



STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Alternative school settings

1. The Schools for All Report (Shaddock) recommended alternative school settings for students who are disengaged from mainstream schooling and who may not necessarily fit into current learning support units within mainstream schools? What alternative school settings are currently available?
2. How does a student enrol in such a school?
3. Who determines whether they are suitable?

Priority Enrolment Area PEA

4. For PEA purposes what checks are made to ensure that the residential address of students are correct at the time of enrolment?
5. How often has it been revealed that parents been found to have provided incorrect residential information?
6. What happens in those circumstances?
7. Given that different schools can have different curricula what flexibility exists around PEA's to accommodate different education preferences of parents?
8. Does the Directorate level ensure schools offer the required mix of courses for students in their PEA?

Suspension Policy

9. How has the new suspension policy been advised and promoted to schools and to parents?
10. What changes has it brought?
11. Why do we have the highest rate of suspension in four years

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. The ACT Government has established the Flexible Education (FE) program to provide personalised education programs to students who, at a particular point in time, cannot access education at their enrolled school. Flexible Education service offering includes:
 - i. The Hospital School,
 - ii. The Cottage program,
 - iii. Muliyan,
 - iv. Murrumbidgee School (previously known as Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre) located at Bimberi Juvenile Justice Centre, and
 - v. Distance Education.



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2. Entry to the Flexible Education offerings vary.

The Hospital School

The Hospital School is for patients and their siblings from preschool to year 12 currently accessed at the Women and Children's Hospital Canberra. Students may be enrolled in public, independent or catholic schools and may also be residents outside the ACT.

The Cottage

The Cottage is open to young people aged 12 to 17 years as part of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Recovery Plan. Young people who access this program must be a CAMHS client first and are referred to the program by CAMHS.

Muliyam

Muliyam provides alternative education to public school students between year 7-10. The Network Student Engagement Team (NSET) works with public schools to identify students who meet the criteria who are then considered by an Intake Panel. The panel has representatives from agencies that support young people with complex needs, such as Police Citizen Youth Club Canberra, ACT Policing Youth Liaison Officers, Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), Canberra Adolescent Mental Health Service, Child & Youth Protective Services (CYPS) as well as Education Directorate teams such as Disability Education, School Psychologists and NSET. The Intake Panel assesses student referrals and a range of flexible education options and wellbeing supports are determined. This may include entrance into the Muliyam program.

Murrumbidgee School

The Murrumbidgee School is located within the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre which accommodates children and young people (10 – 21) who have been refused bail or are sentenced to a period of detention.

Distance Education

Access and enrolment are through an assessment process against a set of criteria for the Finigan School of Distance Education (FSDE), NSW Education Department. ACT public school students are required to provide support documentation to establish eligibility. The information is gathered in partnership with the school and families and is collated by Flexible Education staff who then negotiate with FSDE on behalf of the student for access into Distance Education.

3. As per question 2.
4. To ensure that the residential address of students is correct at the time of enrolment, applicants are required to provide a current rates notice or a current residential lease, together with a current electricity or gas notice to the school at which they are enrolling. Additional or alternative documents may be requested in instances where a rates notice, residential lease and/or gas or electricity notice cannot be provided.
5. Data is not centrally collated on the number of applicants who have provided incorrect residential information. The Directorate does undertake some system-level analysis of residential data anomalies, and this analysis informs enrolment policy development. Schools have been provided with resources (including guidelines and template for sighting



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- documentation) to support the consistent assessment of documentation across the system.
6. If a public school has concerns that the proof of residence documentation does not provide the required proof that the applicant lives in PEA, they can request that the applicant provide additional proof of residence documentation. Schools are encouraged to be sensitive to people's life circumstances (such as homelessness or no fixed address) when seeking clarifications. If a family is unable to provide adequate proof of residence, or give a reasonable explanation as to why not, the school has the option to decline the application and refer it to the student's last known PEA school (if known), or the applicant's second or third preference school. Applicants have access to the review and appeals processes if they are not satisfied with the outcome. These decisions are made on a case by case basis with the guidance of the Education Support Office.
 7. Different schools can teach different electives, but all schools deliver the Australian Curriculum. Options to accommodate curriculum preferences exist through Category B public High Schools which may – subject to capacity - enrol out of area students seeking to access a curriculum choice(s) not available at their PEA school.
 8. Yes. All schools are required to deliver the Australian Curriculum, which ensures all key learning areas are delivered in ACT public schools.
 9. The revised suspension policy and procedures were published in December 2019 through the Directorate's website and intranet.
 10. The revised policy included changes to the policy and procedures to focus on positive behaviour support and exploring alternatives to suspension. The main changes in the policy and procedures include in-school alternative education programs, the use of a process called mutually agreed leave as well as the support that will be provided to schools when students are suspended for 15 or more days.
 11. Suspension data for public schools is publicly available on the Directorate's website [www.education.act.gov.au/ data/assets/.../Suspension-Data-and-Reducing-Suspension.docx](http://www.education.act.gov.au/data/assets/.../Suspension-Data-and-Reducing-Suspension.docx) As noted on the website, suspension data from 2018 is sourced from the new Schools Administration System and is not directly comparable to data in previous years. 2019 data indicates a slight increase in suspensions from across each sector from 2018. The new Schools Administration Systems is now able to capture suspension data with greater levels of both consistency and ease from schools and has resulted in an improved reporting culture.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA

