Understanding and Reducing the Workload of Teachers and Leaders in Western Australian Public Schools

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this independent report was to investigate the major drivers of excessive teacher and leader workload in Western Australian public schools and make actionable recommendations about how they could be mitigated by school and departmental leaders. It complements an investigation undertaken by the Western Australian Department of Education that focused on reducing the administrative burdens ('red tape') that distracted teachers from the core business of teaching and learning.

The authors consulted with teachers, school leaders, school managers, school psychologists, and departmental officials by conducting 12 focus groups. The findings were also informed by Australian and international publications about the drivers of workload and work intensification.

Key Findings
The drivers of workload and work intensification go well beyond 'red tape'. At the heart of the problem is the greatly increased expansion and complexity of the job of teachers and leaders. The solution lies in working towards a professional and public consensus about what is and is not the job of teachers, so that, instead of constant expansion, there is a deliberate shrinking of their roles so that they have more time to focus on the increasingly complex core business of teaching and learning.

The expansion and increased complexity of the job is not entirely due to the addition of non-core work. The core work of teaching and learning has itself become more complex with more diversity in the student body and higher expectations for teachers to meet standards of good practice, including using data to monitor and report on the progress of their students.

The report explains seven drivers of the intensification of teachers' work and how they can be mitigated.

1. Lesson planning. Modern curricula require teachers to integrate the teaching of key competencies and social-emotional development with teaching of subject knowledge and skills. Teachers must achieve this integration with students who are increasingly diverse in terms of background knowledge, social skills, and self-regulation. In such contexts, the need for good lesson planning and assessment strategies is critical, yet many teachers report that they have far too little time to do such planning, and to give their students the quality feedback they need to improve.

   This report recommends that teacher workload could be reduced by provision of centrally developed units of work that are high quality, aligned to the curriculum, and to the learning outcomes that have been described in the scope and sequence documents made available by SCASA. Teacher surveys show that such provision would be welcomed by teachers and save them approximately three hours a week. Centrally developed unit plans and associated resources are already available or currently being developed in several Australian states.

2. Marking. Marking student work is a major driver of teacher workload, especially at secondary level. This report recommends that principals review current marking practices using the principles of effective feedback so that the quantity of marking can be reduced without sacrificing its quality. Evidence-based and highly practical resources for doing such reviews are included in the report.

3. Fit for purpose routines. Routines that are fit for purpose are key to making the work of teachers and leaders manageable. For example, in well-managed schools, rather than every teacher trying to solve the problem of how to settle their class at the start of each lesson, how to contact parents about student absence, or how to run a team meeting, leaders, in collaboration with their staff, design routines that are known in advance, consistently implemented, and effective in achieving the goal. Fit for purpose routines make the job easier for teachers because the action steps required to do the work are made explicit, readily learned, consistently used, and effective. Teachers operating in isolation increases cognitive and physical load, for without shared routines teachers must figure out what to do for themselves. Good routines create the time needed to tackle the non-routine challenges such as those involved in team and school improvement.

   The report recommends that the School Leadership Institute leads discussions about the relationship between teacher autonomy, routines, and workload so that leaders understand and can implement fit for purpose routines in their schools.

4. Maintaining order and discipline. Managing the behaviour of students is a major cause of teacher stress and erodes the time they spend teaching and the time students spend learning. The report recommends that, where needed, principals are supported in ensuring that non-punitive and fit for purpose behaviour management routines are consistently implemented, effective in reducing disruption, and understood by parents. This includes helping teachers to use effective classroom management practices and helping leaders to implement effective whole school approaches to student behaviour management. One of the great strengths of the Western Australian public school system lies in its workforce of professionally trained school psychologists. This is unmatched in any school system in the nation and should be leveraged to maximise the support for principals in building a whole school approach to student behaviour management.

   Despite effective student management routines, a tiny minority of extremely disruptive and non-compliant students can derail a school's normal operation. The demands on teachers and leaders for management plans and documentation for such students needs urgent review. The report recommends adoption of streamlined planning (case management) processes based on functional assessments of the student's behaviour in the relevant context, and that such plans should explicitly take account of the rights of the student and the rights of their peers. For the tiny percentage of students whose behaviour cannot be safely managed within a school, despite good plans and strategies, facilities beyond the school need to play their part in delivering the specialised placements and treatment needed.

5. Addressing mental health and well-being. It has long been recognised that good teacher-student relationships and sensitivity to the emotional needs of students is part and parcel of effective teaching. In recent years however, with the increased attention being given to mental health issues, this aspect of the teacher's role has been expanded and formalised by policies and programs which treat the promotion of well-being as a separate strand of teachers' work. While teachers can make a significant contribution to student wellbeing, the report argues that the role of teachers in the promotion of wellbeing needs to be rethought. Teachers are not mental health professionals, and they should not be expected to address mental health issues which are beyond their educational expertise. Teachers can, and should, support all students' wellbeing by teaching that enables them to succeed and by building strong teacher-student relationships. This will ensure that the focus of teachers and leaders remains on their core purpose and their roles do not further expand into that of counsellor, therapist, or welfare officer.

6. Staffing Issues. Problems with teacher recruitment and retention are having a range of adverse effects on the workload and morale of teachers and leaders. While on the surface the problem of teacher shortages is being well managed (in the sense that all classes in public schools have a teacher in front of them), the reality is that achieving this has, in many schools, had ripple effects that are not so easily seen outside the school. These impacts range from teacher exhaustion as they cover gaps left by insufficient numbers of staff, difficulty in finding relief teachers, more classes taught by out-of-field teachers, negative impacts on students who have a series of relief teachers, erosion of teachers' lesson planning time as they are called to relieve other classes, and displacement of effort by the school's curriculum leaders from improving instruction across the teaching team they lead, to filling staffing gaps. The report acknowledges the work already done by the department to streamline recruitment and appointment processes and suggests further refinements. More importantly, it stresses that medium and longer term solutions to the staffing issues require recognising the increased complexity of the role, stopping the role expansion, and setting clearer boundaries around what is and is not the work of teachers.

7. Consultation. While the intent of increased consultation by the Department is appreciated by the profession, it can detract from core business and add extra work. A parallel situation can arise when in-school committees proliferate and are not purposeful and efficiently run. The report recommends that the School Leadership Institute addresses senior and middle leadership capability in running purposeful and efficient meetings and consultations.

Cumulative Impact
There is seldom a task that leaders and teachers are asked to do that cannot be justified with reasonable educational or administrative arguments. It is the cumulative impact and relentless nature of all the tasks and requirements that drives the problem of workload intensification. This means it cannot be solved by arguing about the worthiness of single strands of the work, for they are all important. It is their relative importance and the impact

of any one task on all the others that must be grasped. The guiding principle for resolving the problem must be relentless pursuit of the proper purposes of schools, by enabling teachers and leaders to focus on the core work that they are uniquely trained to do.

The Brief

Every school system in Australia, as well as schooling systems in comparable countries, have recognised a serious problem with teacher workload[1]. The concern is that teachers now spend so much time dealing with matters that are extraneous to their core teaching responsibilities, that the time spent preparing and delivering high quality teaching to their students has been seriously eroded[2]. Some researchers argue that while teachers remain largely satisfied with their core teaching workload, it is their non-teaching work, such as recording student behaviour, welfare issues, reporting to parents and attending meetings that is the source of dissatisfaction.[3]

A common framing of the problem of teacher workload is that there is too much 'red tape'[4] and that complying with administrative requirements robs teachers and leaders of time that they should be spending on lesson planning, assessing student progress, marking students' work, attending to the learning needs of individual students, and collaborating with colleagues to improve student learning.

The 'red tape' conception of the problem leads to investigations of the demands placed on schools to document their compliance with official policies, to collect and report on various types of data, and to satisfy a range of other administrative requirements that may add little or no value to the educational work of schools.[5]

The Western Australian Department of Education is seeking to address the issue of teacher and school leader workload through a two-phase project. Phase 1 of the project aims to identify bureaucratic demands on schools and remove or reduce as much of this 'red tape' as possible. This phase of the project has already been undertaken and reported on separately from Phase 2.

Phase 2 of the project, which is the subject of this report, aims to:
(a) gather information about those aspects of school practice that create burdensome workload and detract from the core business of teaching and learning; and
(b) make actionable recommendations about how school leaders, in conjunction with the Department, could reduce the scope and impact of such practices so that teachers and leaders could focus more of their time and energy on teaching and responding to the educational needs of their students.

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[1] See Gavin, M. McGrath-Champ, S., Fitzgerald, S & Stacey, M. (2021). Teacher workload in Australia. In Riddle, S., Heffernan, A., & Bright, D., (Eds.), New Perspectives on education for democracy (Ch. 9). Routledge.

[2] Heffernan, A., Longmuir, F., Bright, D., & Kim, M. (2019). Perceptions of teachers and teaching in Australia. Melbourne , Monash University.

[3] Lawrence, D. F., Loi, N. M., & Gudex, B. W. (2019). Understanding the relationship between work intensification and burnout in secondary teachers. Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 25(2), 189–199.

[4] For an academic perspective on red tape see Freiberg, A., Pfeffer, M., & van der Heijden, J. Regulation and the war on red tape: A review of the international academic literature (December 2021). Wellington: School of Business and Government, Victoria University of Wellington.

[5] For a recent Australian report on red tape see "Shifting the balance: Increasing the focus on teaching and learning by reducing the burden of compliance and administration. Review to reduce red tape for teachers and school leaders. AITSL, December 2020.

While our report makes some recommendations about actions which school leaders could take to reduce their own workload and that of their teachers, many of those actions will be difficult for principals to implement if there is not corresponding enabling action by the Department. That is why many of our recommendations for school leaders are accompanied by parallel recommendations for the Department. We believe that successful reduction in and redirection of teachers' work will require commitment and action from both Central Office and school leaders themselves.

Our Response to the Brief

The dynamic interaction between the increased complexity of the work of teachers and school leaders, community expectations and a risk management culture has led to a profession that is not attracting sufficient capable applicants and is not retaining those who do enter the profession[6]. While the salary and conditions of employment, such as the amount of programmed non-teaching time for teachers, are relevant to the attractiveness of teaching as a career, our analysis indicates that *the problem goes to the more fundamental question of whether the job of teaching as currently performed and organised is doable and sustainable.*

We conclude that it is not, and that some long held beliefs and expectations will need to be challenged and changed. We are not arguing for a radical reorganisation of schooling, although we believe that different types of schools and pathways do need to be part of the solution to the workload issues created by students who are not well served by typical school models. Rather, we believe that much clearer boundaries need to be set around what is and is not the role of teachers and educational leaders. Instead of continuing down the path of constant expansion, there needs to be a deliberate shrinking of their roles so that they can, as the Western Australian School Education Act 1999 envisages, focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

Methods

Phase 2 began with a search for research literature that focused on the possible causes of what teachers and leaders experience as excessive workload. Rather than qualitative and quantitative descriptions of workload, our focus was on the system and school-level policies, practices and beliefs that may be the drivers of the workload problem. Instead of writing a separate summary of this literature, we have integrated relevant aspects throughout this report.

