

# YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT EVALUATION

---

**DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION –  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

FINAL REPORT

**REPORT PERIOD**

22 JUNE 2022

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was completed with the assistance of Jessica Ellis, Connie Hassouros and Kim Terry from the South Australian Department for Education.

We would also like to thank the many key stakeholders from the governance board, including former Chief Executive of the Department for Education, Rick Persse, the South Australian Primary Principals' Association, the South Australian Secondary Principals' Association, the Australian Education Union, the Year 7 to High School Stakeholder Reference Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning, former members of the Year 7 to High School Team, Department for Education staff and South Australian high schools, R-12, B-12, Area and primary schools. We thank them for their time and insights and trust that their views are adequately represented in this report.

### **ARTD consultancy team**

Rebecca Wilkinson

Liana Downey

Jane Ford

Marita Merlene

Lia Oliver

Keely Mitchell

Mitchell Rice-Brading

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AED	Aboriginal Education Directorate
AES	Aboriginal Education Strategy
AEU	Australian Education Union
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
ED	Education Director
SAPPA	South Australian Primary Principals' Association
SASPA	South Australian Secondary Principals' Association

## CONTENTS

Executive summary .....	i
Project Overview.....	i
Key Findings .....	i
Enablers of Success .....	ii
Areas for Improvement.....	iv
Next Steps .....	v
1. Project and evaluation overview .....	1
1.1 The Year 7 to High School Transition .....	1
1.2 Evaluation Questions .....	2
2. Methods.....	3
2.1 Planning .....	3
2.2 Desktop review .....	3
2.3 Consultation with governance groups .....	3
2.4 School focus groups and interviews.....	4
2.5 School survey.....	5
2.6 Family and carers survey.....	6
3. Project governance.....	7
3.1 Did the Project deliver on time and on budget?.....	7
3.2 Was there effective oversight of the Project?.....	10
3.3 Elements to replicate .....	11
3.4 Opportunities for improvement.....	13
3.5 Was risk effectively identified and managed? .....	14
4. Service delivery approach.....	20
4.1 Did the Project's service model support schools? .....	20
4.2 Did schools get what they needed from the Department?.....	23
5. Deep dive 1: Students with Additional Learning Needs.....	31
5.1 The Project's approach to supporting the students with additional learning needs.....	32
6. Deep dive 2: Workforce Readiness .....	39
6.1 How effectively was workforce readiness delivered?.....	39
6.2 Lessons learnt from the delivery of workforce readiness strategies.....	43
7. Deep dive 3: Learning spaces.....	45
7.1 How effectively were learning spaces delivered?.....	45
7.2 Lessons learnt from the delivery of learning spaces.....	46
Appendix 1 Key evaluation questions and method/ data sources.....	49
Appendix 2 Program logic.....	51
Appendix 3 Risk and management .....	52
Appendix 4 Data collection instruments.....	54



A4.1	Discussion guides.....	54
A4.2	School survey.....	58
A4.3	Family and carers survey.....	67
Appendix 5	Additional survey data.....	70
A5.1	School survey.....	70
A5.2	Family and carers survey.....	87

## TABLES AND FIGURES

### TABLES

Table 1.	Approach for engaging governance groups.....	4
Table 2.	Key governance and risk management groups .....	18
Table 3.	The effect of the Year 7 to high school transition on high school's approach to teaching students in middle school years.....	42
Table 4.	Key evaluation questions and methods/ data sources .....	49
Table 5.	Specific risk management strategies and adopted throughout the project 52	
Table 6.	Are you currently working in a... ..	70
Table 7.	Survey respondents' role.....	70
Table 8.	High school role in 2021 .....	71
Table 9.	Location of current school.....	71
Table 10.	Enrolments of high schools and primary schools .....	72
Table 11.	High school's perspective of the support and involvement from the department for education .....	75
Table 12.	High schools survey respondents' involvement in aspects of transition planning .....	75
Table 13.	High schools issues or concerns raised with the Year 7 to High School Project Team .....	76
Table 14.	The extent to which high schools' concerns regarding each area were resolved.....	76
Table 15.	High schools participation in professional learning.....	78
Table 16.	High school's rating of professional learning .....	78
Table 17.	High school's perspective on the project's effect (so far) on your school's approach to teaching students in middle school years.....	79
Table 18.	High school's satisfaction with the outcome of the YEAR 7 to high school transition.....	79
Table 19.	Primary school satisfaction with the support provided to your school by the department for education.....	80

Table 20.	Primary schools' perspective on support and involvement from the department for education .....	81
Table 21.	Primary schools issues or concerns raised to Year 7 to High School Project Team	81
Table 22.	The extent to which primary schools' concerns regarding each area were resolved .....	82
Table 23.	Primary school's satisfaction with the outcome of the year 7 to high school transition.....	83
Table 24.	Coding framework - Please share your views on: The top 1 or 2 things the Department for Education should continue doing if planning any future system reform? .....	84
Table 25.	Coding Framework – Finally please share your views on: The top 1 or 2 things the Department for Education should change if planning any future system reform? .....	85
Table 26.	'My Year 7 child...' .....	87
Table 27.	Families satisfaction with the level of support received to prepare for Year 7	87
Table 28.	Does your Year 7 child have a disability or additional learning needs?.....	88
Table 29.	families perspective on the right amount of support provided in the lead up to year 7? .....	89
Table 30.	In your opinion, what positive activities did your school do to help prepare your child move into high school? .....	90
Table 31.	How could your school improve the transition of students from primary school to high school? .....	91

## FIGURES

Figure 1.	Satisfaction with the outcome of the Year 7 to High School Transition .....	8
Figure 2.	High school satisfaction with the support received from the Year 7 to High School Project Team .....	21
Figure 3.	Primary school satisfaction with the support received from the Year 7 to High School Project Team .....	22
Figure 4.	Support and involvement from Department.....	23
Figure 5.	Primary school and high school perspectives on families being well-informed about the transition.....	25

Figure 6.	Families' perspective on the Year 7 to high school transition.....	26
Figure 7.	High schools' perspective on double cohort .....	26
Figure 8.	High school perspective on school readiness.....	28
Figure 9.	High school and primary schools' perspective on support for students at risk of disengagement.....	28
Figure 10.	High schools' perspective on workforce readiness.....	40
Figure 11.	High schools' perspective on learning spaces.....	46
Figure 12.	High schools' perspective on school and family readiness .....	73
Figure 13.	High school perspective on the transition .....	74
Figure 14.	High school satisfaction with the support you received from the year 7 to high school project team .....	77
Figure 15.	Primary schools perspective on the year 7 transition.....	80
Figure 16.	Primary schools satisfaction with the support received from the year 7 to high school project team .....	83
Figure 17.	Families perspective on year 7 to high school transition.....	88

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The South Australian Department for Education (the department) engaged ARTD Consultants to conduct an evaluation of the Year 7 to High School Project (the Project) - a significant system-wide reform delivered in 2022 after 4 years of planning. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify and understand lessons from the Year 7 to High School Project to inform the design and delivery of any future system-wide changes.

The evaluation, conducted between January and June 2022, aims to answer questions about project governance, including oversight and risk management — specifically to understand if the Project was delivered successfully, on time and within budget. It also answers questions about the service delivery approach, to understand whether schools got what they needed to support the move of students from Year 7 to high school. The evaluation involved deep dives examining the effectiveness of delivery in 3 areas: appropriate learning spaces; a workforce ready for the change; and support for the transition of students with additional learning needs and students at risk.

The evaluation approach was designed in collaboration with the department and included analysis of existing data as well as new data gathered from a range of stakeholder groups. Sources included Project reports, data and meeting minutes; focus groups and interviews with the Year 7 to High School Governance Board, Year 7 to High School Stakeholder Reference Group, Project working groups, and a selection of schools in diverse circumstances; and online surveys distributed to all primary, secondary, B-12, R- 2 and Area government schools, as well as families and carers of students commencing Year 7 in 2022.

### KEY FINDINGS

In 2022, roughly 28,000 Year 7 and 8 students moved into high school, with almost all schools having new learning spaces completed, teachers on site and transition plans in place by the start of the school year. Our evaluation finds that the majority of stakeholders consider the system-wide change a success, including 88% of participating school representatives who report being satisfied or very satisfied with the transition outcome. This is in spite of some building works being incomplete due to unforeseen circumstances and some schools experiencing staff shortages.

Stakeholders consistently reported that schools had successfully adapted to welcome younger students and the double cohort of incoming students, and that most Year 7s seemed to be dealing well with the move to high school. They pointed to high-level support for the Project, strong governance procedures, collaboration, a problem-solving approach, and a focus on co-design with schools and stakeholders as enabling the delivery of system-wide reform despite many challenges.

We note, however, that it is too early to assess educational and workforce outcomes and so was out of scope for this evaluation.

## ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

The evaluation identified key enablers supporting the delivery of the reform and the successful move of Year 7 to high school. Many of these enablers were common across key evaluation questions.

### **Public accountability, prioritisation and a drop-dead deadline**

The public political commitment to the success of the Project, with a very explicit deadline, created a sense of urgency and buy-in from internal divisions within the department. Members of the Governance Board expressed strong ownership and shared accountability of the Project, driven by the Minister and the then Chief Executive of the department who chaired the Governance Board, which was made up of Executive members. This structure helped signal to the rest of the department that the Project was a clear priority. Additionally, the small size of the Governance Board in the final year of the project enabled quick decision making and discussions, while being broad enough for strong coverage of internal divisions.

