Governance framework

This is a mandated framework under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this page must follow the process outlined on the creating, updating and deleting operational policies page.

Overview

The governance framework details the principles and elements of good governance that support our vision and values and shape decision-making in the department.

Questions about governance or policy matters should be raised with the relevant department division or directorate.

Scope

This framework applies to all department employees in corporate office and education and care sites.

Detail

Message from the Chief Executive

The governance framework sets out standards of accountability and transparency that stakeholders and I expect of our department. Specifically, it outlines the principles, elements and mechanisms we use for effective governance.

The tone for good governance is set from the top. As such the department’s Senior Executive Group is committed to continuing to measure and align our behaviours to the values and principles set out in this framework. Building a culture that lives and breathes the values and principles of this framework will contribute greatly to our shared efforts to build a world-class education system in South Australia.

Governance is everyone’s responsibility. This framework has been designed to inform and guide all staff about their role in governance. The behaviour of every person in our organisation not only contributes to the achievement of a world-class education system, it also ensures that we continue to have a culture that clearly and consistently demonstrates our values in action, rewarding and encouraging good practice.

This framework will help us to assess the strengths and weaknesses of all business practice and improvement efforts, enabling us to respond quickly. The pace and quality of our response ensures our stakeholders have confidence in our ability to deliver quality educational services to South Australians.

Every organisation must continually evolve their governance arrangements to ensure that service delivery and key objectives continue to be met effectively and efficiently. The department reviews the framework annually to reflect changes to our strategic priorities and structural alignment.
Our story

Every South Australian child and young person deserves the opportunity to be their best in life.
Children deserve a strong start, an excellent education in great schools, and skilled educators who work with students to build the capabilities required for academic achievement and a healthy, happy and successful adulthood.
Our people work with children, young people and their families and communities to build futures and the future of our state.

Vision

We have set an ambitious vision – to build world-class education in this state by 2028. To support our vision, a World-Class Education Strategic Plan and the Towards World-Class Education Action Plan have been developed.

The long-term strategic plan sets out our high-level directions and the 1-year action plan outlines our shorter-term focus for the next year to ensure there is growth for every child, in every class, in every school and preschool.

The plans build on the solid foundations we already have in place across the public education system and we will continue to use evidence to guide our work.

Every employee across the state will continue to focus on 5 key areas:

- challenging learning
- quality people
- strong engagement
- better support
- targeted resources.

Values

The South Australian public sector has defined public sector values. These values clarify who we are and why we are here. These values are embedded into this framework to ensure our governance practices are consistent with the behaviours expected within an efficient and effective department.

The department’s induction process includes online training modules developed by the Office of the Public Sector to ensure all employees understand their responsibilities as public sector employees and commit to following the standards of professional conduct set out in the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector.

Department line managers and site leaders are responsible for making sure the induction program provides sufficient information, training and support for the employee to successfully integrate into the workplace and understand their role, responsibilities and performance expectations.
Principles of governance

For the department to meet its vision, governance arrangements and cultural values must be aligned. This governance framework is designed to define accountability in a practical sense and embed these values throughout the department’s business practices. It is intended that the framework will help staff understand and apply the principles of good governance and assess the strengths and weaknesses of current governance practice within current activities.

The Governance Institute of Australia defines governance in these terms:

Governance encompasses the system by which an organisation is controlled and operates, and the mechanisms by which it, and its people, are held to account. Ethics, risk management, compliance and administration are all elements of governance.

In considering the principles that guide good governance, this framework is influenced by the following 4 principles, as outlined by the Governance Institute of Australia:

- Transparency: being clear and unambiguous about the organisation’s structure, operations and performance, both externally and internally, and maintaining a genuine dialogue with, and providing insight to, legitimate stakeholders and the market generally.
- Accountability: making sure there's clarity of decision-making within the organisation, with processes in place to ensure that the right people have the right authority for the organisation to make effective and efficient decisions, with appropriate consequences for failures to follow those processes.
- Stewardship: developing and maintaining an enterprise-wide recognition that the organisation is managed for the benefit of children, young people and their families, taking appropriate account of the interests of our employees and other legitimate stakeholders.
- Integrity: developing and maintaining a culture committed to ethical behaviour and compliance with the law.