The views of Western Australian educators about the nature and drivers of workload were sought through 12 focus groups, each of which comprised between 6 and 14 participants who held the same educational role. One group each was held with primary principals, secondary principals, primary deputy principals, secondary deputy principals, primary teachers and secondary teachers. In addition, focus groups were held with the Department's senior and middle leadership teams, with regionally based directors of

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[6] This situation is common to many OECD countries in addition to Australia. For a comprehensive review of trends in the United States see Kraft, Matthew A., and Melissa Arnold Lyon. (2022). The Rise and Fall of the Teaching Profession: Prestige, Interest, Preparation, and Satisfaction over the Last Half Century. (Ed Working Paper: 22-679). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: https://doi.org/10.26300/7b1a-vk92

education, collegiate principals, school managers of corporate services, and lead school psychologists.

Participants were recruited by gathering nominations of educators who were likely to be interested in and thoughtful about the topic. Each nominated person was sent an individual letter and invited to attend in person or on-line.

Questions were designed to focus directly on two purposes a) understanding participants' beliefs about school and system-based drivers of burdensome workload and b) gaining participant feedback about possible drivers of burdensome workload that were not already mentioned by participants.

Each focus group lasted between 1.0 and 1.5 hours. In addition to the participants, both report authors were present along with an assistant who took notes and recorded the meeting after gaining consent from participants.

Analysis proceeded by reading the detailed notes of all 12 focus groups and noting recurring themes about contributors to excessive workload. Careful note was taken of instances where participants disconfirmed the importance of a particular theme or had taken steps to avoid or remediate a frequently cited contributor to workload issues.

We recognise that this methodology yields self-reported data about the nature and causes of workload and that there may be a considerable difference between self-reported and objectively determined workload[7]. Our more subjective approach was appropriate, however, for our goal was not to quantify workload hours, but to probe the policies, practices and beliefs that sustained the practices that detracted from core business and created workload that was experienced as excessive, stressful, and pressured.

Workload and Work Intensification

Strictly speaking, 'workload' refers to the average number of hours worked over a given time period, including hours spent in and beyond the workplace. Since it is not the number of hours worked per se, but the quality and organisation of those hours that predicts their social and physical impacts, a distinction is now made in the literature between workload and work intensification. Creagh defines the latter as 'a feeling of being pulled in multiple directions at once due to the competing and contradictory demands at a given point in time.'[8] When teachers and leaders feel they are constantly up against deadlines, juggling priorities and moving rapidly from one complex and unfinished task to the next, they are experiencing work intensification.

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[7] There can be a large difference between self-reported workload hours and hours logged by more objective methods such as shadowing and time and motion studies. See Deloitte (2017) Principal workload and time use study, report to the NSW Department of Education, Deloitte. https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/gef/media/documents/Principal-workload-and-time-use-study-Nov-2017.pdf.

[8] Creagh, S., Thompson, G., Mockler, N., Stacey, M., & Hogan, A. (2023). Workload, work intensification and time poverty for teachers and school leaders: a systematic research synthesis. Educational Review, 1-20.

In a recent synthesis of large scale surveys (n=48,000) on teacher workload across five Australian states,[9] perception of work intensification was the most prominent finding. It was believed to be driven by the 'heavy hand' of data-based compliance reporting, and the introduction of reforms and new curricula.

Research on principals and their deputies shows a similar picture. In their synthesis of studies of workload and work intensification, Creagh et al., report principals as working between 50 and 60 hours per week with non-educational tasks such as marketing, fund raising, budgeting, stakeholder relations and linking with other social and educational providers as taking more time than their educational duties. Principals' traditional after hours work pattern is now exacerbated by the development of technologies which make them 'available' at more times throughout the day and night. Many principals prioritise being visible and present for teachers and students during school hours and do their administrative work in out of school hours.[10] Visibility via attendance at school-related events, email communication and thorough oversight of school-related social media activity have also been identified as increasing workload during non-traditional hours.

Deputy principals reported that their expanded workload was often focused on responding to the immediacy of student discipline issues (their primary time-use activity) and operationally-focused activities with limited training and support[11].

A 2021 Grattan Institute survey of 5,000 Australian teachers[12]found that more than 90 per cent say they don't have enough time to prepare effectively for classroom teaching and report feeling overwhelmed by everything they are expected to achieve. Worryingly, many school leaders feel powerless to support them.

From a policy perspective, the most serious implication of work intensification is its impact on the attraction and retention of teachers and leaders. A recent study of 2444 Australian primary and secondary teachers[13] found that only 41% intended to stay in the profession longer than 10 years – a result that matches earlier findings that between 40 and 50% of teachers leave the profession within five years. The major reasons teachers gave for their intention to leave were heavy workloads, health and wellbeing concerns, and the status of the profession.

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[9] See Gavin, M. McGrath-Champ, S., Fitzgerald, S & Stacey, M. (2021). Teacher workload in Australia. In Riddle, S., Heffernan, A., & Bright, D., (Eds.), New Perspectives on education for democracy (Ch. 9). Routledge.

[10] Reid, D. B., & Creed, B. M. (2023). Visible at night: US school principal nontraditional work-hour activities and job satisfaction. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 51(5), 1123-1140; Wang, F. (2020). Job demands amid work intensity: British Columbia school administrators' perceptions. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, *50*(6), 1013−1031.

[11] Wang, F., Pollock, K., & Hauseman, C. (2021). Complexity and volume: Work intensification of vice- principals in Ontario. International Journal of Leadership in Education. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2021.1974097.

[12] Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., & Joiner, R. (2022). Results of the 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time: Supplement to Making time for great teaching.

[13] See Heffernan, A., Bright, D., Kim, M., Longmuir, F., & Magyar, B. (2022). 'I cannot sustain the workload and the emotional toll': Reasons behind Australian teachers' intentions to leave the profession. Australian Journal of Education, 66(2), 196-209.

In a similar UK study of graduate teachers[14], workload was the most commonly cited reason for intending to leave the profession. Teachers routinely described their workload as 'excessive', 'unrealistic' and 'unsustainable'. Teachers pointed to the sheer quantity of work required of them, and the challenges of trying to fit their work into a reasonable working day or week.

These studies strongly suggest that the longstanding and worsening problem of workload intensification is not confined to Western Australia or Australia. Teachers' and leaders' work has evolved into something that is unsustainable for individual role holders and for the profession. Increasingly, educators do not have the capacity to address the very priorities that are central to the educational purpose of their role. Too many teachers are reporting they are not able to serve their students in the ways they would wish. *The core purposes of education are being compromised.*

Societal Issues and Trends

To fully understand what is driving the workload pressure on teachers and school leaders, it is important to look beyond schools and the Department of Education to the broader environment in which schools are operating. Participants in our focus groups referred to the negative impact of the following societal trends on their capacity to focus on their core business of teaching and learning.

1. **The ubiquity of social media.** The screen culture and social media that now dominate the lives of most children and young people (and their parents) has a significant effect on the way students attend in class. While many teachers believe that screen culture reduces their students' ability to sustain attention, research shows that what has changed is students' willingness, rather than ability, to attend to lessons that they perceive as boring in comparison to the instant access they gain from their digital devices to peers and entertainment.[15] Some teachers in our focus groups described how it was difficult to deliver lessons that matched the immediacy and entertainment delivered through students' electronic devices. They also described how an increasing number of students are not used to accepting adult authority because of the amount of time they are spending interacting with their peers online. Social media have also increased community access to their school leaders and teachers. Monitoring and responding to social media comments are now part of the out of hours work of many school leaders. More consequential than the actual time expenditure, is the feeling of exposure and vulnerability that comes with the ever present risk to the reputation of the school and its staff.

2. **Changes in families and parenting.** Societal changes in the last 15-20 years mean that schools operate in a very different environment from previously. Public school populations are increasingly diverse, with more students coming to school without

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[14] Perryman, J., & Calvert, G. (2020). What motivates people to teach, and why do they leave? Accountability, performativity and teacher retention. British Journal of Educational Studies, 68(1), 3-23.
[15] For a discussion of the effects of technology on attention, see Willingham, D. T. (2021). Why don't students like school? A cognitive scientist answers questions about how the mind works and what it means for the classroom. (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ.: Jossey Bass.

the background knowledge, language, and social skills that have traditionally been expected of new entrants. With more families under financial pressure, some parents are unable to establish and follow through with the behavioural and household routines that teach children how to behave in socially acceptable ways. This means that, for some students, teachers must teach basic self-management skills such as toileting, that in the past would have been regarded as the parents' responsibility. In addition, limited parent-child conversations mean that some children arrive at school with restricted language development. School staff report many instances where what would be regarded as normal parenting responsibilities have been 'contracted out' to schools.

3. **A culture of entitlement and complaint.** There has been a shift over recent years in the broader community's awareness of parental rights, leading to stronger parent advocacy and more frequent complaints to Ministers and media about how schools are catering for the learning and behavioural needs of individual students. While such advocacy can strengthen accountability to the parent community, each complaint generates a cascade of inquiries, reports, and follow-ups from the Minister's office to the relevant Directors, school leaders and teachers. Focus group participants discussed how an increasing number of parents demand that their children receive a level of provision that has little regard for the rights of other children, nor any recognition of the operational requirements of running a school that must serve the needs of all its students. This means that many issues that would in the past have been resolved through some give and take at the local level, now escalate. The increasing frequency of complaints has major implications for workload, particularly for principals. This has been recognised by the Department through its establishment in 2020 of a parent liaison office, along with a revised complaints process.

4. **The epidemic of mental health issues.** COVID brought heightened concern about the physical and mental wellbeing of students who were learning from home without the usual adult and peer support. The heightened awareness of mental health issues across the community has meant that schools have an ever-increasing number of students who have a diagnosed mental health issue that needs to be formally managed. This is compounded by the additional number of students who are believed to have a mental health problem that is yet to be diagnosed. It has also resulted in many teachers seeing student misbehaviour, or lack of engagement in their schoolwork, as a manifestation of a mental health problem to be diagnosed and treated by a mental health professional, rather than behaviour that can be changed by attending to the interaction between the student and the teacher/school.

5. **A culture of risk management.** The combination of social media, parental complaints, and formal accountabilities for the management of students with complex needs, means that the work of teachers and leaders is under considerable public scrutiny. School leaders are hyper-vigilant about the risk of violating, or being perceived to violate, any of the numerous policies and procedures that specify how the educational, behavioural, and mental health needs of such students must be

managed. The activities of oversight agencies such as the Ombudsman and the Office of the Auditor General has contributed to such a posture. Risk management has become a dominant lens through which school leaders prioritise their work, with some admitting that even if there is no formal Departmental requirement for certain documentation, they institute it themselves to protect themselves from any findings of fault about how they have managed an issue.