### **A fit for purpose project team**

A dedicated project team was recruited explicitly for the Project and was small and agile with strong project management and problem-solving skills. The team was focused on finding solutions to emerging problems through consultation with those affected and driving collaboration across the department. The project team had visibility over all decisions, and members that were contributing to the Project from other divisions in the department maintained dual reporting lines, reporting to the team as well as their line managers.

### **Budget flexibility**

The Project's funding of \$28 million enabled the team to solve problems as they arose. Funding flexibility underpinned the team's ability to be agile, make decisions and resolve issues quickly.

### **Regular routines and structure**

The Governance Board met fortnightly in the early years of the project, and then monthly in the later year. Meetings included a clear structured agenda, including presentations from the project team and discussions by the Governance Board of milestones and risk tracking. The project team explicitly gave everyone working on the reform a big picture understanding of how their work contributed to the overall Project and which other parts were relying on them, providing impetus and ownership by different areas in the department.

### **Bringing stakeholders into the tent early on**

Early on the project team engaged with a range of stakeholders (e.g. the union, schools and principal peak bodies) through the Stakeholder Reference Group, webinars, roadshows, surveys and school visits. This engagement, especially the Stakeholder Reference Group, facilitated genuine co-design of parts of the Project, ideas testing and early identification of risks and concerns experienced by schools and families.

### **Effective planning and piloting**

Extensive planning enabled the Project to meet its milestones and help identify and mitigate risks. The pilot program across three schools, and the separate planning phase identified a broad range of potential issues which were systematically tackled prior to the state-wide roll out. The governance structure, resourcing and visibility of the Project was maintained post the pilot program, which supported effective implementation.

### **Ongoing monitoring and risk management**

The team implemented a range of continuous monitoring systems including the School and Family Readiness Roundtable (the Roundtable) which was centred on school-level implementation risks. Members represented different divisions across the department and collectively identified, triaged and problem-solved risks. This structure also helped implement systematic change.

### **Schools' willingness to implement change**

Schools' willingness to go above and beyond in implementing a seamless and strong transition process was key in the success of the Project. High schools and primary schools worked hard to forge strong relationships. Many high schools recruited teachers for extra internal professional development and curriculum planning days and engaged with primary schools for their high school teachers to sit in on lessons.

### **Early access to student transition data to facilitate planning**

Schools were given much earlier access than usual to student enrolment data held by central office, to support planning for the double cohort. Schools said this was invaluable in their planning and they hoped it could be continued.

### **Schools intensified efforts to communicate with families**

Schools invested significant time in communicating with families and were supported by the project team. The intention was to give families the opportunity to air any concerns about the transition and become comfortable with the move. Schools scheduled additional information nights and transition days, with many ensuring the incoming Year 7 and 8s had their own dedicated sessions. Some schools surveyed parents to gather feedback.

### **The staggered return of students to schools (due to COVID-19)**

Due to increasing COVID-19 case numbers in South Australia, the department implemented a staggered start to the 2022 school year. This was highly beneficial for schools, with a small number noting that their learning spaces would not have been ready earlier due to the impacts of the pandemic. Although a result of COVID-19, schools reported that a staggered start would be worth continuing going forward.

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

### **Including the student, family, kids at risk and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice**

The student and family voice was less integrated in the planning stage compared to other stakeholder groups. Future reforms would benefit from more opportunities to engage students and families in co-design. In addition, a number of stakeholders in schools and the department felt that more could have been done in the early planning stages to engage with families of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including translation of information and increasing accessibility of communications to address any technology or literacy barriers. The Project uncovered limitations in existing transition supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students and undertook research projects to inform targeted transition support. Even so, the Aboriginal education specialists reported that the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were not clearly voiced and that this contributed to a lack of targeted middle school pedagogy.

### **Managing leadership exits**

Concerns were raised by some department stakeholders that key leaders from the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) attended less frequently towards the end of 2021 and that this conveyed declining interest in the Project. Additionally, some school staff, and also SAPPA and SASPA, felt that early 2022 was too soon to disband the Governance Board and project team. They pointed out that remaining staffing and infrastructure gaps may remain unresolved without the sense of urgency and leadership of the Governance Board. Areas for improvement would be discussion of the rationale behind the exit of executives from the SRG, and additional planning time before disbanding the project team, to identify and mitigate issues that may arise at a later point in time.

### **Re-designing infrastructure processes**

The existing decision-making structures and systems proved problematic for the scale and pace of builds required. This included planning and budget submission processes and also reporting. Challenges around the lack of urgency around planning led to unnecessary delays and last-minute rushes that impacted schools. Excessive administrative work was involved in budget submission processes and reporting. One suggestion to emerge was the idea of a separate school infrastructure team and associated processes that might have better reflected the needs of the department.

### **Implementing a risk appetite framework**

Overall, risk management was successfully handled throughout the Project. Nevertheless, we heard differing perspectives on whether the right amount of time had been spent on planning, risk management and stakeholder engagement, relative to implementation, which suggests a need for a more explicit conversation on risk tolerance. One tool that can make this easier is a risk appetite statement for the whole department, with specific discussion for large-scale projects.



In addition, there are opportunities for process improvements including training in the use of risk management tools for other parts of the department to ensure consistency and the efficient use of people's time.

### **Improving data systems to enable more accurate forecasting, planning and funding**

Consistent and reliable data about student enrolments, projected demand and learning spaces was not readily available from the outset. The Project uncovered that the data management systems did not support consistent data inputs (particularly around projected enrolments, Special Options placements and school building use) and did not enable demand forecasting. This led to key challenges in managing capacity constraints of 'high demand' schools. Central data on learning spaces were inaccurate as schools had not always reported changes to capital works plans or the reconfiguring of building use to the department. Inaccurate data led to the late identification of the need for more learning spaces for Special Options classes. The Project highlighted the need for greater central oversight and data-based decision-making, and data collection processes were changed as a result. In addition, some issues were mitigated by the department introducing new data management systems and having an increased focus on data-driven decision making. Through the Forecasting Unit in the System Performance Division the department now has a robust enrolment demand methodology developed and a single source of truth on forecasted enrolments and school capacity.

### **Addressing staff shortages**

A significant nation-wide teacher shortage has reduced the ability to access relief teachers. This has made it difficult for schools to release new middle school teachers for professional development, staff induction days and data entry for the double cohort of students. This was particularly challenging in country areas and in hard-to-staff schools. An additional recruitment challenge for country schools was the concurrent recruitment period for all schools, which ordinarily takes place first for country schools. This is an ongoing challenge for the department to address.

## **NEXT STEPS**

While not the focus of this evaluation, the ultimate test of effort to transition students from Year 7 to high school will be in the long-term impacts on students' learning. These are early days, but there are positive indications of the impact of the transition on teaching, with 6 in 10 high school survey participants reporting a positive impact on their teaching of students in the middle school years.

We recommend monitoring of both educational and wellbeing impacts on students over time. This will inform further development of transition strategies at a system level, articulation of what good transition looks like, and an understanding of the benefits and limitations of different high school support structures for this younger cohort.

## 1. PROJECT AND EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The Year 7 to High School Project (the Project) has been a significant system-wide reform, coordinating activities across the South Australian Department for Education (the department) and in schools, as well as input from a range of stakeholders.

The department engaged ARTD to evaluate the Project, particularly examining the barriers and enablers in implementation. The evaluation considers the approach to governance, risk management, support for schools and management of strategic issues such as workforce readiness, learning spaces and support for students with additional learning needs.

Lessons from this evaluation will be used to inform the design and delivery of any future system-wide changes.

This document is the Final Evaluation Report.

### 1.1 THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION

In 2022, the Year 7 student cohort moved from primary school into high school in South Australia, bringing the state education system in line with other states and the Catholic school system which made the change in 2019. This systemic change to the education system was the culmination of 4 years of planning and implementation, led by a purpose-built project team within the department. The Project fulfilled an election commitment of the then new Marshall Liberal government in 2018 to bring Year 7 into high school. The rationale – though controversial in some quarters – was that it would better equip the South Australian education system to teach the Australian Curriculum which is designed around Year 7 in high school with specialist teachers and facilities. A dedicated *Year 7 to High School Project* was established in 2018 to scope the transition, plan it, drive implementation and manage risks. This had high level oversight from the Chief Executive and a Governance Board which met at least monthly to monitor progress and make decisions.

The Project facilitated an unprecedented double cohort of 28,000 students moving into Years 7 and 8 in public high schools. The project also occurred when COVID-19 was rapidly spreading throughout South Australia. This caused delays to the start of the 2022 school year for all students except for Preschool, Reception, and Years 7, 8, and 12, requiring schools to juggle learning at home and face-to-face learning. The Project involved: significant building works to accommodate the volume of students in appropriate learning spaces; managing enrolment processes for double the number of new high school students; movement of primary school teachers to high schools; large scale professional learning; and a new middle school pedagogy appropriate for younger Year 7 students. It also involved transitioning a double cohort of students with additional learning needs with appropriate supports and Special Options classes. Despite the challenges and the intermittent political controversy around the change, the double cohort moved to high school without major incident or public concern.

This evaluation considers the effectiveness of the Project as an approach to managing system-wide change, particularly enablers, what went well, what could have been done better and what can be learned for future system reform. It seeks to address the evaluation questions below.

