



# STRATEGIC PLAN

2014 - 2017 >

Department for Education  
and Child Development



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education and  
Child Development

# Foreword



We each share the desire for all young South Australians to have every chance to live successful lives.

To do this, we need to work together with families to help our children and young people learn, keep safe, and to be healthy, happy, strong individuals.

The Department for Education and Child Development was created in October 2011 to provide services for South Australia's children, young people and their families.

Public education is at the heart of what we do. Open and available to all, South Australia's public education system provides a high quality, secular and comprehensive education from birth to Year 12.

More than 180 000 young South Australians attend some 1 000 children's centres, preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, area schools and special schools throughout the State. Around 17 700 school and early childhood educators help each of those children to achieve their best.

Through the Office for Child Safety, Families SA and the Child and Family Health Service we deliver critical care, protection, health and wellbeing services that provide the essential foundations for children, young people and families to thrive.

Our workforce is one of the biggest in South Australia, employing almost 29 000 people. Each has a valuable role to play in nurturing the next generation of South Australians and has a shared belief in the value and potential of every child.

We are committed to giving every young South Australian a strong start in life, a good education and a brighter future, while helping all children to feel safe.

Jennifer Rankine  
Minister for Education and Child Development

# Welcome



I am pleased to share with you the Department for Education and Child Development's (DECD) strategic plan.

Our department was established to bring together the key government functions that deliver and regulate services for children and their families. Collectively, we aim to improve children and young people's education, safety and development from birth. With this plan, I am confident we can achieve this.

Our new plan outlines the long-term strategic direction for the department. It describes the improvements we will deliver to the South Australian community over the next four years and how we will achieve them.

Our immediate priority is to lift the standard of service provided within the organisation and to the community. We need to make sure all our services support the teaching, leadership and care provided by our staff, and the learning and development of children and young people.

We will continue modernising and refining our approach to delivering services and work hard to improve Central Office services to better support schools, preschools and DECD sites. We will be more accountable – administrators and educators alike.

We will strive for excellence, to earn trust, to build and strengthen relationships – especially with children and young people, their parents, carers and the community.

In this plan we describe how we intend to enhance engagement with children, young people and their families. We will involve communities in decisions that affect them. Above all, we will listen.

Our culture and values are critical to our success. Across our department – in schools, Families SA

sites, preschools and in policy and administration – we are fortunate to have many people who are highly skilled and already embody these values.

Even so, we will continue to increase our focus on developing leaders and optimising use of our resources – none more crucial than our staff and volunteers.

While we put our plan into practice, the world won't stay still. We must continue to change and evolve so that every child thrives. We will be more innovative – to not only follow best practice but to set benchmarks when it comes to the education and wellbeing of our children.

Through this plan, we will focus on giving every single child and young person the best possible education and support within a safe environment, so they can lead happy and fulfilling lives.

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## The next step

This is an ambitious plan. It reflects the need for our policies and systems to be more robust, transparent and flexible. It means new ways of working. It means working together, whatever our role in the organisation.

The key actions in this plan are real commitments we are making to ourselves and the community. We will measure our performance and publicly report on our progress.

This plan will guide us. It sets out goals and gives us direction. But it is not for us. It is for every single South Australian child and young person so they have access to the quality education, health and family support they need and deserve.

Tony Harrison  
**Chief Executive**

## Vision

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A high performing system that improves the educational attainment and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people.

## Values

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We embrace the values that are the foundation of ethical behaviour in the South Australian public sector:

- Professionalism
- Service
- Collaboration and engagement
- Sustainability
- Courage and tenacity
- Trust
- Respect
- Honesty and integrity.

The *Code of ethics for the South Australian Public Sector* embodies and builds upon the principles of the *Public Sector Act 2009* and seeks to advance the objects of the Act in the pursuit of good government in South Australia.

Access the code online at [www.oper.sa.gov.au/page-351](http://www.oper.sa.gov.au/page-351)

# Our priorities

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## Higher standards of learning achievement

South Australia will have a strong public education system, characterised by high achievement, growth, challenge, engagement, and equity.

### We will:

- maximise each and every child and young person's learning, to help them become the most successful learners they can be, confident individuals and informed citizens
- create high expectations for preschools and schools to raise standards of achievement and reduce the gap between our highest and lowest achievers
- build leadership capability and continue to improve teaching quality.

## Improve health and wellbeing

Developmental outcomes for children and young people will improve through the provision of universal and targeted education, health and family services that consider the 'whole child'.

### We will:

- establish an effective platform of universal family health and preschool and school services with targeted interventions, to meet every child's health, learning and developmental needs
- work with families to ensure every child has the foundation for success in school, the workplace, the community, and life.

## Improve and integrate child safety

Our services will be effective and responsive in supporting staff, the community and families in keeping children safe from harm, abuse and neglect.

### We will:

- support the safety of children and young people, especially to ensure that they remain in the care of their families wherever it is safe to do so
  - foster a whole-of-community safeguarding agenda through improved policy, practice and standards to prevent harm for all children and young South Australians.
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### Engage children, families and communities

Children, young people, families and the wider community will be included in our planning and decision making processes.