While most of these broader societal trends are beyond the schools' or the Department's sphere of influence, we believe it is important to acknowledge how these shifts have increased the complexity and challenge of the work of teachers and leaders. For system leaders to focus only on what is within the schools' control leaves school staff feeling that there is no recognition or understanding by their professional and political leaders of the broader array of factors that are impacting the outcomes that they can achieve.

The predicament that public education systems have found themselves in over recent decades is that schools are treated as critical to the resolution of many social problems which need to be resolved through a whole-of-government approach rather than by schools alone. School leaders and teachers are unfairly burdened if they are expected to, for example, compensate for shortages in the mental health workforce.

The responsibility for examining practices within the school and making changes to reduce and simplify teachers' workload, lies with principals. However, the Department needs to partner with principals in this endeavour. For example, if a principal decides to reduce the amount of written teacher commentary on student reports, the Department needs to examine its policy requirements regarding reporting to parents. School staff need to have confidence that their departmental and political leaders support the need to set some boundaries around what schools can reasonably achieve and be held accountable for. A public message that schools cannot provide unlimited services would provide a supportive backdrop for individual principals as they go about communicating with their local community about proposed changes at the local level that keep a focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

A good beginning has been made in establishing some limits to what parents can expect from schools in the recent *Connect and Respect* document released by the Minister for Education. An early opportunity to further extend this public messaging, given the work already underway within the Department, is in the area of student mental health and wellbeing.

We contend that serious public discussion is needed about how schools and school systems should respond to these broad shifts in society without compromising their primary educational purposes and sacrificing the wellbeing of teachers and school leaders. This will inevitably involve some discussion about what schools should and should not take on as their responsibility, and therefore what boundaries should be set. A public education campaign may be needed that sends clear messages about the role of schools and the way parents can support the educational and social development of their children.

Governments have in the past run such campaigns on various health and social topics such as seat belt wearing, sun protection, and healthy diets to improve the behaviour of citizens. It would be helpful to work towards public agreement about the proper role of teachers, and how parents, in collaboration with school staff, can play an important role in their children's success at school.

RECOMMENDATION 1
That the Department initiate a system-wide process that begins to build a public consensus about the role and expectations of schools. This process should acknowledge how the constant expansion of the school's responsibility is threatening its ability to deliver on its core purposes. The process should also communicate the proactive steps the Department and principals are taking to constrain the expansion and enable a stronger focus on the core purposes of schools.

RECOMMENDATION 2
That within the framework set by Recommendation 1, the Department consider a parent education campaign, using the mass media to illustrate how parents can contribute to the success of their children at school. Another option is to stimulate public discussion by releasing a statement on the role of schools in student mental health and wellbeing based on the work already done by the Student Care and Wellbeing Taskforce.

RECOMMENDATION 3
That within the framework set by Recommendation 1, principals seek opportunities to have discussions with their staff and local community about changes in school practice that would create the best conditions in their school for teachers to teach.

School Autonomy

In Western Australia the vehicle for providing schools with increased autonomy is the *Independent Public Schools* (IPS) program. It has been in operation for 17 years and from Term 1 2024, 639 schools will operate as IPS. In essence, the program allows schools to opt into a scheme where staff selection and resource allocation are decided at school level rather than the previous centralised model.

The increased autonomy granted by IPS has generated additional work for principals and for Managers Corporate Services. While principals acknowledge the additional workload, we could detect no appetite for returning to the previous central arrangements. However, we heard many examples where central involvement in supporting school decision making was absent, causing unnecessary duplication of work. One example concerned how schools choose programs to improve student wellbeing. Of the dozens of programs on the market claiming to produce improved social-emotional wellbeing, why would central office not discern which are evidence-based and which are not, and provide schools with a list of those that have evidence of their efficacy? This would save considerable work by school staff and prevent the adoption of ineffective programs.

Principals also described a lack of central support regarding the workload associated with managing building projects. While a project officer is assigned from the Department, that officer may not continue to be involved after handover and until the building is compliant

and fit for purpose. We heard cases of schools where major problems with bankrupt builders, non-compliant construction, and failures in equipment were being managed by senior school leaders and Managers of Corporate Services rather than by a designated Departmental officer.

We acknowledge the efforts of senior central leaders in recent years to address a critical issue that comes with increased school autonomy: that of school staff feeling isolated and cut off from central support. A strategy of 'connected autonomy' has been introduced to improve school connection to the system through increased support such as the Collegiate Principals Team, and to improve connectedness across schools through Networks. These are positive developments, but by not wanting to trespass on school autonomy, there are other areas such as the above examples where the system has vacated the field rather than seeing itself as needing to be involved as an enabler of school decision making.

RECOMMENDATION 4
That the current IPS settings giving principals greater decision making authority be retained, but the Department review how it can reduce the workload associated with increased school level decision making, particularly in relation to school selection of improvement initiatives, staff selection, and infrastructure development.

The Role of the Teacher

Section 64 of the Western Australian School Education Act 1999 describes the functions of a teacher in public schools in ways that are strongly focused on the core business of schooling:
(a) to foster and facilitate learning in students; and
(b) to give competent instruction to students in accordance with —
(i) the curriculum; and
(ii) standards determined by the chief executive officer; and
(iii) the school's plan referred to in section 63(1)(e), and to undertake the preparation necessary to do so; and
(c) to undertake regular evaluation and reporting of the progress of students within the terms of the school plan referred to in section 63(1)(e); and
(d) to be answerable to the principal for the educational achievement of students under his or her instruction; and
(e) to supervise students and to maintain proper order and discipline on their part; and
(f) to carry out administrative duties to meet organizational requirements relevant to the teacher's functions; and
(g) perform any other prescribed function assigned by the chief executive officer.

There are two major reasons why many teachers are not able to satisfactorily carry out the role as described in Section 64 of the Education Act. The first is the considerable expansion of what constitutes the core business of teaching and learning as described in Clauses a-d. The second is the increasing difficulty integrating the competent conduct of this core business and the supervisory and administrative duties described in clauses e-g.

Expansion of the core business.

What now counts as the core business of teaching and learning goes well beyond a narrow academic focus. Students are expected to complete school equipped not just with strong capability in core academic domains such as maths, English, history, and science, but also with capabilities in critical thinking and creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills. Teachers are also expected to focus on social-emotional outcomes such as optimism, agency, self-confidence, and resilience. Social emotional learning may also be pursued through a range of programs and strategies that address important social issues such as childhood obesity, water safety, mental health challenges, cyber bullying, financial literacy, vaping, and consent in personal relationships. Whether such a broad set of goals can be achieved by schools and teachers within current levels of time and resourcing, is questionable. This dilemma was described by one teacher as 'more and more gets added to our role, but nothing is ever taken away'.

The work involved in the core business has intensified as well as expanded. Greater rigour, accountability, and data tracking, mean that more time and effort is required to do the work in the manner specified in policies and procedures. These accountabilities are not red tape in the administrative sense. The teachers in our focus groups talked about tasks that are additional to the time they spend teaching - tasks such as marking student work, reporting to parents, professional learning, playground supervision, meetings, supervision of extra-curricular activities, and support for student well-being or behaviour management. When considered in isolation, each of these tasks may appear to be insignificant, but together they constitute a large demand on teachers' time. Without careful reconsideration of what we are expecting teachers to do in the time available, we risk pulling them in so many different directions that they find it impossible to teach effectively.

The Western Australian approach to lesson planning also contributes to work intensification for teachers. The core business described in clauses a-e of the Act, is more burdensome than needed because teachers are not provided with a sequenced set of the key content and skills prescribed for each year level in each subject area. The national curriculum describes the high level achievement standards in different learning areas across the years of schooling, but it leaves to school systems or teachers the detailed work of scoping and sequencing what the teacher will teach, the resources they could use, and how they will assess against intended learning outcomes.

We are aware of the Scope and Sequence materials produced by the WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) but these are insufficiently detailed to save teachers the considerable work involved in planning a coherent sequence of lessons. They describe what students should understand, know, and do at each year level but not what teachers should teach to ensure that those intended learning outcomes are achieved[16]. Teachers told us that, if left to an individual teacher to undertake, such planning is a significant workload issue. They also expressed the view that teachers should not be expected to have the specialist expertise of curriculum developers.

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[16] See Appendix for an example of the scope and sequence documents produced by SCSA.

We agree that a teacher's role should not be that of curriculum designer. First, that role requires specialist expertise in which very few teachers have been trained. Second, when teachers design their own lessons, it rarely results in a fully sequenced and coherent learning experience. There will be gaps and duplications – limitations which are likely to exacerbate inequity in students' opportunities to learn. Third, the absence of a centrally developed sequence of what should be taught for each learning area greatly increases the work teachers are required to do to plan and deliver curriculum content[17]. The only participant in our 12 focus groups who indicated satisfaction with her current workload in relation to lesson planning attributed her situation to the considerable time she had devoted the previous year to developing a scope and sequence document for her teaching of Year 1 literacy. She had tackled this task on her own and was unaware of it being taken up by other teachers.

There is a significant gap between the national curriculum documents and what teachers need to plan their lessons, and we do not believe that this gap has been filled at the state level. We are firmly of the view that either the Department or SCSA should provide such curriculum support for schools rather than leaving each school to 'reinvent the wheel'.[18]

We are aware of arguments that the central production of high-quality unit plans and assessments devalues teachers' professionalism. We reject such a position, noting that teachers still need to use their professional judgement to decide how best to teach the curriculum content to their students. Far from feeling 'done to', Australian teachers interviewed by *Learning First* expressed a strong preference for access to high quality curriculum materials that they could adopt and adapt to suit their class. The Grattan Institute[19] has estimated that doing so would save teachers on average three hours per week.

RECOMMENDATION 5
That either the Department or the WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority support teachers in their lesson planning by providing statements of what teachers should teach in a sequenced progression for high priority areas of the curriculum.

While concerns about infringing professional autonomy may have contributed to the reluctance to provide detailed guidance about *what to teach*, they have not prevented the Department from providing detailed guidance about *how to teach*. As part of its Quality Teaching Strategy, the Department recently disseminated a statement on effective classroom practice – *Teaching for Impact* (T4I). Prior to the delivery of that statement, many schools had invested a great deal of time in determining a schoolwide approach to effective pedagogy. The T4I statement has the potential to significantly reduce that workload for

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[17] For more discussion of why scope and sequence curriculum documents should be centrally developed, see Learning First – John Hopkins Institute for Educational Policy (2018). What we teach matters: How quality curriculum improves student outcomes. https://learningfirst.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/1.-What-we-teach-matters.pdf
[18] For examples of the type of curriculum support provided to teachers by the NSW Department of Education see the downloadable units of work with associated resources at English 3-6 units webpage.
[19] Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., & Joiner, R. (2022). Results of the 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time: Supplement to Making time for great teaching.

schools by providing them with a system-designed statement describing the key elements of effective teaching. We believe that one of the key messages the Department should send regarding its Quality Teaching Strategy is that effective use of T4I can reduce workload for teachers and school leaders by obviating the need for each school to develop its own instructional framework.