According to the Governance Institute of Australia, governance is vital to making the right decisions and therefore all officers in an organisation must ask themselves this fundamental question:

What would ordinary, right-thinking members of the community — knowing all the relevant facts — believe to be an appropriate exercise of stewardship in such circumstances?

Governance elements

Six inter-related elements guide our governance practice. Aligning the 6 inter-related elements helps us achieve a governance standard that will support a world-class education system.

1. Legislative grounding – a shared understanding of legislative compliance and authorising requirements to deliver strategic and operational outcomes.
2. Robust organisational structure – an organisational structure that supports and promotes the principles and elements of governance to meet its strategic targets and achieve its vision.
3. Strategic planning and management – business and financial and budget planning processes and policy management to achieve strategic outcomes.
4. Risk management – risk intelligent culture that embeds mitigation practice throughout strategic planning and delivery.

5. Stakeholder engagement – a commitment to consistent engagement with relevant stakeholders in decision making that will affect them.

6. Improvement – a commitment to review and measure outcomes for children and young people to ensure trigger control mechanisms occur early enough to maintain improvement.

Element 1: legislative grounding

The department’s legal and authorising environment includes mandates from a number of Acts, regulations and determinations.

The department’s policies and procedures are written to ensure consistency and compliance with relevant legislation. The department’s website references relevant education legislation. All department employees have a responsibility to uphold the legal and mandated requirements relevant to their roles.

Legislation

Section 57 of the Public Sector Act 2009 requires public sector agencies to implement all legislative requirements relevant to the agency, and properly administer and keep under review legislation for which the agencies are responsible.

Treasurer’s instructions

Issued under the authority of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1987, Treasurer’s instructions specify certain procedures in relation to financial management and require each public authority to develop, implement, document and maintain policies, procedures, systems and internal controls to help Chief Executives with their financial management responsibilities. The Chief Executive must establish and maintain effective policies, procedures and systems for identifying, assessing, monitoring, managing and annually reviewing financial and tax risks.

Treasurer’s instructions are binding on the department and require implementation and monitoring as per individual stipulations. Schools and preschools are required to comply with separate instruction approved by the chief financial officer. These separate instructions specify the policies that schools and preschools are required to follow to comply with the Education and Children’s Services Act 2019 and the Education and Children’s Services Regulations 2020 as well as incorporating requirements of Treasurer’s instructions.

Memoranda and agreements that affect governance

To advance the goals and objectives of the department, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) may be entered into with external parties. The MoU should set out the understanding of the mutual aspirations of the prospective parties in working together towards a common end. The MoU sets out in broad terms the understanding between the parties and is not a legally binding document. The MoU should align to the approved strategic plan with suitable governance arrangements to monitor the outcomes.

There are a number of state, national and international agreements and memoranda that ministers and chief executives enter into from time to time. Formal agreements may, amongst other things, set out joint policy and program areas, decision-making authorities for practice, monitoring and compliance and funding arrangements.
Education Council

All Australian education ministers are members of the Education Council, which is accountable to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Education Council provides a forum through which:

- strategic policy on school education and early childhood development can be coordinated at the national level
- information can be shared and resources used collaboratively towards the achievement of agreed objectives and priorities.

The Education Council is primarily supported by a group of senior officials with responsibility for school education, early childhood and higher education who meet as the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC). The department supports the Minister and Chief Executive’s participation at Education Council and AESOC meetings, with a strong focus on the interactions of matters being considered nationally, and South Australian policies and practices. National funding agreements, along with related policy and program actions, are negotiated and agreed through the Education Council.

Element 2: robust organisational structure

The department strives to create a stronger future for South Australia by providing high-quality education, early childhood and child wellbeing services.

The department’s corporate office organisational structure is designed to ensure effective alignment of functions and operations. The structure promotes clear lines of reporting and accountability within and between the organisational groups, to support appropriate, open and transparent communication and decision making.