## 1.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation questions fall under 3 key areas.

1. Project governance
  - Did the Project deliver what it said it would, on time and within budget?
  - Was there effective oversight of the Project?
  - Was risk effectively identified and managed?
2. Service delivery approach
  - Did schools get what they needed from the department to support the move of Year 7 into high school?
  - Did the Project's service model support schools?
3. Deep dive into learning spaces, workforce readiness and transition of students at risk
  - How effectively did the department deliver these elements?
  - What can we learn from how they were delivered?

## 2. METHODS

ARTD used the following data sources:

- a planning workshop with the project team
- a desktop review of program documentation, meeting minutes, reporting and data
- consultation with representatives from the Project governance groups
- focus groups and interviews with eight schools
- online survey for school feedback, completed by 175 participants from 67 schools
- online survey for family and carers completed by 171 participants.

### 2.1 PLANNING

Following an inception meeting, we convened a longer planning workshop with key members of the project team. This included preparation of a high-level program logic to support our understanding of the Project, based on the project team's more detailed version.

### 2.2 DESKTOP REVIEW

ARTD reviewed Governance Board minutes from 2018-2022, milestone reports from 2021, the PwC Project Assurance review report and media articles relevant to the Project planning stage, as well as workforce data. The purpose of this review was to:

- Inform our understanding of the Project.
- Inform our design of interview and workshop discussion guides.
- Understand how effectively the Project was managed, and provide evidence related to Project governance:
  - Did the Project deliver what it said it would, on time and within budget?
  - Was there effective oversight of the Project?
  - Was risk effectively identified and managed?

### 2.3 CONSULTATION WITH GOVERNANCE GROUPS

The project team worked with us to identify relevant groups and individuals for us to work with on planning purposes, for data collection and/or evaluation purposes. More specifically, these discussions were to:

- Explore the evaluation questions related to governance.
- Discuss the intended focus and objectives of the workstream and the approach taken to meet objectives.
- Seek feedback on questions related to how effectively the department delivered learning spaces, workforce readiness and the transition of students at risk, and what can be learned from how these elements were delivered.
- Guide our approach to engaging with appropriate school representatives for the 3 deep dives and identified other areas that are important to highlight.

Consultation has been a mix of online focus groups and individual interviews with members of the working groups and committees. Table 1 below outlines the departmental committee or group and our approach to consultation.

**TABLE 1. APPROACH FOR ENGAGING GOVERNANCE GROUPS**

Departmental committee/ group	Approach
Year 7 to High School Governance Board	Focus group with full board and subsequent individual interviews with 4 members
The School and Family Readiness Roundtable	1-hour focus group
	Interview with senior representative (30-minute interview)
Year 7 to High School project team	1-hour focus group
Stakeholder Reference Group	1-hour focus group
	Individual 30-minute deep-dive interviews with senior representatives (n=2)
Other divisions	Senior representatives (n=2) 30-minute interview
Deep dive governance workshops	Kids at risk (disability) 1-hour focus group and 30-minute interview
	Kids at risk (Aboriginal) 1-hour focus group
	Kids at Risk (General) regional transition focus group
	Senior representative (n=1) 30-minute interview
	Workforce 1-hour focus group
	Learning spaces 1-hour focus group

## 2.4 SCHOOL FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

ARTD conducted targeted interviews and focus groups with 7, out of the 10 schools invited to participate. ARTD provided the department with a list of school contexts and experiences in preparing for the transition that would be beneficial to explore in more depth. The project team then identified specific schools to represent these contexts. Collectively these included schools:

- with high numbers of:
  - students with disability
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
  - students at risk of disengagement
- that experienced workforce issues (including a loss of primary school teachers)
- in country areas
- with capacity limitations
- that received additional support from the project team.

## 2.5 SCHOOL SURVEY

The 10-minute survey sought to gather schools' perspectives on the effectiveness of the service delivery approach and on the delivery of specific elements of learning spaces, workforce readiness and the transition of students at risk.

ARTD generated a survey link that the department distributed to school representatives through the internal newsletter (LinkED) to school leaders, with an action to cascade to all teaching staff involved in preparing for the year 7 to High School transition.

Participants had the option to identify their school. This enabled us to determine (roughly) how many schools are represented in the survey, as some chose the option to not identify their school. In some instances, there were multiple respondents per school. Participants also answered questions about school characteristics.

### 2.5.1 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The information below provides key demographic information about the survey participants for the Year 7 to High School Transition survey. There were 175 survey respondents representing 67 primary and high schools in South Australia<sup>1</sup>. Below are some key characteristics of survey participants that are outlined in more detail in Appendix 5.

- Over half (51%) were from high schools and over a third were from primary schools (36%). A small percentage (7%) were from R-12 schools/B-12 schools and area schools (2%)
- Most frequently survey participants' roles were secondary leadership/ leadership group (33%), Principal (17%) or a Year 7 or middle school teacher (16%).
- Respondents who were currently working in high schools were most frequently secondary leadership/ leadership group (42%), Year 7 or middle school teacher (26%) and principal (10%). Respondents that were currently working in a primary school were also frequently teachers in other year groups (27%), School Services Officer (10%) or administration support (10%).
- Those respondents who were currently working in a high school in 2022 were also most likely to have been working in a high school (50%) or a primary school (39%) in 2021.
- More than half of respondents (64%) currently worked in a high school or primary school that was in a metropolitan area. The breakdown of metropolitan and country areas was similar pattern amongst high school and primary school participants.
- Participants represented schools of varying size (50 to less to 1,001 to 1,500). Most worked in schools where enrolments were 1,001 to 1,500 (27%), 251 to 500 (24%) or 501 to 1,000 (27%).

See Appendix 5 for all figures and tables for the school survey.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note, nominating your school was an optional survey question so not all respondents provided those details.

## 2.6 FAMILY AND CARERS SURVEY

The purpose of this online survey was to gather feedback on families and carers' experience of the transition. The survey included questions about overall satisfaction with the transition as well as teachers, students and schools being well prepared. Open ended questions were also included on aspects that worked well and aspects that could have been done better.

There were tailored questions for families of students who remained in primary school as part of regional transitional arrangements and students who are in a R-12 school or area school.

ARTD provided a link for distribution by the project team to families of Year 7 students via email, and 172 families and carers participated in the survey.

There were 172 individual responses to the survey. It is possible that multiple members of the same family answered the survey. Of these, 148 (87%) had a child who started in high school in 2022, 18 (11%) had a child starting in an R-12/ B-12 school or area school, 3 (2%) had a child who remained in an eligible primary school and 2 (1%) preferred not to say, see Table 26 in Appendix 5.

See Appendix 5 for all figures and tables for the Family and Carers survey.

### 3. PROJECT GOVERNANCE

This chapter answers the key evaluation questions related to project governance, including whether the Project delivered its intended objectives on time and on budget, whether there was effective oversight and whether risks were identified and managed effectively. It also identifies which elements of governance were enablers of project success and worth replicating for future projects, and where opportunities exist for improvement in the future.

#### Key takeaways

- The key Project objective was met on Day 1 Term 1 2022
- The Project was broadly delivered within the allocated budget
- The governance approach used for the Project was highly effective in enabling the Project to achieve a smooth transition of students on time and on budget
- Elements to replicate include having strong accountability, prioritisation, a hard deadline, the right resourcing, regular routines and structure, and bringing in stakeholders from the start
- Opportunities for improvement include a stronger student, family and Indigenous voice, managing communication to stakeholders about the dissolution of the Project team and movements of senior executives on the Stakeholder Reference Group, as well as the governance approach to infrastructure and capital works submissions.

## 3.1 DID THE PROJECT DELIVER ON TIME AND ON BUDGET?

### 3.1.1 KEY PROJECT DELIVERABLES

#### **The key Project objective was met on Day 1 Term 1 2022**

The primary objective of the Project was to move the cohort of Year 7 students into high school at the start of the 2022 school year, concurrently with the new cohort of Year 8 students. Key supporting objectives were to ensure students had appropriate learning spaces, appropriate curriculum material, and extra supports for students at risk.

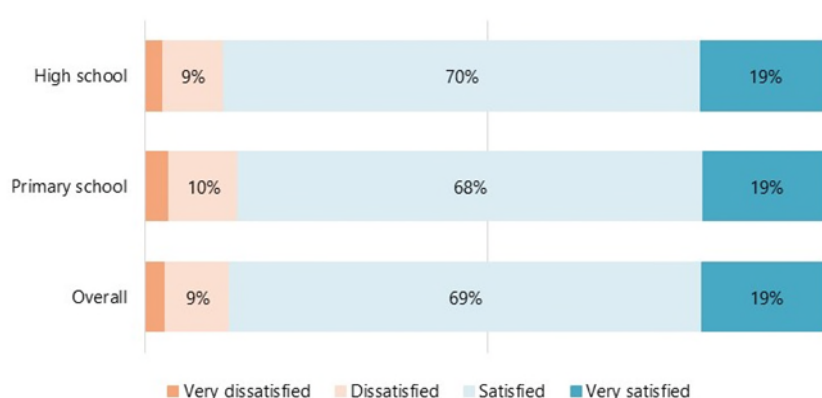
At the start of the 2022 school year, high schools across South Australia welcomed their new cohorts of Year 7 and Year 8 students on time. It was an achievement that many stakeholders, including department staff, professional associations and schools, did not believe was possible within the timeframe, given the magnitude of the Project. It involved building works on an unprecedented scale, undertaking detailed enrolment planning, substantial systemic change to ensure schools could accommodate the double cohort of new students, large scale recruitment and professional learning efforts, new pedagogy and curriculum approaches, and a new approach to staffing including transitioning staff from primary school roles to high school positions.