The *T4I Overview* is generally well supported as a summary of what has long been accepted as sound classroom practice. However, a concern expressed by some teachers is that the current expectations for effective teaching are not realistic, even for highly experienced and capable teachers. They refer to system descriptions of effective teaching that require teachers to personalise their teaching for every individual student. That is: to know where every student is at on a continuum of achievement and to deliver individualised instruction to each of them that enables them to take the next step along that continuum. For most teachers this is simply not an achievable goal. It would be helpful for the Department position about what it expects of its teachers to be modified to reflect what good teachers see as achievable. A more reasonable expectation would be that teachers will deliver an appropriate mix of high-quality instruction to the whole class, tailored instruction to small groups within the class and, at times, individual instruction to those students who require it.

RECOMMENDATION 6
We recommend that information is gathered about the number of schools using the T4I framework and the number who have or intend to develop their own instructional framework. For the latter group, the workload implications should be discussed with school leaders, school workload committees and Departmental officials responsible for the framework. The goal of the discussion is to learn about barriers to its use and how they can be overcome.

Difficulty integrating core business with maintaining order and discipline.
A second reason for the burdensome nature of the teacher's role is that, in many schools, teachers are unable to perform the duties described under Clauses a-d to their satisfaction because they are facing increasing challenges with maintaining order and discipline (Clause e). While many such challenges are best described as low-level classroom disruptions, others arise from students with complex behavioural, mental health and learning needs, and are manifest in such behaviours as biting, hitting, repeated tantrums, throwing objects, use of weapons and physical and verbal abuse of teachers and peers. Given the major implications of disruptive behaviour for teacher workload and satisfaction, we dedicate a subsequent section on behaviour management to discussion of both types of disruption.

Addressing Student Mental Health and Wellbeing
It has long been recognised that good teacher-student relationships and sensitivity to the emotional needs of students is part and parcel of effective teaching. In recent years however, with the increased attention being given to mental health issues in the broader community, this aspect of teachers' role has been expanded and formalised by policies which encourage teachers and leaders to attend to and report on student mental health and wellbeing alongside more traditional academic goals. The impact of these additional goals

on workload and work intensification is critically dependent on how the relationship between student wellbeing and student learning and achievement is understood.

When wellbeing and achievement are understood as separate goals, teachers may make trade-offs between them and, if resources allow, seek to resource their pursuit separately. For example, teachers may try and address wellbeing in a student who is stressed by their academic assignments by lowering expectations, spending time discussing their feelings, and initiating mental health interventions to reduce their stress. The alternative approach that does not involve such trade-offs is for the teacher to provide the intensive and supportive academic help that enables them to succeed in their assignments. In short, they seek to integrate rather than separate the pursuit of student achievement and well-being. Teachers are distracted from the core business when they allow perceived wellbeing issues to divert or reduce their focus on effective teaching.

The separate pursuit of learning and wellbeing goals is not consistent with what we know from psychological science about the relationship between student engagement, wellbeing and success at school[20]. Student engagement is fostered where three psychological needs are met. The first need, a sense of personal competence, refers to students' feelings that they know how to succeed at important tasks and feel confident in doing so. The second need, autonomy, is promoted by school and class experiences in which students influence what and how they learn. This may involve making choices, or when choices are restricted, by accepting the reasons teachers give about why learning something is important. The third psychological need, relatedness, is about belonging, connectedness, affiliation and trust. When students sense that adults at school know and care about them, they feel more connected to the school, and their emotional engagement provides a platform from which teachers can more readily foster their cognitive engagement with tough intellectual work.

In summary, for the great majority of students, their wellbeing at school is taken care of by feeling successful at their schoolwork, exercising appropriate autonomy, and being connected to adults who care about them and their learning. And these are the very conditions that are created by good teaching and positive teacher-student relationships. When wellbeing goals are resourced and pursued through separate provision, teachers and leaders may lose sight of the intimate connection between feeling successful and connected in class, and student wellbeing.[21] The work of promoting student wellbeing is the work of promoting good teaching and positive teacher-student relationships, rather than a separate wellbeing work strand.

RECOMMENDATION 7

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[20] For an introduction to these psychological needs see Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (2015). Self-determination theory. In J.D. Wright (ed.), International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition), Elsevier, pp. 486-491. For an application of self-determination theory to schooling see Wang, M-T., & Holcombe, R. (2010). Adolescents' perceptions of school environment, engagement, and academic achievement in middle school. American Educational Research Journal, 47(3), 633-662.
[21] Clarke, T. (2020). Children's wellbeing and their academic achievement: The dangerous discourse of 'trade-offs' in education. *Theory and Research in Education, 18*(3), 263-294.

That Departmental expectations of teachers in relation to student wellbeing reflect the understanding that teachers can best improve student wellbeing through good teaching and positive teacher-student relationships rather than by pursuing it as a separate domain.

RECOMMENDATION 8
That school leaders develop within their staff a clear understanding that good teaching and building positive student relationships are at the core of the school's strategy for addressing student wellbeing.

For a small minority of students, however, out of school factors that inhibit wellbeing will not be sufficiently mitigated by excellent teaching and positive teacher-student relationships. For such students, the role of the teacher is to be observant enough to recognise the difficulties and refer the student to in-school staff with student services responsibilities, who will then decide whether referral to out-of-school support services, mental health specialists and welfare agencies is required. The role of the teacher is not that of counsellor, and nor should they be expected to deliver psychological interventions for students with problems that are beyond the reach of effective teaching and effective teacher-student relationships. The job of teachers is to do their utmost to meet the psychological needs of their students by applying their expertise as educators.

A constant refrain from teachers and school leaders in our focus groups was: '90% of our time is spent on 10% of the kids'. This is driven by what some describe as the 'increasing diversity' of the student population. School staff speak of the burgeoning of students with 'complex needs'. These terms cover students with a disability, students who display disruptive behaviour and do not respond to the teacher's usual classroom management practices, students with erratic attendance and students with a mental health problem (diagnosed and undiagnosed). These students are required to be 'case managed' and to have a documented individual plan that the teacher must help design and then implement in the classroom. Such planning will often involve communicating with parents or caregivers, other government agencies and health practitioners. In those schools where 20% or more of a teacher's class fall into this category, planning for those students will become a significant part of their workload. We return to this issue in a later section of this report.

The Role of Leaders

The expectations of Western Australian school leaders are spelled out in the Department's Statement of Expectations, the Principal Performance Improvement Tool (PPIT) and the documents that support the Principal Performance Review (PPR). These documents guide principals in their reflections about their performance, in their preparation of a written submission about their performance, and in the validation of their self-assessment in a meeting with a director and peer. Given the power of performance management processes to shape the way a role is performed, it is worth noting some implications of the performance review process for leader workload.

We note that the document guiding principals in their preparation for the review includes weblinks to approximately 20 additional resources. The URLs to these 20 resources are included in a list of 42 web links, that are deemed relevant to the PPR. Regardless of the

quality of these resources, their sheer number presents a daunting amount of work for principals, especially for those who are new to the role. Those with experience and a strong strategic sense will be able to quickly locate those resources that really matter. For newer or more compliance-conscious leaders, the task will seem daunting. It is important that a holistic strategic overview is constantly in mind when officials promulgate policies and the resources that support them, for it is their cumulative impact that shapes workload, not the necessity for, or quality of, each individual item.

The validation of a principal's self-assessment involves a meeting of up to three hours between the principal and his or her director. The evidence that the principal has collected in support of their submission is discussed along with information independently collected by officials as part of a 'system scan' comprising information collected from eight business areas of the Department. The eight areas are: employee relations; finance and commercial services; financial services (school audit); public school accountability; Education Regional Offices; risk and assurance; standards and integrity; staff recruitment and employment services.

By collecting information from eight Central Office business areas there is a risk that principals will form the view that compliance with business policies and procedures is the top priority for ensuring a satisfactory performance review. It is important that principals are supported in focusing strongly on educational purposes and impact rather than on business processes. The Principal Performance Review process needs to address the principal's leadership of the educational achievements of the school along with the principal's wellbeing and future leadership aspirations.

RECOMMENDATION 9
That the design of the Principal Performance Review process be revisited to ensure that it is primarily focused on evidence about teaching and learning and that it supports the career development and wellbeing of the principal.

Many senior and middle leaders are not able to give sufficient time to the improvement of teaching and learning. When asked to estimate the percentage of their allocated leadership time they spent on their instructional or curriculum leadership duties, the highest estimate given by our focus group participants was 30%. When asked what happened in the other 70% of their allocated time, the answer was invariably attending, directly or indirectly, to behavioural and well-being issues, particularly of students with complex needs.

For many leaders, their core business of leading the improvement of teaching and learning is done in evenings and on weekends. When asked to explain this pattern, many leaders spoke of their belief that they must strictly comply with a set of procedures for students with complex learning and behavioural needs. This belief is anchored in a risk management culture that holds schools accountable through phone calls, inquiries, and investigations from multiple system leaders. Some senior Departmental staff we spoke with questioned whether principals were correctly interpreting regulations and believed they were exceeding what was required. When this proposition was checked with principals, examples were provided of why doing so was essential to 'cover our backs.'

The result of these beliefs and practices is that, in too many schools, risk management and compliance are driving leaders' work. Many are focused on correct implementation of a set of audited processes rather than establishing the routines and culture that are required to ensure the learning and wellbeing of all students.

RECOMMENDATION 10
That when departmental officers encounter school leaders who they perceive as exceeding policy requirements, they seek to:
- understand the reasons for the principals' beliefs, including their fears about risk;
- reduce any unnecessary fear and over-conscientious compliance and
- clearly communicate to other leaders who may share the misunderstanding, the nature of the misunderstanding, and what revisions have been made to the planning, reporting, and risk management protocols to prevent future misunderstandings.

It is clear in the educational literature that those schools that focus on a very limited number of areas for improvement and rigorously assess whether their strategies are improving outcomes, generate less work for their teachers than schools where they spread their effort across many fronts and don't assess impacts on outcomes. The ability to maintain a focus on a small number of priorities is essential for successful improvement efforts and for teacher and leader wellbeing. The department could model this by producing an annual *Focus* document that describes only those actions being taken to address the three priorities it has set for schools: improved teaching, improved response to student mental health and wellbeing and improved success for Indigenous students. It should also make clear the intimate connection between improved teaching and improved wellbeing, so leaders do not pursue each of these goals with improvement strategies that do not acknowledge the considerable overlap between them.