Beginning with the Chief Executive, the department’s business units have a cascading hierarchy for decision-making.

A functioning governance structure relies on the organisational structure supporting the elements and principles of good governance.

Refer to the roles and responsibilities section for more information.

Governing bodies, committees and working groups – governance considerations

Governing bodies, committees and working groups are often used to oversee development and implementation of major initiatives or programs. It’s important when determining governance arrangements for a new initiative, to consider whether the issue could be governed by an existing governance body, committee or working group to maximise existing structures and ensure efficient and effective governance.
Key considerations when establishing a governing body, working group or committee

- There’s a clear terms of reference or charter that details the:
  - purpose and role of the governing body or committee and ensure alignment with the organisation’s purpose (if a statutory role, ensure compliance with the enabling legislation)
  - requirement to apply the principles of good governance detailed in the governance framework (for example role-modelling organisational values, transparency, clear outcome measures, and risk management)
  - statement of membership composition
  - responsibilities of the members and their accountabilities
  - reporting arrangements, including timeframes for reporting and a list of agreed objectives against which performance can be measured
  - sunset or review date.

- Members have the collective skill set and experience to deliver on the stated purpose.
- The governing body or committee is equipped with the skills and the resources required to play an active role in their deliberations.
- There’s an appropriate and skilled secretariat support.
- Briefing papers are sent out in a timely manner so that all members have the opportunity to consider them thoroughly.
- Sound recordkeeping and protocols are in place.
- Review of committee performance and appropriateness on a regular basis, especially when there are organisational changes.
- There’s a work plan for the year (as may be appropriate).
- There’s a regular schedule of meetings, with prearranged dates and, where appropriate, written agendas, papers and minutes as well as list of actions decided at each meeting.
- Governance arrangements are clear and transparent.

Boards, working groups and committees

At the discretion of the Chief Executive, short, medium or longer-term boards, committees or working groups may be established to provide direction and advice to the Chief Executive and the Senior Executive Group. Governance structures are unique to each organisation therefore effective tools are essential for implementing and monitoring strategic direction, budgets, and governance and risk management frameworks. The Governance Institute of Australia’s good governance guides can help further.
Local education teams

Local education teams are responsible for supporting improvement within individual schools and preschools, in addition to providing leadership to the partnerships within the portfolio. In this context, local education teams have the following decision-making functions:

- identification, selection and recruitment of site leaders
- educational leadership, inclusive and reflective of cultural approaches, to achieve improvement across all sites within the education partnership
- monitoring of individual site improvement and the effective implementation of school and preschool improvement planning
- alignment of local and organisational priorities to build system coherence and consistent quality practice, statewide
- monitoring, intervention and support, tailored to the needs of individual sites in the effective management of incidents
- leading schools and preschools through quality school and preschool improvement practice based on system-wide and local data and evidence to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for all children and young people.

Partnerships

A partnership is a collective of geographically defined preschool and school sites and the communities they serve. All South Australian government preschools and schools participate in an education partnership, with the support of local education teams.

Each partnership has its own governance arrangements aligned to the Partnership Governance Guideline, and appropriate to the local context. This typically includes a chairperson, an executive, a planning group and agreed expectations and decision-making protocols. Documents regarding partnership structures is maintained by each partnership.

Local governance arrangements that support decision-making connect back to the department’s corporate governance structures via education directors, through line management by the executive director, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools.

Partnerships provide the following decision-making functions:

- designing and implementing structures and processes that facilitate the strategic collaboration between sites to effectively support the improvement strategy of each school, preschool and children’s centre
- sharing knowledge and expertise on effective practice between sites
- identifying and understanding the needs of children and young people
- developing strategies tailored to individual sites to support the learning improvement and wellbeing of all children, with a particular focus on priority population groups, such as Aboriginal, disability, and guardianship of the Chief Executive
- identifying strategic and evidence-based opportunities to effectively organise resources to improve quality outcomes.
Schools, preschools, children’s centres and other – governance structures

The management and educational leadership of a site is the joint responsibility of the relevant governing council and the principal or preschool director and employees.