Against this backdrop, the department engaged with all 509 schools across South Australia and supported approximately 28,000 Year 7 and Year 8 students to move into public high schools at a time when COVID-19 was spreading rapidly throughout the state.

Overall, it was a very successful effort. As shown in 0, the majority of school survey respondents (88%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the outcome of the Year 7 to high school transition, (and sentiment was consistent for high school and primary school representatives). In addition, most families were satisfied with the level of support they received to prepare for Year 7 (38% somewhat satisfied and 38% very satisfied).

**FIGURE 1. SATISFACTION WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION**



*Source. Year 7 to High School Transition school survey. Note. Percentages less than 5% are not shown. A total of 138 respondents answered this survey question with 79 from High school and 59 from primary school. This question was asked of all survey respondents*

There were, however, some elements outstanding at the time of transition. This included 59 school positions unfilled (24 at the time of writing) and one school that activated its contingency plan due to unfinished building of learning spaces. In addition, three of the schools we interviewed explained that building continued around them during the first weeks of term (including landscaping and fit-outs), and that they knew of other schools in the same circumstances.

The Project was delivered within the \$28 million budget allocated across four years. It included:

- \$13 million in professional learning investment
- \$10 million to implement the project over the 4 years, including the costs to conduct the pilot project
- \$3 million in double cohort transition grants
- \$2.85 million in establishment grants to support schools to set up new classrooms.

The Project also led to increased per capita funding from the Commonwealth Government and to schools.

### 3.1.2 OTHER DELIVERABLES

Beyond timing and budgetary considerations, the project team identified a number of target deliverables across four areas:

- Ensuring there were adequate and appropriate **learning spaces** at each school - including classes for those students requiring additional support.
- Ensuring **schools and families were ready** for the transition, and that they experienced continuity of learning; families felt well informed and prepared to connect with their new high schools; and all students experienced appropriate rites of passage to mark their transitions.
- Ensuring that **their workforce was ready** – including schools having appropriate curriculum material and the confidence to deliver it.
- A focus on capacity planning to ensure both the Year 7 and 8 cohorts (**the double cohort**) experiencing school for the first time had the support they needed to get to school on day one and feel supported and connected once they got there.

The Project was structured around these focus areas, with a workstream for each, and then an underlying workstream on **system readiness** which captured delivering communications to all stakeholders and addressing finance requirements for the Project.

#### School and family readiness deliverables

Two thirds (66%) of high school representatives who completed the survey agreed that their school was prepared for the transition, and a further 30% somewhat agreed. Similarly, 69% agreed that staff had access to appropriate curriculum and materials to prepare for teaching Year 7, and none disagreed. Half (50%) agreed that their staff had access to the right tools to understand Year 7 students' unique needs and learning styles, while 11% somewhat disagreed (see Figure 12 in Appendix 5).

We heard in interviews that some schools used release funding to develop a '*middle school*' culture and pedagogy during 2021. Some recruited specialist middle school teachers, and also provided guidance to other staff teaching and managing Year 7s to ensure a consistent approach. However, some stakeholders were sceptical about whether all schools would be able to embed and sustain the new pedagogy (also see Chapter 4)

#### Workforce readiness deliverables

The department recruited 752 ongoing secondary teaching positions for the start of 2022, leaving 59 'hard to fill' positions unfilled, however a separate 'Country Regions Campaign' was successful in bringing this number down to 24<sup>2</sup> (also see Chapter 6).

#### Learning spaces deliverables

The Project delivered appropriate learning spaces on time for all but 1 of the 66 schools and in this case a contingency plan was implemented. However, work continued on fit - outs and

---

<sup>2</sup> We note that challenges arising from COVID during 2022 meant that 75 positions were unfilled as at April 2022.

landscaping at the start of 2022 which some noted was disruptive. (Also see Chapter 7). Additional work on additional Special Options learning spaces was commissioned mid-way through 2021 and this is due to be completed mid-2022.

### **Double cohort deliverables**

The double cohort commenced successfully in 2022, following extensive capacity planning and provision of extra support for students at risk.

## **3.2 WAS THERE EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT OF THE PROJECT?**

### **The governance approach was highly effective in enabling the Project to achieve a smooth transition of year 7 to high school students on time and on budget.**

The Project was managed by a dedicated Year 7 to High School project team and overseen by a Governance Board chaired by the Chief Executive. The project team established working groups to deliver each project stream, and set KPIs specific to project streams and their intended outcomes. They developed a program logic that mapped out all elements of the reform, their intended outcomes, dependencies, and the accountable governance groups. As noted above, the Project was structured around 4 key workstreams (learning spaces, school and family readiness, double cohorts and workforce outputs) supported by an overarching system readiness stream. The project team developed a program logic depicting this structure, along with KPIs for each workstream, and is provided at Appendix 2.

The primary governance body for the Project was the Governance Board (comprised of the department's Chief Executive and Executive leaders). Day-to-day project implementation was led by the dedicated project team. The School and Family Readiness Roundtable (the Roundtable) and the Stakeholder Reference Group were two other important elements of the governance structure which provided real time-feedback from the system, early flagging of emerging risks and joint problem solving on how to address potential and actual issues. More detailed information about these groups can be found in Table 2 on page 23.

Overall, the elements of governance that supported the successful implementation of the Project (and should be replicated for any future reform efforts) were:

- Prioritisation (including senior leadership and commitment — the Project was driven from the top), clear deadlines and public accountability.
- Fit-for-purpose recruiting for the project team leadership (and a dedicated project team with core team members co-located).
- Regular, structured and disciplined governance meetings.
- Early and genuine engagement with school leaders and stakeholders (see section 3.3 'Bringing people into the tent' on page 17).

Opportunities for improvement included:

- More explicit inclusion of family and student voice in the governance processes (in particular for Indigenous students/families).
- Improved communication with key stakeholders about executive movements on the Stakeholder Reference Group and a staged exit of the Project Team to manage the first few months of implementation, while some minor issues remained.
- Re-thinking the governance approach to infrastructure and submissions (which proved a challenging part of the Project for both the centre and schools).

### 3.3 ELEMENTS TO REPLICATE

#### **The power of public accountability, prioritisation and drop-dead deadlines**

Governance Board members highlighted the value of public political commitment in rallying and unifying the organisation. The strong sense that the deadline was looming (school would start in January 2022, one way or another) created a useful sense of urgency. Interviewees noted that this resulted in more creative thinking, willingness to change, better problem solving and a more 'can-do' attitude. People felt they were in it together. This was explicitly contrasted with other projects where deadlines or deliverables might be considered less strict, and/or the measures of success might be less public, and where the responsibility was less collective. In these situations, interviewees reported there tended to be more resistance and staff were less likely to jointly engage in problem solving. It was clear to all involved that successful implementation was a shared priority.

Furthermore, it was a priority in the true sense of the word, with deliberate choices not to simultaneously reform other major areas of practice, avoiding the confusion and fatigue that has overrun other jurisdictions, and reducing the impact of these efforts.

Crucially, members of the Governance Board expressed a strong sense of ownership and shared accountability for the Project—both as a governance group, and by extension across the department more broadly. Accountability started at the top. The Minister for Education was clearly committed to the Project and the then Chief Executive of the department was Chair of the Governance Board. The size of the team was also manageable - big enough to have broad coverage, but small enough to be able to have discussion and make decisions.

The then Chief Executive articulated (and this was backed up by others' observations) feeling a strong sense of personal responsibility and ownership for the Project's success. While day-to-day decision-making was delegated to the project team, team members reported they knew that the Chair (as well as the responsible Executive Director) and the broader Governance Board would step in to help remove roadblocks, problem-solve, and reinforce the need for action as required. The gravitas that the senior leadership buy-in gave the Project was cited by many as crucial to the Project's success. For example, a member of one of the working groups noted that it enabled collaboration with other directorates in an unprecedented way: *'The 7toHS team was able to help us and encouraged us about what was possible. There was a political imperative. ...If [the Project Team] rang everyone said yes and how high would you like me to jump?'*

### **The right resourcing makes all the difference**

This sense of ownership led to realistic resourcing of the project team, in terms of budget and also seniority and experience levels of team members. This crucial success factor was also aided by the team being in a position to drive their own recruitment (with support from the Governance Board) and bring into the organisation a targeted specific skill set around managing projects of this scale and complexity. This was contrasted in situations where there is sufficient budget allocation to recruit specific skills. This leads to people not having the time to dedicate to driving the project forward and/or not having the skills or experience required.

The resourcing of the supporting governance structures was equally important, including senior experienced leaders from the Department of Premier and Cabinet (the DPC), the Australian Education Union (AEU), and school leaders with recent field experience. These individuals were well-positioned to represent the interests and perspectives of their organisations, and had the requisite expertise and experience to help drive program design and identify and plan for risks.

### **Regular routines and structure support implementation**

The Governance Board met initially fortnightly and later monthly with a clear structured agenda, which involved presentations from the project team and discussion by board members of milestones and risk tracking. There were two phases of the Project — a planning and implementation phase – and the Project team make-up and focus evolved to reflect this.

The inclusion of key executive members delivering on big parts of the program gave them sufficient oversight to facilitate the project team's successful engagement with other areas of the department, which helped them overcome any resistance they might otherwise have experienced.