The Department should expect progress towards these three priorities each year, rather than being fully achieved in any particular timeframe. The goals are so ambitious and fundamental that they should not be regularly changed – it might take a decade of conscientious and focused effort to achieve the progress required. Motivation of school personnel is maintained, not by changing the goals, but by sustained collaborative effort and measurable progress in achieving them. This approach would result in a very different *Focus* document to the current one which lists multitudes of actions intended over the year ahead. The mindset that everything is important, and we must not lose sight of anything, is a recipe for work overload.

RECOMMENDATION 11
That the current three system priorities for schools remain unchanged until satisfactory progress is achieved, so leaders and teachers at all levels can focus on them and be given the space and time to learn what is required for success. Ongoing monitoring by the system is required so that progress can be assessed.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The *Focus* document and all other relevant documents should stress the intimate relationship between good teaching, good teacher-student relationships and student success and wellbeing.

Inclusion

There have been considerable efforts over recent decades to extend the opportunities of schooling in mainstream settings to many students who were previously denied such opportunities. Every student with disability should, like all students, have access to an educational environment that provides them with opportunities to develop their full potential as an individual and a contributing citizen.

The inclusion of students with disability is clearly desirable even though it has increased the complexity of teachers' work. Frequent engagement with families is also required to support these students, adding to demands on teachers' time, alongside managing therapists on school sites. Unless these challenges are well recognised, and teachers are supported with the time and skills needed to meet them, the benefits that are sought for students are unlikely to be realised. The same need for capability building of teachers apply to Education Assistants who play a vital role in supporting the success of students with a disability in all classes.

While the Department expects every school to have an ethos of inclusivity that welcomes students with a disability, we are unaware of any explicit statement of the principles of inclusivity. Dissemination of such a statement would assist school leaders to build inclusive cultures in their schools.

When devising, implementing, and monitoring plans for mainstreamed students with a disability, the responsibility of educators is to not only cater for one child, but to cater for that child while protecting the rights of all children in the class to learn and to feel physically and psychologically safe while doing so. The challenge for educators implementing inclusive practice is to formulate plans that meet both goals and to have all parties recognise and strive to meet the rights of the student with a disability *and* the rights of their fellow students.

RECOMMENDATION 13
That the Department develop a comprehensive strategy for students with disability that includes legislative review, clarification of the principles of inclusion, guidelines for effective case management that respects the rights of the included student and of their classmates and provides access to professional learning and specialist staff with high levels of expertise in the education of students with disability.

Fit for Purpose Routines

Routines that are fit for purpose are key to making the work of teachers and leaders manageable. Routines specify the sequence of actions required to complete a task and

coordinate the contributions of those responsible.[22] For example, in well-managed schools, rather than every teacher trying to solve the problem of how to settle their class at the start of each lesson, how to contact parents about student absence or how to avoid unwanted mobile phone use, leaders design and implement routines that are known in advance, consistently implemented, and are effective in achieving the goal.

The more that the work of teaching and leading is routinised the less the cognitive and physical load required to do the work. The time and effort needed to do the work is greatly reduced because the action steps required are made explicit, readily learned, consistently used, and effective.

Routines are fit for purpose when the activity sequences achieve the relevant educational purposes. A teacher's routines for settling the class at the start of the lesson are fit for purpose when all students are engaged in the lesson within the specified time. Workload is unnecessarily increased and intensified when either the work is not sufficiently routinized or some of the routines are not fit for purpose. For example, if many teachers are struggling to get students to put their mobile phones away, this means either that there are not fit for purpose routines available, or that such routines are available but are not being used consistently. In either case, work intensifies as teachers try to figure it out for themselves.

The result is highly variable practice, and such variability makes it extremely hard to learn from other teachers. A certain degree of routinisation is a precondition for learning and improvement, because the more the variation, the harder it is to know with any certainty how colleagues accomplish any given task.

The use of a widely shared routine, however, is no guarantee of effectiveness. Education is full of examples of widely shared routines, many of which are the result of pedagogical fads and fashions, which do not achieve the intended educational goals[23]. The creation of routines that are effective and reduce teacher stress and workload requires deep understanding of the mechanisms which explain why a particular sequence of activities leads to the desired educational goal. Without such understanding, routines may succeed in reducing workload by sacrificing the educational purpose of the routine.

Attempts to reduce the marking workload of secondary teachers, which is a major driver of their overall workload, provides an important case in point. Since written marking of student work is a type of feedback, and feedback is a high impact teaching strategy, it is important that attempts to simplify marking routines preserve the qualities that make it effective[24]. Feedback is effective when it is part of a comprehensive formative assessment strategy that includes intended learning outcomes and success criteria. It should give students information about their performance relative to intended learning outcomes, be

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[22] Hodgson, G. (2009). The nature and replication of routines. In Becker, M. C., & Lazaric, N. (Eds.). Organizational routines: Advancing empirical research (pp. 26-44). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

[23] For just one example, see Willingham's discussion of learning styles in Willingham, D. T., (2021). *Why don't students like school?* (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ.: Jossey Bass.

[24] Teacher feedback to improve pupil learning. Senior leader implementation pack. 2021). London: Education Endowment Foundation.

timely, and suggest next steps. Opportunities for students to receive and use the feedback should also be planned.

Understanding and applying the principles of good feedback matter much more than its frequency or method (written or oral). Marking workload can be reduced by ensuring that leaders and teachers understand the principles of effective feedback, use that knowledge to evaluate the quality of their current marking practices, and then reduce the quantity of their marking while enhancing its quality.

Leaders and teachers should not need costly and time consuming professional development to undertake a review of their current marking practices, because a recent, highly practical, and evidence-based report has been released as part of a comprehensive initiative by England's Department of Education to address teacher workload.[25] In addition to the report on oral and written feedback, the English tool kit on workload reduction includes similar analysis and resources for crafting fit for purpose routines for behaviour management and school culture.[26]

RECOMMENDATION 14
That the School Leadership Institute promote discussion about the relationship between professional autonomy, fit for purpose routines, and teacher and leader workload.

RECOMMENDATION 15
That principals and their staff use the available evidence-based workload reduction toolkits to establish whether their school has school-wide fit for purpose routines in key areas of its operation.

Behaviour Management
We recognise the intimate connection between effective teaching, good teacher-student relationships, and student behaviour at school. This relationship was articulated by one of our focus group principals who explained that reducing the heavy workload associated with individual student case management ultimately depended on establishing "high-quality instruction by the classroom teacher, all day, every day so that far fewer students fall through the cracks and finish up needing highly intense intervention".

We agree, and support the efforts of the Department to promote high quality teaching through its T4I initiative. Good teaching across a school reduces the number of disruptive students, and therefore the amount of work involved in individual case management. Nevertheless, managing the behaviour of students is consistently identified in surveys of teacher stress and workload as a major issue for teachers[27]. While good teaching reduces behavioural disruption, it also requires the foundation of a safe and orderly classroom environment. It is essential, therefore, that the department' s Quality Teaching Strategy, Behaviour Management Strategy and Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy are

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[25]Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning: Guidance Report (2021). London: Education Endowment Foundation. This report has been singled out because it is based on a transparent evidence base and the mechanisms that make feedback effective are clearly presented.
[26] Ways to reduce workload in your school: tips from school leaders - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[27] See Principal workload and time use study (November 2017). Deloitte and NSW Department of Education.

conceptualised and presented to schools as having a large overlapping central core rather than as three separate initiatives generated from three different sections of Central Office.

RECOMMENDATION 16
That the Department review how well the Quality Teaching Strategy, Behaviour Management Strategy and Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy are communicated to schools as mutually supportive and essential components of the core business of teaching and learning.

In discussing how disruptive student behaviour contributes to teacher stress and workload, a distinction is needed between the prevention and management of low level disruption and the management of a tiny minority of students whose extreme behaviour damages property and threatens their own and others' safety.

Low level disruption

Low level disruption is minimised by fit for purpose and consistently implemented school - wide behavioural expectations and routines. While effective behaviour management routines maximise the time available for teaching and learning, their primary purpose is *to protect and preserve the rights of all those in a school community.* Three rights are relevant – the right to feel physically and psychologically safe, the right to respect and fair treatment and the right to learn. The purpose of behavioural rules is to make clear how these rights will be protected and what happens if they are violated[28].

Teachers who employ effective classroom management skills, supported by a school-wide behaviour management approach, minimise such minor disturbances as students not bringing the right materials to class, whispering to other students, unauthorised moving around the classroom, distracting other students, checking their mobile phones, and calling out. For example, constant reminders to students who will not put their phones away is stressful and disrupts the lesson. As already described, gaining compliance is much harder if a teacher is attempting to do this in the absence of student and parent understanding of an agreed and effective school-wide or system-wide mobile phone policy. When teachers and leaders struggle to establish a learning-focused school culture, behaviour problems are likely to escalate, expectations are lowered as teachers lose heart, and teaching time is eroded.

There is an urgent need to ensure that every teacher can establish, through appropriate classroom norms and routines, an environment in which every student's right to learn, free from behavioural disruption, is protected[29]. While the recent federal government review of initial teacher education is attempting to ensure that newly graduated teachers are much better equipped in this respect, many current teachers and principals may need support in implementing evidence-based classroom management strategies *across the school*.

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[28] See discussion of the purpose of rules and the protection of the three rights in Lovell, O. (2022). Tools for teachers: How to teach, lead and learn like the world's best educators (Ch. 2). Woodbridge, England: John Catt.
[29] There are detailed examples of how to do this in in Lovell, O. (2022). Tools for teachers: How to teach, lead and learn like the world's best educators (Ch. 2). Woodbridge, England: John Catt.

Providing such support would involve building teacher capability in consistent use of proven classroom management strategies, and building principal capability to implement a whole school approach to behaviour management. While many principals have developed such a whole school approach in their school, some have not, and would require the support and advice of suitably qualified support staff to assist them. One of the great strengths of the Western Australian public school system lies in its workforce of professionally trained school psychologists. This is unmatched in any school system in the nation and should be leveraged to maximise the support for principals in building a whole school approach to student behaviour management. Specialist school psychologists who have organisational consultancy skills and are already operating with a 'school as client' perspective, present the most likely source of such consultancy support.

RECOMMENDATION 17
That all principals are supported to implement common fit for purpose routines to minimise low level disruption in classrooms, hallways, and playgrounds. That system and professional leaders endorse and clearly communicate to schools and the community that the purpose of this effort is protecting the rights of all students to a safe and learning-focused school environment.

RECOMMENDATION 18
That the capacity of school psychologists and other specialists to support principals in achieving an effective whole of school approach to managing student behaviour is reviewed and increased.

High level disruption

Once a school has implemented effective routines for managing low level disruptions and upskilled its teachers in effective classroom management, there will still be, in many schools, a very small number of students who will require additional attention. This small number of extremely disruptive and non-compliant students can consume a huge amount of a school's resources. Teachers and school leaders told us that it only takes one or two of these extremely disruptive students to effectively de-rail a school's normal operation.