The Education and Children’s Services Act 2019 sets the functions, roles, powers and operational rules of governing councils of schools, preschools and children’s services centres. The Act allows binding administrative instructions to be issued to governing councils by the Chief Executive.

As outlined in the Act, and in their constitutions, school governing councils have a joint responsibility with the site leader to:

- implement school improvement plans
- involve the local site community
- develop and approve local site policies
- set the broad direction and vision of the site
- monitor and review the site improvement plan
- be an employing authority of some non-teaching services, including out of school hours care and canteen
- report to the site community and Minister on council business and budgets.

The Governance Institute of Australia provides some easy steps to success when establishing governance within schools.

Standalone preschools and children’s services centres operate under a preschool model constitution, as per the Education and Children’s Services Act 2019. The constitutions outline the roles, functions, and powers of preschool the councils.

More information on these arrangements is on the governing councils page on the department’s website.

Preschool and school

Preschool and school sites have local governance structures in place in line with the Education and Children’s Services Act 2019.

Local governance arrangements that support decision-making connect back to departmental corporate governance structures via site leaders, through line management, to the Chief Executive, school councils, and governing councils’ accountabilities to the Minister for Education. A school governing council structure is directed by its constitution and members are required to follow a code of practice.

A typical school governing council structure includes:

- mandated sub-committees: governing councils should have a finance advisory committee and, if a site has a canteen or an out-of-hours care program or other service, a committee must be established to support that service
- other sub-committees: established to help the governing council to carry out its functions more effectively.
Some sites may also have affiliated committees, such as parents and friends clubs, old scholars associations, and Aboriginal community networks. Affiliated committees operate under their own constitution and are separate governance structures to governing councils.

**Children’s centres governance structures**

Governance arrangements for children’s centres for early childhood development and parenting are designed to support collaborative decision-making between partners, including relevant government agencies and non-government service providers in the local community. Partners may include, but are not limited to, agencies such as Department of Human Services, SA Health, Child and Family Health Services (CaFHS), local councils, and non-government providers. Children’s centres operate within existing legislation and requirements for each partner agency.

The overarching partnership group brings together agencies to provide integrated services around the family and child.

The children’s centres advisory group provides a key mechanism to help streamline communication, contributing to strategic direction setting, and facilitating purposeful collaboration and engagement on behalf of all children’s centres. The group, consisting of directors from a range of children’s centres, representatives from corporate office, an early childhood leader and an education director, provide advice on consultation and communication processes between corporate office and sites with specific focus on system-wide policy and operational matters.

Machinery of Government (MoG) changes, effective 1 July 2019, identified a need to develop an updated service framework and overarching principals to streamline and shape the vision for children’s centres staff into the future.

**Aboriginal education governance structures**

Through the Aboriginal Education directorate, the department is represented on a range of governance and consultative committees to promote greater collaboration between public sector agencies and advisory groups. Through these mechanisms the department aims to improve the quality, efficiency and targeting of services for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

Through the Aboriginal Education Strategy, the department made a commitment to seeking expert Aboriginal advice by engaging Aboriginal people who are external to the department and who have expertise in education, child development, culture, community and nation building, along with internal consultation with the Aboriginal Senior Officers Advisory Group.

The department’s Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) commits to partnering with the external advisory group, South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council (SAAETCC). SAAETCC is the peak body for parent and carer advocacy, and engagement with education and child development services for Aboriginal children and students in South Australia.

**Administered items**

The governance and functions of administered items vary. They include:

- Discrete grant programs: providing individual grants to government and non-government entities and governed by their own policies, guidelines, and grant agreements.
• Funding to boards: the Education Standards Board and SACE Board, governed by their own Acts of Parliament.

• Advocacy bodies for children and young people: Commissioner for Children and Young People, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee, Child Development Council; Guardian for Children and Young People governed by the Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016.

• Arts entities: Carclew, the History Trust of South Australia, Windmill Theatre (further information provided in the next section).

