

Reimagining public education beyond mainstream schooling

Explanatory paper



Government
of South Australia

Department for Education

Background

Our Strategy for Public Education in South Australia calls us to act with purpose—ensuring every part of our system works together to support the success of every child and young person.

The Department for Education (the department), through the Schools and Preschools Division, is undertaking a systemic review of sites, services, and programs operating alongside mainstream schooling as announced by the Hon Blair Boyer, Minister for Education, Training and Skills on 1 July 2025. The review will examine how these provisions currently support learners, celebrate strengths, and identify where different or new approaches are needed to better align with our strategy.

This is an opportunity to ensure we are delivering on the full promise of public education. We will build on what works—understanding why it works, addressing gaps, and exploring innovative ways to extend impact and meet the diverse needs of every learner.

Scope

The sites, services and programs in-scope of the review are:

- **Home Education**, families/carers choose to seek an exemption from attending school for their child/children and instead educate at home.
- **Hospital School SA**, children and young people unable to attend their enrolled school due to chronic health conditions or family members/carers being treated in hospital.
- **Better Behaviour Centres**, provide targeted transitional programs for children and young people who require a long term, early intervention service aligned to a mainstream context.
- **Learning Centres**, provide short-term restorative and targeted education programs for children and young people who are excluded from their enrolled school.
- **Open Access College**, provides access to a blended approach of online and in-person education. The College has a site-specific enrolment policy for children and young people who live rurally or remotely, are unable to access a government school for other reasons or wish to access subjects not available at their enrolled school.
- **Youth Education Centre**, offers secondary education to children and young people involved with the youth justice system (either on monitored home detention or in custody at the Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre) as well as the Flexicentre, a tailored flexible learning program.
- **Bowden Brompton Community School**, an educational option for children and young people who face barriers to engaging consistently in mainstream schooling.

The review will consider systemic statewide data on delivery, uptake, attendance and effectiveness of sites, services and programs.

Rationale

As our *Strategy for Public Education* states ‘Public education is for every child and young person in South Australia’. To ensure we are meeting this commitment, we are taking the opportunity to ensure all children and young people are seen, support and set up to thrive.

The department operates a range of additional sites, services, and programs designed to address specific barriers and needs. While some variation in delivery is necessary to provide targeted support, there is opportunity for stronger alignment across these settings and an opportunity to amplify, connect and grow what works.

Data over the last decade shows a pattern of declining attendance and increasing suspensions and exclusions. Analysis of this data and contributing factors will support us to highlight where early coordinated action and proactive practices can be strengthened and expanded across the system.

Additional complexities in the lives of children and young people (including disability, behaviour challenges, mental health concerns, long-term illness, incarceration and geographical isolation) can impact the ability to attend, engage and thrive in a mainstream education setting.

We are seeking to understand how these challenges are being addressed within our system, both within and outside of mainstream services, and what strategies and supports are making the most difference.

Approach

The review will be underpinned by data-informed design and appreciative inquiry. Quantitative and qualitative data will be used to establish key details about each site, service, and program, and to identify where further investigation is needed to uncover improvement opportunities or address service gaps.

Through appreciative inquiry—including deep consultation with stakeholders across the system—we will build a comprehensive narrative of these additional sites, services, and programs: their history, current role, and how we can use what we learn to shape the future.

Consultation activities with key stakeholders (site leaders, children/young people, families, cross-government agencies, key associations and peak bodies) are being conducted throughout September and October 2025.

Outcomes

This review will ensure every child and young person can thrive in every setting across South Australia. It reinforces our commitment that public education is for all, by supporting wellbeing, delivering equity and excellence, and empowering learners to succeed.

The findings will help us strengthen the levers of our *Strategy for Public Education*—effective teaching, empowered leadership, strong partnerships with families and communities, engaging children and young people, strengthening supports, and driving continuous improvement and responsibility.

Next steps

The final report and recommendations are anticipated by the end of 2025.

Key findings and next steps for action are anticipated to be shared with the public in early 2026.