Stakeholders also noted that the project team explicitly gave everyone involved in delivery a big picture understanding of how their work contributed to the overall Project, and which other parts were relying on them. This oversight facilitated delivery. One senior leader observed *'They did a huge data wall (showing all the parts of the Project) and how they fitted in, after that, things got a lot easier. People understood the urgency and what they were working towards.'*

One Governance Board member noted that there may have been more opportunity for them to play a challenging role, and re-weight the balance of input from the project team/ Governance Board. This did not emerge as a common theme amongst the Governance Board more broadly, who reported feeling confident in the line of sight this process afforded them.

### **Bringing people into the tent**

The Stakeholder Reference Group enabled engagement with key stakeholders (people who could either enable the success of the Project, or act as blockers) right from the outset. Chaired by the Project's executive sponsor and coordinated by the Project team, it included senior representatives of the AEU, Primary and Secondary principal Associations, Area Leaders Association, Public Service Association, Small Schools Association, Preschool

Directors Associations, School Business Association, State School Leaders Association and a pilot school representative.

The engagement of the AEU was particularly important, and meant that their concerns were anticipated, acted on and addressed early in the process, rather than waiting for concerns to emerge. The AEU's representation and connection with teachers across the system meant they had good insights into the breadth and nature of staff needs and requirements as the change was undertaken. This was particularly important when it came to the requirements to adapt and streamline approaches to staffing, given the substantial increase in demand for new recruits. A total of 859 jobs were advertised with some jobs receiving 100 applications per panel. Regular engagement with the AEU meant that while some concerns were raised to the Fair Work Commission, these were quickly resolved.

Powerfully, the Stakeholder Reference Group also included a school leader who had been part of the pilot program group of schools. They were able to share their experience, assuaging some anxiety from others yet to go through the process, and also play a key role in identifying opportunities to strengthen implementation, and contributing to problem-solving to address issues.

Others reported feeling like they added less to the group but got a lot out of it.

The Roundtable played an important role in collating and feeding in a wide array of input and concerns, identifying potential risks that were then fed to the project team to help mitigate against.

## 3.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

### **Including the student, family and Indigenous voice**

One voice that was less explicitly 'at the table' was the family and student voice. Future reform efforts would benefit from creating opportunities to hear from students and family about their experiences, expectations, concerns and to get their input in co-design processes.

Concern was also raised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices were not taken into account early enough in the design process. Future efforts should involve explicit engagement with the South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council, and inclusion of representatives in the Stakeholder Reference Group or equivalent entity.

### **Managing exits**

Concerns were raised that after the start of the 2022 school year, the Governance Board no longer met to discuss the Project and that the Project team was unceremoniously disbanded early in 2022. A number of leaders observed that issues resulting from the transition may take a while to emerge. People also noted that some infrastructure and staffing needs had not been completely met, and that without the sense of urgency and leadership, these may remain gaps.

Towards the end of the Project, key leaders attended the Stakeholder Reference Group less frequently. There was limited communication about the reasons for what some members perceived to be an early exit and a decline in interest. Some members felt confused and disappointed and additional communication about the nature of executive engagement with the SRG would have been well received.

### **Infrastructure considerations**

The Project entailed extensive large scale new school builds and refurbishment, one of the largest such undertakings the public education system has seen. Schools reported that the quality of the new builds and fit outs they received was very high. However, there were issues with the process that created unnecessary work and complexity for the project team and departmental staff.

The existing decision-making structures and systems proved problematic for the scale and pace of builds required. In particular, there were ongoing challenges in terms of creating the same sense of urgency around planning that the rest of the department felt, which led to unnecessary delays and last-minute rushes.

There was strong consensus from the Governance Board that if something of this magnitude were to be undertaken again, a more appropriate governance and project management structure would be a separate 'school infrastructure' organisation dedicated to the project.

The other barrier to efficiency was the existing cut-off which determines what level a separate budget submission is required (all projects over a certain limit require a separate submission). There was no modification of this process in light of the much larger than usual number of projects, which led to a high volume of paperwork and presentations to the Public Works Committee, when perhaps a batching process could have provided sufficient oversight in a more efficient way.

## **3.5 WAS RISK EFFECTIVELY IDENTIFIED AND MANAGED?**

Perhaps the most important indicator of good risk management is the success of the Project, as discussed in Section 3.1.

### **3.5.1 RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

Risks were identified early by the project team and different internal divisions. Identifying risks prior to implementation included using:

- *School engagement* – the team recruited a former head of the South Australian Primary Principals' Association to lead a team of former and current deputies and principals to engage with schools and identify areas of risk at a school-level.
- *Pilot schools* – identified risks prior to the state-wide rollout. During this period the project team engaged intensively with families to gain their feedback, hear concerns and ensure that these were considered in the rollout.

- *PWC study* – identified governance risks at the beginning of the Project and made recommendations such as the core project team centrally documenting the core scope, and critical path. This was implemented throughout the process to allow greater ease of project managing.
- *Students with Disability working group* – undertook a scoping piece that identified potential risks with a double cohort of students with a disability. The key risks were that there were not enough psychologists to do assessments, and data was not being collected consistently between local offices, however these risks were managed (see Section 5.1.2 for detail).
- *Stakeholder Reference Group* – engaging the AEU, associations and other external stakeholders early allowed for co-design and identification and management of risks from the perspective of principals, teachers and schools.
- *The School and Family Readiness Roundtable* – identified school-level risks through direct liaison with schools by Education Directors and project team members. It provided a platform to escalate issues with the right internal divisions.
- *Community engagement* — the project team engaged the community via forums and country roadshows to gauge concerns and manage solutions. Any risks that couldn't be dealt with at a local level were escalated to the Roundtable for assistance.

Overall, most interviewees indicated that they felt this system was highly impactful, allowing issues to be addressed early before they escalated. The absence of negative media coverage was one indication of success in this regard. Engagement mechanisms such as the Stakeholder Reference Group removed potential risks such as union blockage, and they co-designed the workforce strategy to minimise this.

### 3.5.2 HOW EFFECTIVE WAS IT?

The governance structure, including leadership and membership, frequency of meetings, involvement of stakeholders, were elements of excellent risk management practice, and should be emulated in future projects.

Beyond the governance approach, the risk approaches which most enabled the Project's success include: running a pilot program; a separate planning phase (which involved explicit risk identification and mitigation); the use of the Roundtable to collate, aggregate and feedback risks to the project team.

Areas of risk management that could have been strengthened include training in the use of risk management tools for other parts of the department, to ensure consistency and the efficient use of people's time, and the use of a risk appetite framework.

For a more detailed discussion of specific risks and mitigation strategies see Appendix 3.



### 3.5.3 ELEMENTS TO EMULATE

#### **Running a pilot program**

The benefit of running a pilot program which represented a broad array of types of schools cannot be overstated. Doing this sufficiently early in the process enabled the kind of reality check that only implementation can offer. Issues were identified through the pilot program and systematically tackled. The relatively positive experiences of the pilot schools also helped to assuage concerns for schools yet to go through the process and build some positive momentum for the Project.

One challenge that can often emerge with pilot programs is if there is a difference in the level of management attention and resourcing between the pilot programs and the ongoing implementation. The fact that the governance structure, resource and visibility of the Project was maintained beyond the pilot program helped support effective implementation.

#### **Having a separate planning phase**

A common mistake in other Australian and international jurisdictions is rushing to implementation, with inadequate planning, no testing phase, and poor consideration of how project elements need to fit together. This Project was very different. The deliberate investment in an experienced and well-resourced team to plan for a project of this scale and complexity contributed to the ultimate success of the overall transition.

It was clear from the output and documentation that deliberate choices had been made on crucial factors including timing, interdependencies, potential measures of success, resourcing at different phases of the Project, and when responsibility might transition from the project team to a 'business as usual' approach within the department. We saw evidence that these issues had been carefully considered, ensuring many risks were mitigated from the design stage onwards.

#### **Using the Roundtable**

There were nine members of the Roundtable, including individuals from different divisions across the department. They were tasked with collating, aggregating and sharing risks with the project team. Roundtable discussions were centred on risk at the school specific level, focused on schools at risk of not being ready and how to address any issues that might emerge. This helped to implement systematic change such as enrolment data sharing, online recruitment processes, limited psychological testing (for Special Options classes) and truncated One Plans to reduce the burden of the double cohort planning on school staff.

### 3.5.4 AREAS TO STRENGTHEN

#### **Continuous improvement and training in tools and approaches**

Some stakeholders found the reporting requirements associated with the risk process onerous. This was not a consistent finding. In our experience, such variation can emerge when people have different levels of understanding of the requirements, and different experience levels in using such frameworks. There may have been an opportunity to build the level of capacity and confidence in using risk reporting tools and in ensuring that the tools and templates were as clear and simple as possible. Another simple step is to time how long people are spending to complete them — substantial variations may indicate different levels of understanding and capacity, which can be addressed through training programs.

#### **The use of a risk appetite framework**

Some of the questions that emerged in our discussion about risk management hinted at a lack of shared understanding of the department's risk appetite. These included opposing perspectives on whether:

- there had been an appropriate balance of time spent on planning versus implementation
- the needs of small schools had been appropriately anticipated and met
- the right amount of time had been spent on stakeholder engagement.

For each of these areas we heard strong views from different stakeholders that too much or too little time had been spent. It is worth noting that people are more likely to say too much time has been spent on planning, risk management and stakeholder engagement, when implementation has been relatively smooth.

All departments and teams are making these kinds of trade-offs on a regular basis — trying to assess the risk involved and weighing up the effort in mitigating and allocating resources against the potential implications, in the best way possible.