• On-passing of Commonwealth Government funds: to non-government schools for recurrent grant funding in line with and governed by the Australian Education Act 2013.

• On-passing of other Commonwealth Government funds: to government and non-government preschools for universal access funding, governed by funding deeds, and for chaplaincy funding for all 3 education sectors, governed by terms of reference.

Administered arts entities

Under recent Machinery of Government changes, the ministerial functions and powers for the History Trust of South Australia (History Trust), the Australian Children’s Performing Arts Company trading as Windmill Theatre (Windmill) and the Carclew Incorporated (Carclew), were conferred from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to the Minister for Education.

The History Trust and Windmill are instrumentalities of the Crown. As the Crown cannot enter into the agreement with itself, separate memoranda of association and articles of association (MoAAs) were drawn for the department with both the History Trust and Windwill. Carclew is a separate entity of the Crown and as such a funding deed has been drawn.

The agreements confirm the relationship between the department and each entity – establishing agreement about the conditions of funding and the method of reporting against those conditions. The activities and services undertaken by the entities will contribute directly to the objectives of the department and also meet the objectives of the organisation.

Element 3: strategic planning and management

The department is governed by federal and state legislation, and is guided by the Premier’s Delivering for South Australia Plan.

Department for Education Strategic Plan

The department’s World-Class Education Strategic Plan and the Towards World-Class Education Action Plan describe how we will achieve a world-class education system.

The long-term strategic plan sets the high-level directions. It outlines the vision for what the department aims to achieve over the next year and beyond, by describing the key areas of focus and the strategic priorities that will deliver on the vision.

The 1-year Action Plan outlines the department’s shorter-term focus and the activities that the department has committed to in support of the Strategic Plan.
Strategic management framework

The strategic management framework was developed to support the planning, implementation and delivery of the strategic plan. The focus for the strategic management framework is to provide a cohesive, coordinated, transparent approach to connecting strategic planning, operational planning, performance review and the implementation of strategy and system reforms within the governance, risk and performance development frameworks.

The aim for the strategic management framework is to establish an articulated clear line of sight from the strategic plan through to the annual business plans and individual performance development plans.

Four key activity areas were identified and endorsed for implementation by the Senior Executive Group:

- Strategy and planning: to propose and agree on system-wide strategies and policies to be developed and implemented in support of the department’s Strategic Plan.
- Deployment: to develop consistent executive priorities and performance agreements, and agree on budget and workforce planning. This would feed into the development of divisional business planning and individual performance development plans.
- Implementation: guidance and support to execute divisional business plans and individual performance development plans.
- Review: a mechanism to support the collection and analysis of data to monitor and validate implementation progress and success measures.

The strategic management framework and the implementation of the school improvement model have provided valuable insight into the approach and critical success factors in implementing systemic change in schools and preschools. These complementary planning, reporting and accountability processes streamline how the department measures its performance against required outcomes and define its public value.

Policies, procedures, frameworks and guidelines

Departmental operational policies (procedures, frameworks and guidelines) provide guidance around the application of specific Acts and regulations and the core business and objectives of the department to deliver on the Strategic Plan.

The department’s corporate office, in collaboration with sites and services, is responsible for developing all operational policies and policy instruments.

Operational policy

Operational policies must be developed in line with the department’s policy approval framework.

The development and review of all operational policies requires the coordination and consideration of processes to ensure the integrity, currency and reliability of all departmental policies. This includes a legislative compliance review and completion of an Aboriginal impact statement declaration for a new policy, major edit or policy deletion.
Strategic policy

A coordinated, integrated approach to the development of operational policy improves the efficiency, timelines and quality of the department’s systemic and strategic activities. This ultimately improves outcomes from children and young people and contributes to our goal to build a world-class education system.

From January 2020, use of the Strategic Policy Model is mandatory for all system strategies, and recommended for use on all other strategic policy and projects.

Only the department’s Senior Executive Group has the authority to initiate and approve policy, system strategies and policy instruments.

All department employees are accountable for complying with the departmental polices.