The time required to manage high level disruption goes beyond the management of the student when an incident occurs. Required written plans specify the need for parent follow up and attempts to connect the student and their family with relevant outside agencies. When a teacher has several students in their class who are required to have a documented plan, the recording requirements are significant. Teachers told us that whereas in the past they may have had one or two such students in their class, they are likely to now have five or six such students. Requirements for individual planning, intervention, parent follow up and documentation which may be viable for one or two students in a class, become completely non-viable if there are five or six such students.

Rationalisation of the demands for individual student plans needs to be urgently undertaken. Teachers' current understanding is that if they have a student in their class who is an irregular attender, there is a requirement to have an Attendance Plan; if that same student is falling behind academically, they are required to have an Individual Education Plan; if they are extremely disruptive, they will need to have an Individual Behaviour Plan; if

they have a mental health problem, that will require a plan. A teacher reported that they had one very difficult student in their class who was on five separate plans! A Departmental official told us that multiple plans were not needed. This may be another example where school and Departmental staff have differing understandings of what is required.

RECOMMENDATION 19
That the differing beliefs of school leaders and Departmental officials about the documentation required for students with complex needs be discussed with those who are seen as over-conscientious with the goal of:
- understanding the reasons why schools and Departmental officials may have differing understandings of the planning that is required for students with complex needs;
- agreeing and clearly communicating revised protocols for planning for students with complex needs and
- ensuring that protocols for how to cater for students with complex needs explicitly address the rights of the students with complex needs and the rights of their peers.

In summary, significant reduction in burdensome teacher and school leader workload in the area of student behaviour could be achieved if school leaders were able to establish a school culture in which low level disruption is prevented and efficiently managed by establishing norms, expectations and routines for student behaviour that protect the rights of all students to a safe and learning-focused school environment. High level disruption requires the formulation of a plan, based on a functional assessment of the student's behaviour in the relevant context, that explicitly addresses the rights of the target students and the rights of peers. The roles of other school staff who become involved when the behaviour escalates beyond the classroom need to be clear; and for the tiny percentage of students whose behaviour cannot be safely managed within a school with effective strategies and processes, facilities beyond the school need to play their part in delivering the specialised placements and treatment needed.

RECOMMENDATION 20
That leaders of the Schools of Special Needs: Behaviour and Engagement, Medical and Mental Health and Alternative Learning Settings, work with senior Health Department officials to examine co-operative arrangements for the placement and treatment of students whose behaviour and mental health issues cannot be safely managed within a school.

The Increasing Medicalisation of Schools
While there is clearly a need for some students to be referred to the health system for diagnosis and treatment of their medical condition, problems arise when teachers respond to a student exhibiting behavioural or learning difficulties by assuming the problem is located within the child, and that medical, psychological or psychiatric treatment is needed.

The more that medical language, diagnoses, and interventions become the primary lens through which student behaviour is viewed, the more reliant teachers and leaders become on the availability and expertise of non-educators. The alternative is for teachers and school leaders to ask what it is about the context in which the behaviour occurs (the interaction

between the student and teacher/school) that could be changed to elicit more productive behaviour.

As one example, we were told of a 10 year old child who had been expelled from an independent school for persistent absence. Her mother had 'supported' her irregular attendance by sitting in class with her for five years. Instead of considering how the child's school refusal and anxiety could have been learned from a pattern of mother-child interaction, the school's response was to view the child's behaviour as indicating an anxiety disorder requiring a medicalised treatment plan.

Adopting a medical model rather than an educational model does not build, and may even erode, teachers' capability in managing increasingly diverse classrooms. Instead, teachers are expected to implement therapeutic practices for a range of conditions that are managed under the guidance of medical/psychiatric personnel rather than focusing on context-specific interactions between students, teachers, peers and parents.

The current funding model for students with complex needs also incentivises the continued reliance on medical diagnoses and interventions. For many such students, extra funding is contingent on a medical, psychiatric, or psychological diagnosis. The long wait times to get such diagnoses mean that extra resources, if they come at all, may be delayed.

The final and perhaps most important unintended consequence of the medicalisation of schooling is the expansion of the role of teachers and leaders into the medical and mental health realm. Schools are not therapeutic agencies and teachers are not therapists. Where accessible health, mental health and welfare facilities are lacking, schools should not be expected to take up the slack. It is this type of role creep that is at the heart of the work intensification and staffing retention issues.

RECOMMENDATION 21
That there is a planned transition so that, in most cases, funding for students with special needs is tied to functional needs assessments rather than medical diagnoses.

School Staffing Processes
The most obvious impact of the current teacher shortage is the time it now takes school leaders to ensure that every class in their school has a qualified and competent teacher. While the Department has a range of strategies to increase supply and improve retention of current staff, the responsibility for ensuring that each school is fully staffed rests with the principal, at least that is the case for all IPS. It is notable that IPS principals have for many years discharged this responsibility successfully with the number of unfilled teacher positions at the start of the school year being either very low or, in recent years, zero. This is in stark contrast to the years prior to IPS.

But with the current teacher shortage being so severe, principals report that their time is increasingly taken up with staff recruitment. They are fully aware of the significance of decisions around staff selection, and know the high costs of unsatisfactory appointments, not least of which, is their middle leaders having to spend more time than they have been allocated, in supervision and mentoring. But with limited pools of applicants to select from

they face a dilemma: the requirement to have a teacher for every class is non-negotiable, but appointing a teacher who will struggle to meet the necessary standard sows the seeds for a high workload management problem in the future.

Despite the improvements, principals did identify aspects of the current recruitment process that were adding unnecessary workload. The back and forth with centrally based Workforce staff regarding approval for advertising a position was extremely time consuming. Principals are advocating for a process where they would retain control of choosing their staff but a centrally or regionally based HR expert would ensure that the whole process of advertising and filling the position met the compliance requirements. They also saw opportunities to streamline the approvals process for selecting non-teaching staff.

RECOMMENDATION 22
That a small group of principals in collaboration with Workforce personnel be convened to revise the recruitment process so that:
- principals retain authority over the decision to fill a position, final approval of the wording of the advertisement, composition of the short list, if any, and final selection of the successful applicant; and
- a dedicated regionally or centrally based HR expert is responsible for the administration of these steps and ensuring they are compliant with relevant standards.

In addition to the work of staff recruitment, the teacher shortage has had other serious impacts on teacher and school leader workload. One such impact is that, due to the difficulty of engaging relief teachers to cover for staff absences, current staff (both teachers and school leaders) are giving up Duties Other Than Teaching Time (DOTT) to provide cover. The erosion of planning time for teachers is affecting the quality of teaching. Difficulty in finding the relief teachers required to cover staff absence has been exacerbated by the norms developed during COVID. In that period, strong messages were sent to staff that they should stay home when sick. This appears to have carried over beyond the peak of COVID and resulted in an increase of staff absence due to sickness.

Another significant mindset shift amongst teachers is that for those who see the job as too complex, demanding and stressful, there is a preference for relief teaching that does not carry the same workload demands of marking, curriculum planning, parent liaison and other school responsibilities as does a permanent appointment. Other teachers are responding to the same workload and complexity issues by opting for part-time teaching. If these trends continue and a declining percentage of teachers are full-time, fully committed to the goals of the school and its students, the role of senior and middle leaders becomes significantly more complex.

Another factor that is compounding the staffing crisis is that, in many schools, principals can no longer rely on the same level of staff goodwill that has previously enabled them to offer a rich suite of extra-curricular activities. Many teachers have internalised the teacher well-being and life balance messages, and are far less likely than they were before to volunteer for extracurricular activities and events and to take on extra duties, even when compensation is offered. If this mindset becomes entrenched and the system can no longer

rely on the goodwill of teachers to 'go the extra mile', some of the offerings that parents and students have become used to, will no longer be available.

In summary, the current teacher shortage is having a range of adverse effects on school staff and their workload and morale. While on the surface the problem of teacher shortages is being managed (in the sense that all classes in public schools have a teacher in front of them), the reality is that achieving this has, in many schools, had ripple effects that are not so easily seen outside the school. These impacts range from teacher exhaustion as they run faster to cover gaps left by insufficient numbers of staff, difficulty in finding relief teachers, more classes taught by out-of-field teachers, negative impacts on students who have a series of relief teachers, erosion of teachers' lesson planning time as they are called to relieve other classes, and displacement of effort by the school's curriculum leaders from improving instruction across the teaching team they lead, to filling staffing gaps.

Consultation

School staff report that stakeholder consultation is a more time consuming process than ever before. Principals need to consult with their school community regarding the overall direction of the school and ensure that their staff are consulted over decisions that impact them. While consultation is clearly necessary, the question needs to be asked whether numerous committees and meetings are required for effective consultation. One secondary principal reported that he ran 18 committees and feared loss of staff and student voice if they were reduced.

Some principals have reduced meetings and made them more focused on teaching and learning. Workload reduction toolkits produced by DfE in England and AITSL give principals several useful tips for how to reduce meetings without reducing participative decision making. This involves such things as asking staff what they do and do not wish to be consulted about, and running meetings that are efficient and highly focussed on a pre-planned agenda. The capabilities required include strategizing a sequence of meetings, establishing and maintaining purpose, providing on-the-spot thematic summaries of discussions, recognising and parking distractions, advocating own views, seeking feedback and reactions and finding common ground. The overall goal is to reduce the number of meetings and to make each one more effective.

It would appear that this inefficient consultation problem also exists at the Department level, with principals and Directors repeatedly asked to be in focus groups and on committees that all add to their workload. With so many consultation forums over a wide range of policy and program areas, there is a risk that each one is developed in isolation, without due consideration of their collective impact on schools.

RECOMMENDATION 23
That the School Leadership Institute build senior and middle leader capability to conduct effective and efficient consultation and meetings.

More Flexible Schooling Models

The current delivery model for schooling works well enough for most students. They are able to learn and succeed in a school model which has changed little over decades. That is,

an 'egg crate' organisational model that has a single teacher with an instructional group of around 20-30 students in a classroom working through a tightly structured academic curriculum in a highly verbal environment.

But this model does not work well for every student. School staff report that the number of disengaged students is increasing and while some can be re-engaged through pedagogical adjustments and alternative pathways, others cannot, particularly in the lower secondary years. Trying to engage these students against the odds puts considerable pressure on teachers and can involve a large time commitment often for very little return. Some secondary school leaders have used the flexibility they have to create alternative pathways for some of their students that has solved the engagement problem. The question for system leaders is whether there are opportunities to actively support such initiatives with schooling delivery models that challenge the standard frameworks that the system has in place.