Going forward, one tool that can make this easier is a risk appetite statement for the whole department, with specific discussion for large-scale projects. This would be discussed and agreed to by the Governance Board (or Executive Board) in conjunction with the Minister's office. The process of discussion recognises that choices inevitably need to be made, given that resources are finite. The process of undertaking an explicit discussion in advance about what risks can be tolerated at what level (e.g. there would likely be zero tolerance for risks associated with child safety, but there may be more tolerance for risks for timing overruns, or pushback from the unions) can help streamline decision making both in the short term, as well as the long run.

#### **Ongoing monitoring**

It is also worth noting that there may be further unanticipated issues that arise as the year progresses, so it will be important to continue to anticipate, monitor and respond to any potential risks. Ongoing monitoring was not within the brief of this evaluation.

**TABLE 2. KEY GOVERNANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT GROUPS**

Group	Who	Purpose	Meeting frequency	Governance ability – oversee and manage risks
The Governance Board	The Governance Board were a group of six executives who represented the key divisions that were mostly impacted by the Year 7 to high school transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversee and approve decisions.</li> <li>Escalate matters</li> <li>Ensure appropriate outcomes were achieved to keep the Project on track</li> </ul>	Fortnightly at project outset, then monthly	<p>The governance board was across all major decisions that were made through their routine catch ups.</p> <p>Pulling out an executive lead was effective. There was one team that managed both project design and implementation. They were able to progress and mitigate issues with others when asked by the project team.</p> <p>Stakeholder interviews with the project team, the Roundtable and the Stakeholder Reference Group noted that they provided a good guiding hand. However, it was mentioned that the Governance Board could have had greater transparency when it came to no longer joining the Stakeholder Reference Group.</p>
The project team	A core team who worked solely on the Year 7 to high school transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide oversight of all areas and ensure timelines are being met</li> <li>Inform the governance board on high interest areas</li> <li>Represent the department at the stakeholder reference group</li> <li>Govern the Roundtable</li> <li>Facilitate external stakeholder relationships</li> </ul>	N/A	<p>The project team was the core team who provided oversight of the Project.</p> <p>They were seen as key enablers to the success of the Project (see Section 3). Governance Board interviews highlighted that the team provided strong visibility of the Project - knowing everyone's roles, responsibilities and ensuring timelines were met. They also were reported into by other divisions such as workforce. They were seen to be effective project managers, triaging issues effectively and following up on anything that had not been actioned.</p> <p>The project team also coordinated the SRG including determining the agenda and preparing associated papers. The 7toHS executive project sponsor chaired the SRG.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate internal relationships and work</li> <li>• Triage issues and solve them</li> </ul>		
Stakeholder Reference Group	Unions, associations, pilot school representative, project team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test ideas quickly</li> <li>• Co-design and engage in some aspects of the Project</li> </ul>	Monthly	<p>The Stakeholder Reference Group provided feedback to the department and tested out ideas about the transition. There was also an opportunity to provide feedback from a school's perspective e.g. what would work and what wouldn't work for schools.</p> <p>A genuine partnership was cultivated which meant that the Stakeholder Reference Group played a part in codesigning the workforce strategy.</p> <p>One member commented that it was <i>'the best process I have been involved in terms of transformational change'</i></p>
The School and Family Readiness Roundtable	A group of 9 individuals from different divisions of the department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracked all schools' potential concerns and identified their risk level within 3 categories, green, amber and red</li> <li>• A team manager flagged schools that were struggling and triaged through the Roundtable</li> </ul>	Twice a term (as per terms of reference), with additional meetings scheduled as required.	<p>Interviewees highlighted that the Roundtable actively managed risk by considering schools concerns, documenting them and triaging issues to their appropriate divisions.</p> <p>Governance Board meeting minutes further highlight the Roundtable's active work in identifying at risk schools and how these issues were addressed leading towards 2022.</p>

## 4. SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACH

This chapter answers the key evaluation questions related to service delivery model, including did the schools get what they needed from the department to support the move of Year 7 into high school; and did the Project's service model support schools' families.

### Key takeaways

- The Project service model aimed to provide intensive support to schools
- The majority of schools were satisfied with the support they received
- Nevertheless, many high schools would have preferred more support
- The project team managed communications to schools and stakeholders effectively
- Families were well-informed and schools were willing to go above and beyond to support the transition
- Families reported their school was well-prepared and that children are settling in well
- The Project delivered appropriate curriculum material to support continuity of learning
- The Project provided transition and enrolment data to high schools early
- Schools encountered some teething issues with the new online enrolment system
- The Project expedited processes for students with additional learning needs
- Improvements in data management and analytics were critical in addressing capacity issues and ensuring appropriate learning spaces
- Changes to recruitment processes brought forward timelines and gave schools more information about candidates
- Bulk advertising of positions disadvantaged country schools that were harder to staff

### 4.1 DID THE PROJECT'S SERVICE MODEL SUPPORT SCHOOLS?

#### The Project's service model aimed to provide intensive support to schools

The project team developed a service model intended to provide wrap-around support for schools and case management of any emerging issues. A key feature of this model was having a support team with recent experience working in schools to bridge the gap between the head office system perspective and on-the-ground school practice and culture. The project team included staff who had been in school leadership positions to liaise with schools and the Roundtable regularly checked in with principals. Staff from pilot schools were also given additional time to support schools in their district with planning for the double cohort. Support ceased as the Project came to an end at the start of Term 1, 2022.

The following mechanisms supported schools:

- One face-to-face meeting with an Education Director per term focused on preparing for the move of Year 7 – with schools then classified as green, amber or red in terms of delivery risk.
- Intermittent calls throughout the term from the project team, or more frequently for higher risk schools or those in need of greater support.
- The project team also engaged with schools through association forums and site visits.
- A stakeholder reference group to represent the views of schools.

- A roundtable to triage schools' concerns.
- Ongoing interaction with pilot schools through the Roundtable.

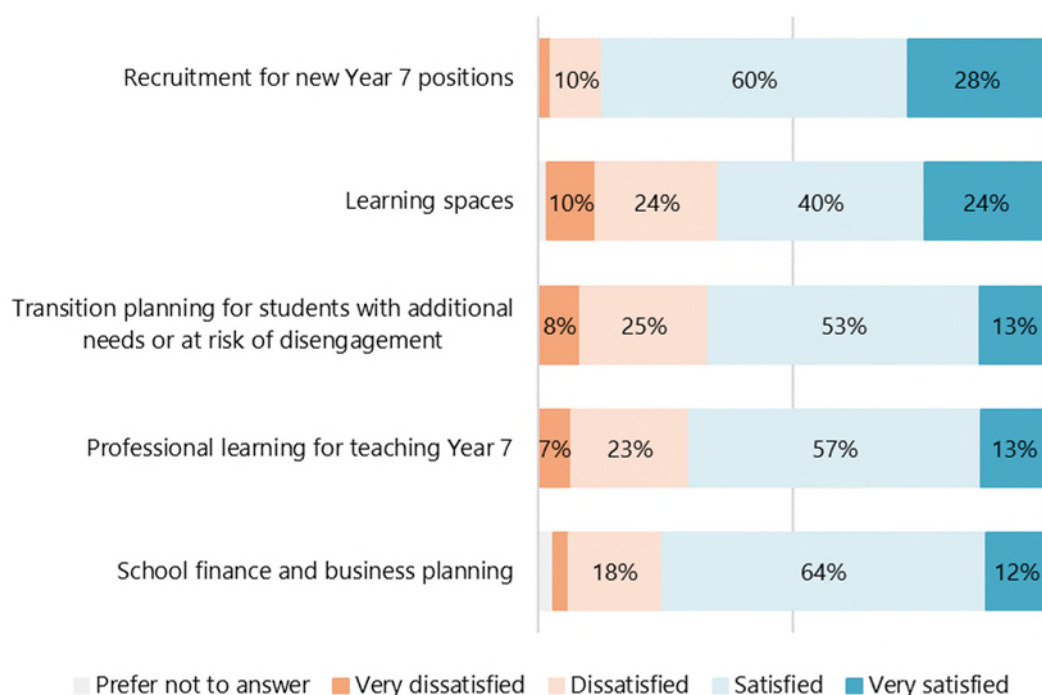
Stakeholders observed that it was particularly helpful to have the project team deal directly with school principals, providing case management and monitoring risks.

### The majority of schools were satisfied with the support they received

Overall, school representatives reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the support they received from the department for the transition and this was true of high schools and primary schools.

Among high school representatives, when asked about the support they received from the project team on different areas, satisfaction levels (satisfied or very satisfied combined) ranged from a high of 88% for 'Recruitment for Year 7 positions' to 64% for 'Learning spaces' (see Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2. HIGH SCHOOL SATISFACTION WITH THE SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT TEAM**

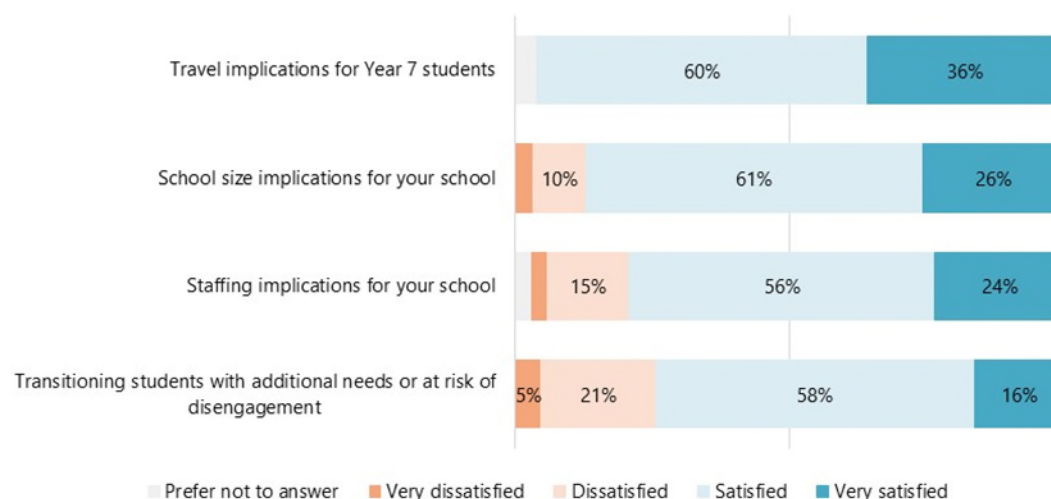


Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey. Note. Percentages less than 5% are not shown. The number of responses for each item ranged from 40 to 62 high school survey respondents for this question. This question was asked to all high school survey respondents.