Element 4: stakeholder engagement

The South Australian Government is committed to supporting a culture of high-quality and effective stakeholder and community engagement. Good engagement helps create better decisions by bringing the voices of citizens and stakeholders into the issues that are relevant to them. The government is committed to embedding good engagement practice as an integral part of the way it operates.

Established in 2013, Better Together is centred on the following six engagement principles to provide a consistent approach across government and to guide best practice:

- we know why we are engaging
- we know who to engage
- we know the history
- we start together
- we are genuine
- we are relevant and engaging.

Practical advice on implementing these principals when engaging with department stakeholders is available from the Strategic Policy and External Relations division.

Legislation, the Strategic Policy Model and the operational policy approval framework specify engagement in certain circumstances.

Element 5: risk management

The department is committed to embedding risk management in all of its operations and its business culture. Risk management is an integral part of the department’s planning and management processes and an essential function of good governance.

The department’s effectiveness is enhanced when risk management practices and business processes exemplify and reinforce its values. The management of risks and opportunities is the responsibility of all employees, including contractors, business partners and volunteers.

The department’s Chief Executive is accountable to the Minister for developing and implementing the department’s risk management policy and procedure which embeds risk management into the governance and practices of the department and manages uncertainties to achieve departmental objectives.
According to Deloitte’s developing an effective governance operating model, a risk intelligent culture comprises the following characteristics:

- **Commonality of purpose, values, and ethics:** people’s individual interests, values, and ethics are aligned with those of the organisation’s risk strategy, appetite, tolerance, and approach.
- **Universal adoption and application:** risk is considered in all activities, from strategic planning to day-to-day operations, in every part of the organisation.
- **A learning organisation:** the collective ability of the organisation to manage risk more effectively is continuously improving.
- **Timely, transparent, and honest communications:** people are comfortable talking openly and honestly about risk using a common risk vocabulary that promotes shared understanding.
- **Understanding of the value of effective risk management:** people understand, and enthusiastically articulate, the value that effective risk management brings to the organisation.
- **Responsibility – individual and collective:** people take personal responsibility for the management of risk and proactively seek to involve others when that is the better approach.
- **Expectation of challenge:** people are comfortable challenging others, including authority figures. The people who are being challenged respond positively.

**Element 6: improvement**

Enhanced organisational performance is possible due to a school and preschool improvement model that ensures a differentiated approach to literary and numeracy improvement, based on high-quality support from education directors and local education teams. The cycle sets out 5 steps for continuous improvement:

1. analyse and prioritise
2. determine challenge of practice
3. plan actions for improvement
4. improve practice and monitor impact
5. review and evaluate.

Public confidence in the department requires the department to be open about its policies, decisions, actions and achievements. This encompasses public accountability and reporting on activities and expenditure that support accountability to the government and to the South Australian community.
Information management

The department must comply with relevant state legislation and policy, and in some cases federal legislation, regarding the gathering, use, retention and sharing of personal information. This is detailed in the department’s information management policy that consolidates requirements relating to:

- information privacy
- information sharing
- information security
- freedom of information
- records management.

Data governance

The department considers data governance to mean ‘the exercise of decision-making and authority for data-related matters’ (Data Governance Institute).

The department is committed to formalising data governance arrangements as per best practice data principles, to improve data quality and governance with the responsibilities of chief data officer being assigned to the executive director, System Performance.

The department’s data sharing obligations are stated in the Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016.

Reporting mechanisms

The department publishes regularly requested information as part of the government’s commitment to transparency and accountability reflected in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet Circular PC035: Proactive Disclosure of Regularly Requested Information (PDF 673KB). The information made available under this Circular includes details of ministerial and Chief Executive expenditure on credit cards, mobile phones, and overseas travel.

In line with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet Circular: PC045 Disclosure Logs for Non-Personal Information (PDF 312KB) the department must also publish the non-personal information it has released in response to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 1991 (FOI Act). Refer to disclosure logs on the department’s website.

National reporting

South Australia participates in national reporting and data collection activities as part of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The results can be located on the Productivity Commission’s performance dashboard, providing a single, streamlined source of information on progress towards the COAG’s key commitments in education, early childhood and ‘closing the gap’.

