope of the audit.

The planning phase also identifies the audit criteria. These are standards of performance against which the audited entity, program or activities are assessed. Criteria may be based on relevant legislation, internal policies and procedures, industry standards, best practice, government targets, benchmarks or published guidelines.

At the completion of fieldwork, the audit team meets with management representatives to discuss all significant matters arising out of the audit. Following this, a draft performance audit report is prepared.

The audit team then meets with management representatives to check that facts presented in the draft report are accurate and to seek input in developing practical recommendations on areas of improvement.

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A final report is then provided to the head of the audited entity who is invited to formally respond to the report. The report presented to the NSW Parliament includes any response from the head of the audited entity. The relevant minister and the Treasurer are also provided with a copy of the final report. In performance audits that involve multiple entities, there may be responses from more than one audited entity or from a nominated coordinating entity.

Who checks to see if recommendations have been implemented?

After the report is presented to the NSW Parliament, it is usual for the entity's audit committee to monitor progress with the implementation of recommendations.

In addition, it is the practice of Parliament's Public Accounts Committee to conduct reviews or hold inquiries into matters raised in performance audit reports. The reviews and inquiries are usually held 12 months after the report received by the NSW Parliament. These reports are available on the NSW Parliament website.

Who audits the auditors?

Our performance audits are subject to internal and external quality reviews against relevant Australian and international standards.

The Public Accounts Committee appoints an independent reviewer to report on compliance with auditing practices and standards every four years. The reviewer's report is presented to the NSW Parliament and available on its website.

Periodic peer reviews by other Audit Offices test our activities against relevant standards and better practice.

Each audit is subject to internal review prior to its release.

Who pays for performance audits?

No fee is charged for performance audits. Our performance audit services are funded by the NSW Parliament.

Further information and copies of reports

For further information, including copies of performance audit reports and a list of audits currently in-progress, please see our website www.audit.nsw.gov.au or contact us on 9275 7100.

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OUR VISION

Our insights inform and challenge government to improve outcomes for citizens.

OUR PURPOSE

To help parliament hold government accountable for its use of public resources.

OUR VALUES

Purpose – we have an impact, are accountable, and work as a team.

People – we trust and respect others and have a balanced approach to work.

Professionalism – we are recognised for our independence and integrity and the value we deliver.

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