#### We will:

- build our capacity to engage with children, young people, families and the wider community in our planning and decision making.

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### Right service at the right time

Families, carers, children and young people will access the range and scale of services they need for their health, wellbeing, development, care and education.

#### We will:

- plan and better integrate services to ensure children, young people and families have access to the services they need, when they need them
- support those who need it most by directing resources to meet the specific and identified needs of priority populations.

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### Build a better system

The South Australian public education and care system will be effective, efficient and transparent, with high public trust and credibility.

#### We will:

- introduce new governance, planning, management and performance-monitoring systems across DECD to improve the way our services are delivered and increase accountability across the system
  - establish greater delegated authority across schools, preschools and services that support children and families
  - implement these changes in a cohesive, targeted manner, always keeping children, young people and their outcomes in mind.
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# Higher standards of learning achievement

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## We will:

- maximise each and every child and young person's learning, to help them become the most successful learners they can be, confident individuals and informed citizens
- create high expectations of preschools and schools to raise standards of achievement and reduce the gap between our highest and lowest achievers
- build leadership capability and continue to improve teaching quality.

## What success looks like

- South Australian students have achieved higher standards of learning and achievement in literacy and numeracy, mathematics and science, and higher proportions are achieving SACE with increasingly higher grades
- The educational achievement gap between the highest and lowest achievers has been reduced
- Sustained improvements in educational outcomes for priority groups are clear, including for Aboriginal students, students with a disability, children and young people in the care of the Minister and students using flexible learning pathways
- Young people graduate from our public education system on a clearly articulated pathway to further education, training and/or employment and have the skills and capabilities required for that pathway
- Parents and carers are engaged in their children's learning
- Teaching quality and leadership capability in our preschools and schools have improved through implementation of a coherent, system-wide approach.

## Key actions

- Provide preschool services so that every South Australian four-year-old child can attend a minimum entitlement of quality preschool
- Implement and monitor the DECD *Birth-18 numeracy and literacy strategy*, the DECD *Aboriginal strategy 2014-2016*, and the *Australian Curriculum and Teaching for effective learning strategy 2012-2017*
- Develop and implement a strategy to improve outcomes for students with disabilities
- Implement effective programs to develop students' capabilities and support pathways planning for young people's successful transition from school to further education, training and/or employment
- Develop and implement a teaching quality strategy and a preschool and school leadership development strategy
- Implement educational standards and an enhanced DECD *Improvement and accountability framework (DIAf)*, which supports preschools and schools to deliver improved educational and systemic results.

# Improve health and wellbeing

Developmental outcomes for children and young people will improve through the provision of universal and targeted education, health and family services that consider the 'whole child'.

## We will:

- establish an effective platform of universal family health and preschool and school services with targeted interventions to meet every child's health, learning and developmental needs
- work with families to ensure every child has the foundation for success in school, the workplace, the community, and life.

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## What success looks like

- Children's health and wellbeing outcomes have improved, demonstrated by an increase in the number of South Australian children who are developmentally 'on track' as measured by the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) – formerly Australian Early Development Index
- Children, young people and families have access to universal child and family health, preschool and school services, with clear pathways to targeted interventions for those with additional needs
- All families are effectively connected from the antenatal period to services supporting parents to build a strong start in life and parental capacity
- Age-appropriate developmental screening tools provide useful information to schools and families at the key transitions: commencing school, transition to secondary school and transition from secondary school.

## Key actions

- Develop and implement strategies for early identification, targeted interventions, and support services that reduce developmental vulnerabilities
  - Establish a support services model that is organised as multidisciplinary teams that link with school and preschool local partnerships
  - Improve access to early childhood services that provide a range of multidisciplinary, universal and targeted child development services
  - Establish a suite of developmental screening tools to provide information at key transition points for children and young people.
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# Improve and integrate child safety

Our services will be effective and responsive in supporting staff, the community and families in keeping children safe from harm, abuse and neglect.

## We will:

- support the safety of children and young people, especially to ensure that they remain in the care of their families wherever it is safe to do so
- foster a whole-of-community safeguarding agenda through improved policy, practice and standards to prevent harm for all children and young South Australians.

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## What success looks like

- Children and young people are safe and supported in and around our services
- More children and young people have a safe and stable home environment, including those in out-of-home care, and are supported to reach their full potential
- Children, young people and their families are supported to remain together wherever it is safe to do so, with fewer children and young people being placed in out-of-home care
- Children that require out-of-home care are provided with a safe and nurturing environment that helps them to grow and develop their full potential
- Prevention strategies are in place that reduce the number of child protection incidents requiring investigation, and best practice processes are in place for the appropriate and transparent management of incidents when they do occur.

## Key actions

- Undertake a program of cultural change across the department to focus on providing a 'family-focused' child protection system
  - Refresh mandatory notification practices to strengthen how we safeguard children accessing our services and sites, so that vulnerable children may be reached early in their life, and early in the life of an issue
  - Implement a range of programs to support families and build their capacity to provide safe and nurturing homes, so that more children can remain with their families when it is safe to do
  - Strengthen opportunities for safe and timely reunification of children from out-of-home care with their birth family
  - Lead and monitor whole-of-government and non-government approaches to safeguarding children in the community, including appropriate service interventions and community education.
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# Engage children, families and communities

Children, young people, families and the wider community will be included in our planning and decision making processes

## We will:

- build our capacity to engage with children, young people, families and the wider community in our planning and decision making.