Some flexibility in the delivery model can be seen with the introduction of VET courses in the final years of schooling as an alternative to predominantly classroom-based academic learning. These programs typically involve more project-centred learning based around learners' needs. There are also examples in a handful of schools of the *Big Picture* delivery model with a more flexible learning program designed around the student's interests and increased utilisation and engagement with community resources.

RECOMMENDATION 24
That the Department sponsor a small number of pilot programs to explore and evaluate alternative models of schooling where there is local support for such provision.

List of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1
That the Department initiate a system-wide process that begins to build a public consensus about the role and expectations of schools. This campaign should acknowledge how the constant expansion of the school's responsibility is threatening its ability to deliver on its core purposes. The campaign should also communicate the proactive steps the Department and principals are taking to constrain the expansion and enable a stronger focus on the core purposes of schools.

RECOMMENDATION 2
That within the framework set by Recommendation 1, that the Department consider a parent education campaign, using the mass media to illustrate how parents can contribute to the success of their children at school. Another option is to stimulate public discussion by releasing a statement on the role of schools in student mental health and wellbeing based on the work done by the Student Care and Wellbeing Taskforce.

RECOMMENDATION 3
That within the framework set by Recommendation 1, principals seek opportunities to have discussions with their staff and local community about changes in school practice that would create the best conditions in their school for teachers to teach.

RECOMMENDATION 4
That the current IPS settings giving principals greater autonomy be retained, but the Department review how it can reduce the workload associated with increased school level decision making, particularly in relation to school selection of improvement initiatives, staff selection, and infrastructure development.

RECOMMENDATION 5
That either the Department or the WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority support teachers in their lesson planning by providing statements of what teachers should teach in a sequenced progression for high priority areas of the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATION 6
We recommend that information is gathered about the number of schools using the T4I framework and the number who have or intend to develop their own instructional framework. For the latter group, the workload implications should be discussed with school leaders, school workload committees and Departmental officials responsible for the framework. The goal of the discussion is to learn about barriers to its use and how they can be overcome.

RECOMMENDATION 7
That Departmental expectations of teachers in relation to student wellbeing reflect the understanding that teachers can best improve student wellbeing through good teaching and positive teacher-student relationships rather than by pursuing it as a separate domain.

RECOMMENDATION 8

That school leaders develop within their staff a clear understanding that good teaching and building positive student relationships are the school's core strategy for addressing student wellbeing.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the design of the Principal Performance Review process be revisited to ensure that it is primarily focused on evidence about teaching and learning and that it supports the career development and wellbeing of the principal.

RECOMMENDATION 10

That when system leaders encounter school leaders who they perceive as exceeding policy requirements, that they initiate timely and respectful discussions, with the goal of:

- understanding the reasons for the principals' beliefs, including their fears about risk;
- reducing, based on those understandings, any unnecessary fear and over-conscientious compliance and clearly communicating to those who may share the misunderstanding, the nature of the misunderstanding, and what revisions have been made to the planning, reporting, and risk management protocols to prevent similar future misunderstandings.

RECOMMENDATION 11

That the current three system priorities for schools should remain unchanged until satisfactory progress is achieved, so leaders and teachers at all levels can focus on them and be given the space and time to learn what is required for success. Ongoing monitoring by the system is required so that progress can be assessed.

RECOMMENDATION 12

That the *Focus* document and all other relevant documents should stress the intimate relationship between good teaching, good teacher-student relationships and student success and wellbeing.

RECOMMENDATION 13

That the Department develop a comprehensive strategy for students with disability that includes legislative review, clarification of the principles of inclusion, guidelines for effective case management that respects the rights of the included student and of their classmates and provides access to professional learning and specialist staff with high levels of expertise in the education of students with disability.

RECOMMENDATION 14

That the School Leadership Institute promote discussion of the relationship between professional autonomy, fit for purpose routines, and teacher and leader workload.

RECOMMENDATION 15

That principals and their staff use the available evidence-based workload reduction toolkits to establish whether the school has school-wide fit for purpose routines in key areas of its operation.

RECOMMENDATION 16
That the Department review how well the Quality Teaching Strategy, Behaviour Management Strategy and Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy are communicated to schools as mutually supportive and essential components of the core business of teaching and learning.

RECOMMENDATION 17
That all principals are supported to implement common fit for purpose routines to minimise low level disruption in classrooms, hallways, and playgrounds. That system and professional leaders endorse and clearly communicate to schools and the community that the purpose of this effort is protecting the rights of all students to a safe and learning-focused school environment.

RECOMMENDATION 18
That the capacity of school psychologists and other specialists to support principals in achieving an effective whole of school approach to managing student behaviour is reviewed and increased.

RECOMMENDATION 19
That the differing beliefs of school leaders and Departmental officials about the documentation required for students with complex needs be discussed with those who are seen as over-conscientious with the goal of:
- understanding the reasons why schools and Departmental officials may have differing understandings of the planning that is required for students with complex needs;
- agreeing and clearly communicating revised protocols for planning for students with complex needs and
- ensuring that protocols for how to cater for students with complex needs explicitly address the rights of the target students and the rights of their peers.

RECOMMENDATION 20
That leaders of the Schools of Special Needs: Behaviour and Engagement, Medical and Mental Health and Alternative Learning Settings, work with senior Health Department officials to examine co-operative arrangements for the placement and treatment of students whose behaviour and mental health issues cannot be safely managed within a school.

RECOMMENDATION 21
That there is a planned transition so that, in most cases, funding for students with special needs is tied to functional behavioural assessments rather than medical diagnoses.

RECOMMENDATION 22
That a small group of principals in collaboration with Workforce personnel be convened to revise the recruitment process so that:

- principals retain authority over the decision to fill a position, final approval of the wording of the advertisement, composition of the short list, if any, and final selection of the successful applicant and
- a dedicated regionally or centrally based HR expert is responsible for the administration of these steps and ensuring they are compliant with relevant standards.

RECOMMENDATION 23
That the Leadership Institute build senior and middle leader capability to conduct effective and efficient consultation and meetings.

RECOMMENDATION 24
That the Department sponsor a small number of pilot programs to explore and evaluate alternative models of schooling where there is local support for such provision.

Appendix: Scope and Sequence Document English P-6

ENGLISH – Scope and sequence P–6

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
LANGUAGE							
Language variation and change							
Language variation and change How English varies according to context and purpose, including cultural and historical context	Understand that English is one of many languages spoken in Australia and that different languages may be spoken by family, classmates and community	Understand that people use different systems of communication to cater to different needs and purposes and that many people may use sign systems to communicate with others	Understand that spoken, visual and written forms of language are different modes of communication with different features and their use varies according to the audience, purpose, context and cultural background	Understand that languages have different written and visual communication systems, different oral traditions and different ways of constructing meaning	Understand that Standard Australian English is one of many social dialects used in Australia, and that while it originated in England it has been influenced by many other languages	Understand that the pronunciation, spelling and meanings of words have histories and change over time	Understand that different social and geographical dialects or accents are used in Australia in addition to Standard Australian English
Language for interaction							
Language for interaction How language used for different formal and informal social interactions is influenced by the purpose and audience	Explore how language is used differently at home and school depending on the relationships between people	Understand that language is used in combination with other means of communication, for example facial expressions and gestures to interact with others Understand that there are different ways of asking for information, making offers and giving commands	Understand that language varies when people take on different roles in social and classroom interactions and how the use of key interpersonal language resources varies depending on context	Understand that successful cooperation with others depends on shared use of social conventions, including turn-taking patterns, and forms of address that vary according to the degree of formality in social situations	Understand that social interactions influence the way people engage with ideas and respond to others for example when exploring and clarifying the ideas of others, summarising their own views and reporting them to a larger group	Understand that patterns of language interaction vary across social contexts and types of texts and that they help to signal social roles and relationships	Understand that strategies for interaction become more complex and demanding as levels of formality and social distance increase

ENGLISH – Scope and sequence P–6

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Evaluative language How language is used to express opinions and make evaluative judgments about people, places, things and texts	Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes	Explore different ways of expressing emotions, including verbal, visual, body language and facial expressions	Identify language that can be used for appreciating texts and the qualities of people and things	Examine how evaluative language can be varied to be more or less forceful	Understand differences between the language of opinion and feeling and the language of factual reporting or recording	Understand how to move beyond making bare assertions and take account of differing perspectives and points of view	Understand the uses of objective and subjective language and bias
Text structure and organisation							
Purpose audience and structures of different types of texts How texts serve different purposes and how the structures of types of texts vary according to the text purpose	Understand that texts can take many forms, can be very short (for example an exit sign) or quite long (for example an information book or a film) and that stories and informative texts have different purposes	Understand that the purposes texts serve shape their structure in predictable ways	Understand that different types of texts have identifiable text structures and language features that help the text serve its purpose	Understand how different types of texts vary in use of language choices, depending on their purpose and context (for example, tense and types of sentences)	Understand how texts vary in complexity and technicality depending on the approach to the topic, the purpose and the intended audience	Understand how texts vary in purpose, structure and topic as well as the degree of formality	Understand how authors often innovate on text structures and play with language features to achieve particular aesthetic, humorous and persuasive purposes and effects
Text cohesion How texts work as cohesive wholes through language features that link parts of the text together, such as paragraphs, connectives, nouns and associated pronouns	Understand that some language in written texts is unlike everyday spoken language	Understand patterns of repetition and contrast in simple texts	Understand how texts are made cohesive through language features, including word associations, synonyms, and antonyms	Understand that paragraphs are a key organisational feature of written texts	Understand how texts are made cohesive through the use of linking devices including pronoun reference and text connectives	Understand that the starting point of a sentence gives prominence to the message in the text and allows for prediction of how the text will unfold	Understand that cohesive links can be made in texts by omitting or replacing words
Punctuation How punctuation works to perform different functions in a text.	Understand that punctuation is a feature of written text different from letters; recognise how capital letters are used for names, and that capital letters and full stops signal the beginning and end of sentences	Recognise that different types of punctuation, including full stops, question marks and exclamation marks, signal sentences that make statements, ask questions, express emotion or give commands	Recognise that capital letters signal proper nouns and commas are used to separate items in lists	Know that word contractions are a feature of informal language and that apostrophes of contraction are used to signal missing letters	Recognise how quotation marks are used in texts to signal dialogue, titles and quoted (direct) speech	Understand how the grammatical category of possessives is signalled through apostrophes and how to use apostrophes with common and proper nouns	Understand the use of commas to separate clauses