The performance dashboard reflects the measures in the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) replacing the National Education Agreement (NEA) and National Education Reform Agreement (NERA).
The department is responsible to the Australian Government to provide annual information to inform the Report on Government Services (ROGs). The ROGs is a vital tool in providing information to the community and holding all Australian governments accountable for the effectiveness and efficiency of government services.

The ROGs encourages improved service delivery by providing governments, taxpayers and users of services with meaningful, balanced, credible, and comparative information.

The department is required to report to the Australian Government on elements set out in national partnership agreements, including Universal Access to Early Childhood Education.

State reporting

The department’s public reporting at the state level includes:

- an agency statement as part of the state budget process
- a government template-based annual report about the department’s activities and outcomes for each calendar year, including audited financial statements, human resources, and statutory reporting
- department annual report, required under section 15 of the Education and Children’s Services Act 2019
- the department’s website.

Local reporting

Complaints management reporting

The department is committed to supporting effective complaint management to improve customer service outcomes and general business practices across the agency.

The department reports on complaints about department public schools, preschools and early childhood services via 2 mechanisms in line with the Australian/New Zealand Standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014).

Preschool and school reporting requirements

Departmental policy and procedure and the Ombudsman SA require preschool and school sites to document complaints received and maintain a complaints register that outlines volume, nature and results of complaint handling, including whether resolution occurred locally. A summary of the register must be reported by the school or preschool annually.

Refer to the statistics, reports and publications page on the department’s website for additional annual preschool and school reporting requirements.

Central schools complaints management reporting requirements

The Customer Feedback unit (CIS) provides a central schools complaint management service and is the escalation point for complaints that cannot be resolved at the school or preschool level. Quarterly complaints management data and trend analysis is reported to the Senior Executive Group as required by the Ombudsman SA and the Department of Premier and Cabinet Better Services Program to drive improvements in relation to customer services across the public sector. The directorate also publishes its complaint data in the department’s annual report.
Performance measurement

Measuring the performance of the department as an organisation is another avenue for making sure the department is accountable to the South Australian public. Performance is measured through a range of performance indicators at various levels of the department.

Corporate performance measures

The System Performance division is responsible for providing performance and strategy implementation progress reporting that aligns to the strategic initiatives outlined in the department’s Strategic Plan to the Senior Executive Group and Chief Executive.

Partnership performance measures

System-wide performance reviews report on performance in strategically important areas for our preschools and schools, at the education partnership level. These are data-driven performance reviews linked to the department’s strategic plan, our Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA), and to 4 strategic objectives related to proficiency and academic excellence in numeracy and reading, as well as student engagement.

The reviews consider outcomes for all children and students from preschool through to secondary school. Performance is assessed against past results and focuses on improvement. A standard methodology is applied that identifies improvement, decline or no change against a baseline for each partnership or site, for each measure. Partnership leaders also provide an overview of improvement progress, outlining the practices that have been implemented.

Preschool and school performance measures

The department’s improvement and accountability policy sets out the expectations for all department preschools and schools for quality assurance, and maximising each and every child and young person’s learning through a process of continuous review, improvement and accountability. It clarifies the roles and responsibilities of preschool and school leaders in being accountable for clear, measurable improvement goals and plans against standards, effective planning, strategic intervention, evaluation and reporting through quality self-review processes to guide and monitor improvement and meet policy compliance requirements.

The National Quality Framework drives continuous improvement and consistency in Australian early childhood education and care services and applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool, kindergarten and outside school hours care services. Under the National Quality Framework, the department’s early childhood services are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard. Ratings are made public and promote transparency and accountability, helping parents to assess the quality of education and care services available.

The National Quality Framework encompasses the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, the National Quality Standard, an assessment and quality rating process and national approved learning frameworks. In South Australia the National Law is applied under the Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011.
Financial management compliance framework

The department Chief Executive has a responsibility to establish and maintain an appropriate internal control environment in line with the Department of Treasury and Finance Treasurer’s instructions, the Accounting Policy Framework and Model Financial Statements that help government agencies to comply with accounting standards and other mandatory requirements as well as provide consistency in the presentation of the financial statements.