Satisfaction was even higher amongst primary school representatives who completed the survey. A total of 84% were satisfied or very satisfied with the support provided to their school by the department to prepare for the transition and implications for their school. In addition, satisfaction ranged from 96% ('Travel implications for Year 7 students,' very satisfied

and satisfied combined) to 74% ('Transitioning students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement') (see Figure 3 and also Appendix 5).

**FIGURE 3. PRIMARY SCHOOL SATISFACTION WITH THE SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT TEAM**



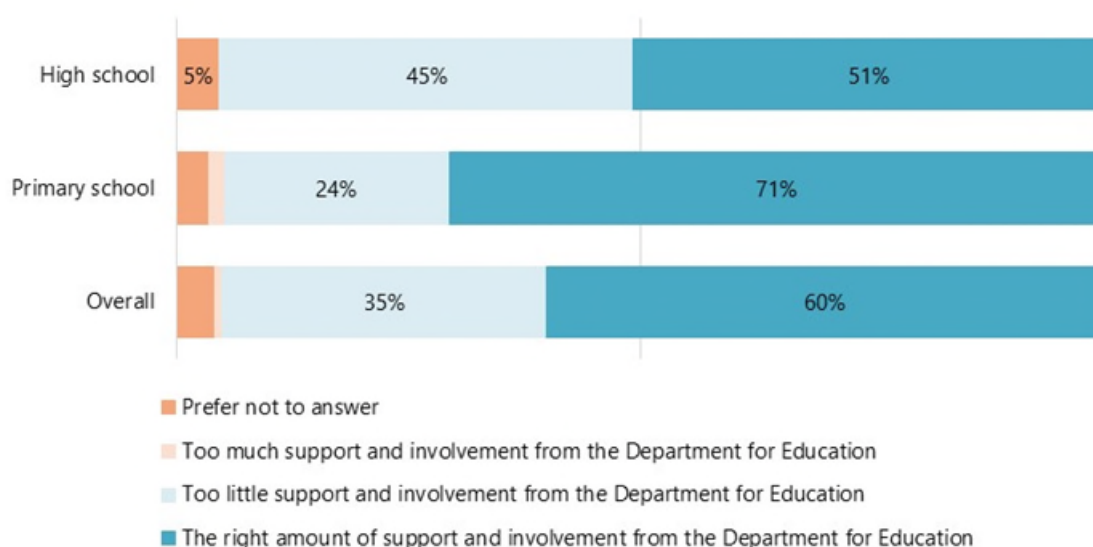
*Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey. Note. Percentages less than 5% are not shown. The number of responses for each item ranged from 25 to 43 primary school survey respondents for this question. This question was asked to all primary school survey respondents.*

In the school survey we asked participants to identify the top things to retain if undertaking another large-scale system reform. Survey participants indicated that they felt supported by the project team, the pilot schools' learnings and engagement, transition programs, the transition data being provided earlier, and transition days being coordinated.

Our interviews with selected schools found that they appreciated the collaborative approach adopted by the department, including the regular contact made by the project team to discuss issues with one school identified as 'at risk'. Some high schools we spoke with singled out the release funding which enabled them to work collaboratively with primary schools and to plan their middle school approach before the start of the school year. Primary schools were pleased that the department established common transition days for secondary schools, thus reducing disruption to primary schools.

### **Nevertheless, many high schools would have preferred more support**

Of the school representatives who completed our survey, 60% reported that they received the right amount of support and engagement from the department. High school representatives were less positive than primary school representatives, with 51% indicating they received the right level of support and 45% indicating they received too little support. In contrast 71% of primary school representatives reported receiving the right amount of support, and 24% reported receiving too little. Only a small proportion of school representatives reported too much support and involvement from the department (See Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4. SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT FROM DEPARTMENT**

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey. Note. Percentages less than 5% are not shown. A total of 123 respondents answered this survey question with 65 from High school and 58 from primary school. This question was asked to all survey respondents.

When asked to identify one or two things to change in a subsequent reform, some school survey participants identified issues related to support, such as: the need to have greater support for schools impacted by the change in their student population; the need for an extra administration staff to help with the enrolment process; departmental support in curriculum planning and providing curriculum planning days for high schools; and extra funding for student facing initiatives, learning spaces, and smaller schools to better support their processes.

Amongst primary school representatives, a small number felt that more consideration was needed of the impacts for their school context, in particular calling out the implications of smaller school leadership classifications. We note this was a minority though, as 85% of primary school representatives agreed or somewhat agreed that the implications for primary schools were appropriately managed at the system level (see Figure 15).

## 4.2 DID SCHOOLS GET WHAT THEY NEEDED FROM THE DEPARTMENT?

The Project focused on supporting schools to deliver the Year 7 to high school transition. This also included how schools were going to support families.

### **The project team managed communications to schools and stakeholders effectively**

The project team communicated with schools through multiple channels including open email, forums, the Stakeholder Reference Group and the Roundtable. Importantly, these channels also provided schools different options for sharing their views.



The project team and working groups managed internal and external stakeholder communications effectively through the working groups and Stakeholder Reference Group. The recruitment of project team members with recent experience working in schools, and engaging directly with schools that needed additional support, helped bridge the potential divide between central office and schools.

**Families were well-informed and schools were willing to go above and beyond to support the transition**

Schools were willing to go above and beyond in implementing a seamless and strong transition process. Schools' engagement with families encompassed two-way communication and an intensive focus on supporting the transition of a double cohort with visits to high school and visits by high school teachers to primary schools. Schools worked to overcome common family concerns about their Year 7 student moving to high school. Schools held information nights, barbecues and other events to encourage a sense of community and family at the new school. This was supported by funding for teacher release time. The Project supported schools to host additional transition days so that the two transitioning cohorts could have their own tailored experiences.

Strong relationships between primary schools and high schools enabled schools to prepare students, families and teachers for the move. Primary schools released teachers to participate in professional development and transition days in 2021 and welcomed high school teachers to observe Year 6 and 7 classes, supported by transition funding from high schools. Many schools hoped for this to continue as part of their transition program but recognised it would be difficult without ongoing teacher release funding.

These efforts were well received by school representatives and families who participated in our surveys. There were high levels of agreement (agree or somewhat agree) that families were well-informed including:

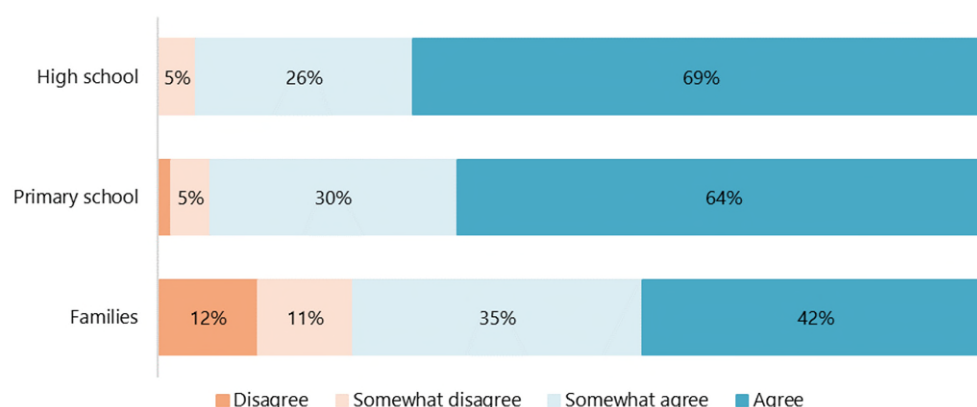
- 94% of primary school representatives
- 95% of high school representative
- 77% of families (see Figure 5).

Feedback from schools via open-ended survey questions highlighted that clear and transparent communication with families and schools, through newsletters and emails, are important for the department to emulate when implementing future system reforms. They also conveyed the importance of consistent transition practices.