ENGLISH – Scope and sequence P–6

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Concepts of print and screen Different conventions that apply to how text is presented on a page or screen	Understand concepts about print and screen, including how books, film and simple digital texts work, and know some features of print, for example directionality	Understand concepts about print and screen, including how different types of texts are organised using page numbering, tables of content, headings and titles, navigation buttons, bars and links	Know some features of text organisation including page and screen layouts, alphabetical order, and different types of diagrams, for example timelines	Identify the features of online texts that enhance navigation	Identify features of online texts that enhance readability including text, navigation, links, graphics and layout	Investigate how the organisation of texts into chapters, headings, subheadings, home pages and sub pages for online texts and according to chronology or topic can be used to predict content and assist navigation	This sequence ends at Year 5
Expressing and developing ideas							
Sentences and clause-level grammar What a clause is and how simple, compound and complex sentences are constructed through one clause (simple) or by combining clauses using different types of conjunctions (compound and complex)	Recognise that sentences are key units for expressing ideas	Identify the parts of a simple sentence that represent 'What is happening?', 'What state is being described?', 'Who or what is involved?' and the surrounding circumstances	Understand that simple connections can be made between ideas by using a compound sentence with two or more clauses usually linked by a coordinating conjunction	Understand that a clause is a unit of grammar usually containing a subject and a verb and that these need to be in agreement	Understand that the meaning of sentences can be enriched through the use of noun groups/ phrases and verb groups/phrases and prepositional phrases Investigate how quoted (direct) and reported (indirect) speech work in different types of text	Understand the difference between main and subordinate clauses and that a complex sentence involves at least one subordinate clause	Investigate how complex sentences can be used in a variety of ways to elaborate, extend and explain ideas
Word-level grammar Different classes of words used in English (nouns, verbs, etc), the functions they perform in sentences and when they are combined in particular recognisable groups such as phrases and noun groups	Recognise that texts are made up of words and groups of words that make meaning	Explore differences in words that represent people, places and things (nouns, including pronouns), happenings and states (verbs), qualities (adjectives) and details such as when, where and how (adverbs)	Understand that nouns represent people, places, concrete objects and abstract concepts; that there are three types of nouns: common, proper and pronouns; and that noun groups/ phrases can be expanded using articles and adjectives	Understand that verbs represent different processes, for example; doing, thinking, saying, and relating and that these processes are anchored in time through tense	Understand how adverb groups/ phrases and prepositional phrases work in different ways to provide circumstantial details about an activity	Understand how noun groups/phrases and adjective groups/ phrases can be expanded in a variety of ways to provide a fuller description of the person, place, thing or idea	Understand how ideas can be expanded and sharpened through careful choice of verbs, elaborated tenses and a range of adverb groups/phrases

ENGLISH – Scope and sequence P–6

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Visual language How images work in texts to communicate meanings, especially in conjunction with other elements such as print and sound	Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts	Compare different kinds of images in narrative and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning	Identify visual representations of characters' actions, reactions, speech and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add to or contradict or multiply the meaning of accompanying words	Identify the effect on audiences of techniques, for example shot size, vertical camera angle and layout in picture books, advertisements and film segments	Explore the effect of choices when framing an image, placement of elements in the image, and salience on composition of still and moving images in a range of types of texts	Explain sequences of images in print texts and compare these to the ways hyperlinked digital texts are organised, explaining their effect on viewers' interpretations	Identify and explain how analytical images like figures, tables, diagrams, maps and graphs contribute to our understanding of verbal information in factual and persuasive texts
Vocabulary Meanings of words, including everyday and specialist meanings, and how words take their meanings from the context of the text	Understand the use of vocabulary in familiar contexts related to everyday experiences, personal interests and topics taught at school	Understand the use of vocabulary in everyday contexts as well as a growing number of school contexts, including appropriate use of formal and informal terms of address in different contexts	Understand the use of vocabulary about familiar and new topics and experiment with and begin to make conscious choices of vocabulary to suit audience and purpose	Learn extended and technical vocabulary and ways of expressing opinion including modal verbs and adverbs	Incorporate new vocabulary from a range of sources into students' own texts including vocabulary encountered in research	Understand the use of vocabulary to express greater precision of meaning, and know that words can have different meanings in different contexts	Investigate how vocabulary choices, including evaluative language can express shades of meaning, feeling and opinion
Phonics and word knowledge							
Phonological and phonemic awareness of the ability to identify the discrete sounds in speech (phonemes), and to reproduce and manipulate them orally	Recognise and generate rhyming words, alliteration patterns, syllables and sounds (phonemes) in spoken words Segment sentences into individual words and orally blend and segment onset and rime in single syllable spoken words, and isolate, blend and manipulate phonemes in single syllable words	Segment consonant blends or clusters into separate phonemes at the beginnings and ends of one syllable words Manipulate phonemes in spoken words by addition, deletion and substitution of initial, medial and final phonemes to generate new words	Orally manipulate more complex sounds in spoken words through knowledge of blending and segmenting sounds, phoneme deletion and substitution in combination with use of letters in reading and writing	From Year 3 onwards, knowledge about phonological and phonemic awareness continues to be applied when making connections between the sounds (phonemes) in spoken words and the letters (graphemes) in written words			

ENGLISH – Scope and sequence P–6

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Alphabet and phonic knowledge The relationship between sounds and letters (graphemes) and how these are combined when reading and writing	Recognise and name all upper and lower case letters (graphemes) and know the most common sound that each letter represents Write consonant- vowel-consonant (CVC) words by representing some sounds with the appropriate letters, and blend sounds associated with letters when reading CVC words	Use short vowels, common long vowels, consonant blends when writing, and blend these to read one-syllable words Understand that a letter can represent more than one sound and that a syllable must contain a vowel sound	Use most letter-sound matches including vowel digraphs, less common long vowel patterns, letter clusters and silent letters when reading and writing words of one or more syllable Understand that a sound can be represented by various letter combinations	Understand how to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships, syllables, and blending and segmenting to fluently read and write multisyllabic words with more complex letter patterns	Understand how to use phonic knowledge to read and write multisyllabic words with more complex letter combinations, including a variety of vowel sounds and known prefixes and suffixes	Understand how to use phonic knowledge to read and write less familiar words that share common letter patterns but have different pronunciations	Understand how to use phonic knowledge and accumulated understandings about blending, letter- sound relationships, common and uncommon letter patterns and phonic generalisations to read and write increasingly complex words
Spelling Knowledge about how sounds (phonemes) of words are represented by letters or letter patterns, knowledge of meaning units within words (morphemes) and word origins	Understand how to use knowledge of letters and sounds including onset and rime to spell words Know how to read and write some high-frequency words and other familiar words Understand that words are units of meaning and can be made of more than one meaningful part	Understand how to spell one and two syllable words with common letter patterns Use visual memory to read and write high-frequency words Recognise and know how to use simple grammatical morphemes to create word families	Understand how to use knowledge of digraphs, long vowels, blends and silent letters to spell one and two syllable words including some compound words Use knowledge of letter patterns and morphemes to read and write high- frequency words and words whose spelling is not predictable from their sounds Build morphemic word families using knowledge of prefixes and suffixes	Understand how to use letter-sound relationships and less common letter patterns to spell words Recognise and know how to write most high frequency words including some homophones Know how to use common prefixes and suffixes, and generalisations for adding a suffix to a base word	Understand how to use knowledge of letter patterns including double letters, spelling generalisations, morphemic word families, common prefixes and suffixes and word origins to spell more complex words Read and write a large core of high frequency words including homophones and know how to use context to identify correct spelling	Understand how to use knowledge of known words, base words, prefixes and suffixes, word origins, letter patterns and spelling generalisations to spell new words Explore less common plurals, and understand how a suffix changes the meaning or grammatical form of a word	Understand how to use knowledge of known words, word origins including some Latin and Greek roots, base words, prefixes, suffixes, letter patterns and spelling generalisations to spell new words including technical words

ENGLISH – Scope and sequence P–6

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
LITERATURE							
Literature and context							
How texts reflect the context of culture and situation in which they are created	Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences	Discuss how authors create characters using language and images	Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created	Discuss texts in which characters, events and settings are portrayed in different ways, and speculate on the authors' reasons	Make connections between the ways different authors may represent similar storylines, ideas and relationships	Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts	Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts
Responding to literature							
Personal responses to the ideas, characters and viewpoints in texts An individual response to the ideas, characters and viewpoints in literary texts, including relating texts to their own experiences	Respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators	Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences	Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts	Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others	Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view	Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage, and reflecting on the viewpoints of others	Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots
Expressing preferences and evaluating texts Expressing personal preference for different texts and types of texts, and identifying the features of texts that influence personal preference	Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts	Express preferences for specific texts and authors and listen to the opinions of others	Identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences	Develop criteria for establishing personal preferences for literature	Use metalanguage to describe the effects of ideas, text structures and language features of literary texts	Use metalanguage to describe the effects of ideas, text structures and language features on particular audiences	Identify and explain how choices in language, for example modality, emphasis, repetition and metaphor, influence personal response to different texts

ENGLISH – Scope and sequence P–6

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Examining literature							
Features of literary texts The key features of literary texts and how they work to construct a literary work, such as plot, setting, characterisation, mood and theme	Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text Recognise some different types of literary texts and identify some characteristic features of literary texts, for example beginnings and endings of traditional texts and rhyme in poetry	Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts	Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways	Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative	Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension	Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses	Identify, describe, and discuss similarities and differences between texts, including those by the same author or illustrator, and evaluate characteristics that define an author's individual style
Language devices in literary texts, including figurative language Language devices that authors use and how these creative meanings and effects in literary texts, especially devices in poetry	Replicate the rhythms and sound patterns in stories, rhymes, songs and poems from a range of cultures	Listen to, recite and perform poems, chants, rhymes and songs, imitating and inventing sound patterns including alliteration and rhyme	Identify, reproduce and experiment with rhythmic, sound and word patterns in poems, chants, rhymes and songs	Discuss the nature and effects of some language devices used to enhance meaning and shape the reader's reaction, including rhythm and onomatopoeia in poetry and prose	Understand, interpret and experiment with a range of devices and deliberate word play in poetry and other literary texts, for example nonsense words, spoonerisms, neologisms and puns	Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, in narratives, shape poetry, songs, anthems and odes	Identify the relationship between words, sounds, imagery and language patterns in narratives and poetry such as ballads, limericks and free verse
Creating literature							
Creating literary texts Creating their own literary texts based on ideas, features and structures of texts experienced	Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images	Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication	Create events and characters using different media that develop key events and characters from literary texts	Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, for example perspective, distance and angle	Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining	Create literary texts using realistic and fantasy settings and characters that draw on the worlds represented in texts students have experienced	Create literary texts that adapt or combine aspects of texts students have experienced in innovative ways

ENGLISH – Scope and sequence 7–10

	Pre-primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Experimentation and adaptation Creating a variety of texts, including multimodal texts, adapting ideas and devices from literary texts	Innovate on familiar texts through play	Innovate on familiar texts by using similar characters, repetitive patterns or vocabulary	Innovate on familiar texts by experimenting with character, setting or plot	Create texts that adapt language features and patterns encountered in literary texts, for example characterisation, rhyme, rhythm, mood, music, sound effects and dialogue	Create literary texts by developing storylines, characters and settings	Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors	Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, for example, using imagery, sentence variation, metaphor and word choice