The frameworks for financial management in the South Australian public sector have, as its foundation, the Public Finance and Audit Act 1987. The Act regulates the receipt and expenditure of public money and for examination of the degree of efficiency and economy with which public resources are used. Treasurer’s Instruction 28 Financial Management Compliance program requires a financial management compliance program to provide assurances with respect to those elements of the above framework that specifically relate to financial management.

External audit and review

The department is subject to external review processes, including those conducted by the SA Auditor-General, including financial and compliance, information systems and performance management systems. Ombudsman SA investigates complaints about South Australian government and local government agencies and conducts freedom of information reviews. The Ombudsman can also receive information about state and local government activities confidentially under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018.

The Education Standards Board may also consider complaints in relation to schools, preschools and early childhood services under the Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011.

In addition, Parliamentary committees investigate specific issues, and play a role in monitoring and reviewing public sector organisations against relevant legislation, or particular areas of activity.

Internal audit

The department’s Internal Audit team provides independent and objective audit and advisory services across all areas of the department, including corporate office, preschools and schools. In turn, this improves department service delivery by identifying improvements in risk management, control and governance processes, systems and practices.

Roles and responsibilities

Chief Executive

Make sure the department complies with its legislative obligations to deliver the ambition to create a world-class education system for South Australia.

Senior Executive Group, principals and preschool directors

Lead the application of the department governance framework to make sure the department’s legislative, strategic, ethical and financial obligations are met.
Directors

Help executive directors develop business plans aligned with the school and preschool improvement agenda to make sure decisions made at the corporate, governing council, partnership, site and service levels are made in line with the department strategic plan’s vision and priorities.

Design and implement processes to make sure the department administers and complies with relevant legislation that its respective divisions are responsible for.

Monitor and review the efficiency and effectiveness of processes implemented to administer and comply with relevant legislation.

Employees with line management responsibilities

Make sure that department employees are aware of and accountable for their responsibilities for compliance within the governance framework.

Executive director, System Performance division

Review the governance framework annually (in consultation with the department’s Senior Executive Group) to make sure it reflects the department’s core service delivery drivers, strategic priorities, and structural alignment.

Department employees involved in managing or supporting department committee structures

Make sure that governance committees align activities to those that will assist the department to fulfil its strategic plan and achieve operational objectives.

See the governing bodies, committees and working groups – governance considerations section when establishing these structures.

All department employees

Comply with the wide range of interrelated legislation, policies, procedures and frameworks referenced in the department’s governance framework, which operate to drive and support good governance within the department.

School governing councils and preschool management committees

Comply with relevant legislation and established constitutions to provide advice to site leadership to drive and sustain good governance at government schools and preschools.
Audit and Risk Committee

Provide independent advice to the Chief Executive (and the Senior Executive Group) on the department’s risk, control and compliance framework, and its external accountability responsibilities.

Legal Services directorate

Review the legislative element of the department’s governance framework and communicate changes throughout the department.

System Performance division

Monitor the implementation of the governance framework with the Senior Executive Group approving a review every 12 months. A comprehensive review will occur every 2 years.

Supporting information

Related legislation

Australia Education Act 2013 (Commonwealth)
Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016
Education and Children’s Services Act 2019
Education and Children’s Services Regulations 2020
Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011
Freedom of Information Act 1991
Public Finance and Audit Act 1987
Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018
Public Sector Act 2009
Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016

Related policies

Building better governance
Circular PC022: Establishment and governance requirements for boards and committees (PDF 143KB)
Circular PC035: Proactive Disclosure of Regularly Requested Information (PDF 673KB)
Circular: PC045 Disclosure Logs for Non-Personal Information (PDF 312KB)
Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector
Compliance and resources
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Amendment(s): major edit – legislative compliance policy content incorporated.
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Amendment date: December 2014
Amendment(s): revised and updated framework.

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