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## What success looks like

- Children's and young people's voices are being heard and incorporated into our decision-making and teaching and learning processes
- Families, children and young people are involved in the planning of services in their local communities
- The community can better participate in the public policy process by accessing transparent public reporting
- Incidents and complaints are managed ethically, appropriately and efficiently
- The effectiveness of departmental decisions, policies, services and resource use is leading to improved outcomes, and increased satisfaction with our services.

## Key actions

- Build the capacity of our education, care, health and family services to better partner with families and communities in planning, managing and monitoring our services
  - Implement and monitor a children and youth participation strategy for use across the department
  - Introduce a revised framework for managing incidents and complaints, including strategies for effectively and consistently sharing information
  - Implement accountable government initiatives, including an 'open data' policy that provides transparent public reporting and accountability
  - Implement and monitor feedback processes including:
    - regular staff, parent, student and client satisfaction surveys
    - common processes through which students can provide feedback to their teachers
    - departmental use of online tools to seek community opinions.
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# Right service at the right time

Families, carers, children and young people will access the range and scale of services they need for their health, wellbeing, development, care and education.

## We will:

- plan and better integrate services to ensure children, young people and families have access to the services they need, when they need them
- support those who need it most by directing resources to meet the specific and identified needs of priority populations.

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## What success looks like

- Education and child development (ECD) local partnerships create effective local service plans in collaboration with the community
- Preschools, schools and partnerships easily access the support services they require to cater for the needs of the children in their care. Those services are timely and coordinated, efficient, relevant and consistent
- Children and young people with identified needs have a single, negotiated learning and support plan, developed in partnership with them and their parents or carers
- Departmental resources are directed to meeting the identified needs of children and young people
- Child protection, early childhood and support services are accessible, work to strengthen families, and support children to develop, flourish and belong.

## Key actions

- Develop education and child development (ECD) local partnerships across the State, and utilise community planning approaches to identify local priorities and solutions
  - Build the role of integrated service hubs and children's centres in providing a range of universal and targeted services in communities
  - Review how services are delivered and implement an integrated service delivery model that prioritises high impact interventions to children in highest need and better supports those with additional needs
  - Develop and implement a *One child, one plan* service and intervention-planning approach, to ensure integrated assessment and delivery of services to children and young people with identified needs.
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## Build a better system

The South Australian public education and care system will be effective, efficient and transparent, with high public trust and credibility.

### We will:

- introduce new governance, planning, management and performance-monitoring systems across DECD to improve the way our services are delivered and increase accountability across the system
- establish greater delegated authority across preschools, schools and services that support children and families
- implement these changes in a cohesive, targeted manner, always keeping children, young people and their outcomes in mind.

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### What success looks like

- Departmental operations have a clear link to strategic priorities and are effectively managed through an integrated whole-of-agency planning, management and reporting system
- Governance arrangements are effective and transparent, and allow for greater local authority and accountability across preschools and schools
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined at the preschool, school, partnership and system levels, and enable more effective and better supported local decision making
- DECD demonstrates sound financial and resource management, and manages change effectively.

### Key actions

- Establish a whole-of-department integrated governance framework, strategic and operational planning, performance monitoring and reporting
  - Develop corporate plans to optimise the use of our physical and information assets in response to a changing environment
  - Engender a culture of leadership through a state-wide workforce development plan including a plan to build leadership capability and quality across DECD
  - Develop a clear departmental position on levels of delegated authority at the site, partnership and central levels of our public education and care system
  - Align corporate and financial services to the department's service delivery model, supported by a revised funding model, and to support further devolution of authority and accountability to preschools and schools
  - Develop a managed approach to change and enhanced internal and external communication channels to support effective change management.
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# How will this be achieved?

## Planning and reporting framework

The department is introducing a new approach to planning and reporting aimed at improving transparency and accountability, and implementing strategies to deliver improved education and child development outcomes. This new approach will enable DECD to effectively plan, implement, monitor and report on performance, thereby creating an effective integrated organisational management system.

The priorities and success statements described in this plan will guide planning across all DECD business units and sites from 2014 to 2017.

Whilst much of the detail in this plan describes whole-of-system reform initiatives, there are other equally important levels of planning across our system.

Planning at service and site level, ECD local partnership planning and community partnership planning will reflect the six strategic priorities described in this plan and report against success statements relevant to their activities.

The companion document to this strategic plan, *Building a high performing system 2014-2015*, details the immediate priorities for organisational improvement that will be the focus of our business improvement planning in the short and medium term.

We will measure and report publicly on outcomes at all levels.

Six strategic priorities 2014 - 2017



Building a high performing system  
 A business improvement plan for the Department for Education and Child Development







**Government of South Australia**

Department for Education and  
Child Development

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