*The twice a term updates for parents (i.e. the Parent Update newsletter insert) were good and the school package that was sent out for planning was good and helped answer some questions. [primary school – leadership group]*

*Create consistency across all high schools. Schools approach things very differently. Neither is good or bad but it's difficult to gauge what support is fair and appropriate to request.*

**FIGURE 5. PRIMARY SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILIES BEING WELL-INFORMED ABOUT THE TRANSITION**

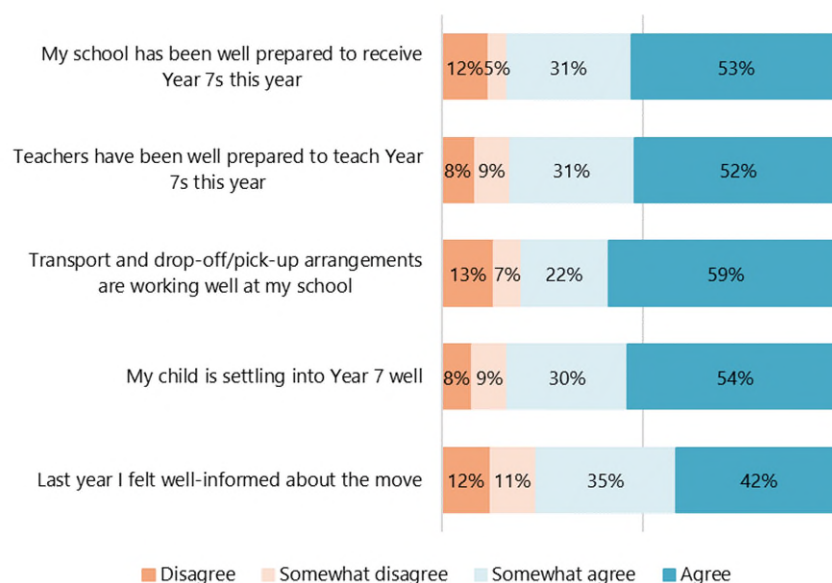


*Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey & Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers. A total of 88 respondents from High schools, 64 from primary schools and 158 families responded to this question. This question was asked to all survey respondents.*

**Most families reported that their school was well-prepared and that their child was settling in well**

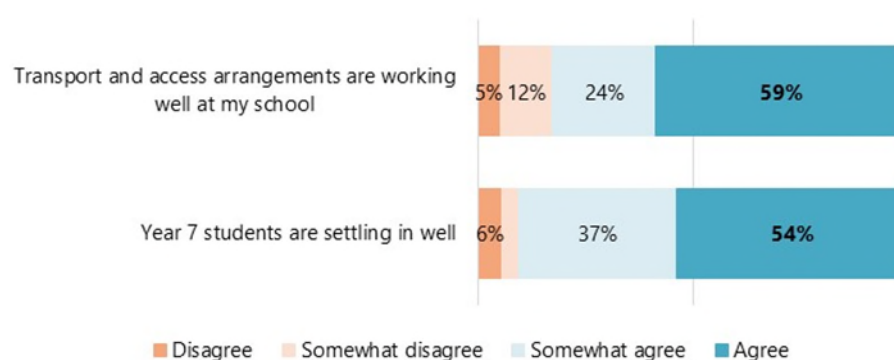
Most families and carers who participated in our survey agreed or somewhat agreed that their school had been well prepared to receive Year 7s and that teachers had been well prepared to teach Year 7s (84% and 83% respectively).

Importantly, 84% of participating families agreed or somewhat agreed that their child was settling into Year 7 well. This result was also consistent with responses from high school representatives, amongst whom 91% agreed or somewhat agreed that Year 7 students are settling in well (see Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6. FAMILIES' PERSPECTIVE ON THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION**

Source. Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers. The number of responses for each item ranged from 148 to 160 families for this question. This question was asked to all families that participated in the survey.

Potential transport and pick-up challenges were a key issue for schools to plan and the project team provided support when a particular issue was identified. Of the families who participated in our survey, 81% agreed or somewhat agreed that these arrangements were working well. A similar proportion of high school representatives also agreed or somewhat agreed (83%) (see Figure 7).

**FIGURE 7. HIGH SCHOOLS' PERSPECTIVE ON DOUBLE COHORT**

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey. A total of 92 survey respondents answered the question about 'transport and access arrangements are working well at my school'. A total of 106 survey respondents answered the question about 'Year 7 students are settling in well'. All high school survey respondents were asked this question.

In open-ended responses, families highlighted some additional effective transition supports including the staggered start, teachers meeting primary school students prior to them going to school, and regular communication.

*The partial grade start to the year was good - only the year 7, 8, 12 were at school, all other grades started the year from home. This took away some of the overwhelm of starting at a bigger school, less bodies.*

*The primary school received visits from the Year 7 Co-ordinator, Transition Day, Year 7s started first day back, information evenings*

*Transition days, the high school kids came to the primary school, we had open days all the regular stuff that would also happen for a move from 7 to 8.*

*Great communication about what was to happen and where they were to go on their first day.*

### **The Project delivered appropriate curriculum material to support continuity of learning**

The Project worked with schools to provide Year 7s with a positive learning experience that met the developmental needs of younger students and equipped them for more in-depth specialist learning. This included implementing a middle school curriculum and culture.

Stakeholders acknowledged a need to combine the engaging project-based pedagogy of primary schools with the specialist knowledge of high schools. Transitioning younger students out of the nurturing primary school environment meant that the high school curriculum and learning spaces needed to be adapted to accommodate a more collaborative 'middle school' learning style.

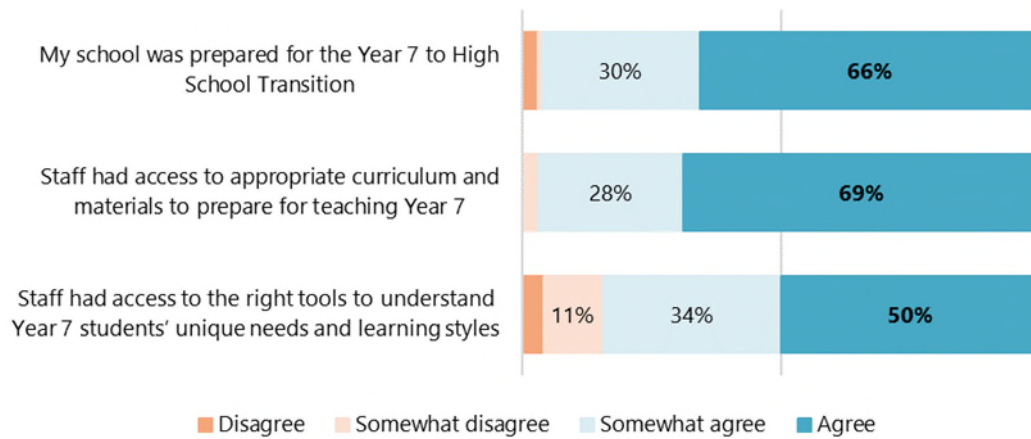
The Roundtable included a curriculum and learning advisor to consult with schools about an appropriate evidence-based pedagogy suited to the younger cohort. The pedagogy specialist finished early on the Roundtable as this aspect of the Project was completed and all concerns had been addressed. The curriculum support was developed from interjurisdictional research and the pilot schools' experiences. Schools also had access to professional development through Orbis about adapting the high school curriculum to suit the developmental needs of Year 7s.

Almost all high school representatives we surveyed agreed that their school had access to appropriate curriculum and materials to prepare for teaching Year 7 (97% agree or somewhat agree), and 84% agreed or strongly agreed that their staff had access to the right tools to understand Year 7 students' unique needs and learning styles (see Figure 8).

Overall, nearly all high school representatives felt that their school was prepared for the transition (96% agree and somewhat agree combined). However, one area for improvement was support for students at risk of disengagement. In this area, 65% of primary school representatives and 83% of high school representatives agreed or somewhat agreed this group had received appropriate additional support (see Figure 8). Meanwhile just over half of the families that participated in the survey that have a Year 7 child with

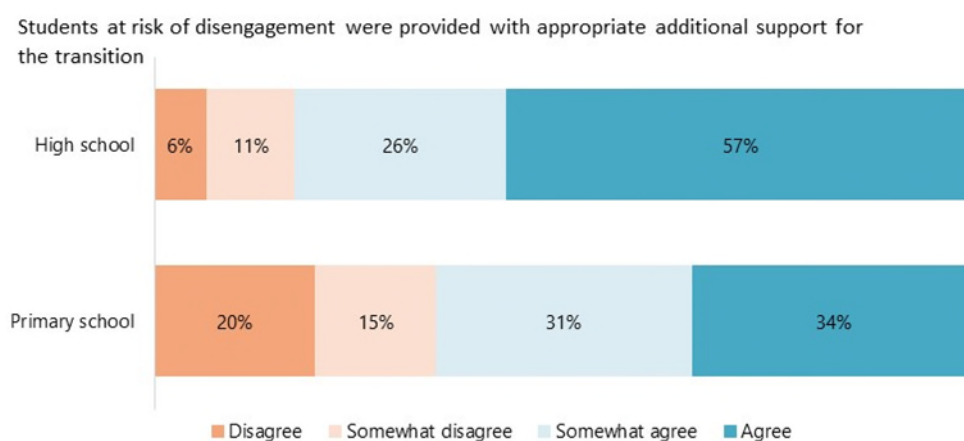
additional learning needs agreed or somewhat agreed that their child received the right amount of support in the lead up to Year 7. Refer to Section 7 for a detailed discussion.

**FIGURE 8. HIGH SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL READINESS**



Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey. A total of 102 survey respondents answered the question about 'My school was prepared for the Year 7 to High School Transition'. A total of 93 survey respondents answered the question about 'Staff had access to appropriate curriculum and materials to prepare for teaching Year 7'. A total of 96 survey respondents answered the question about 'Staff had access to the right tools to understand Year 7 students' unique needs and learning styles'. All high school survey respondents were asked this question.

**FIGURE 9. HIGH SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS' PERSPECTIVE ON SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AT RISK OF DISENGAGEMENT**



Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey. A total of 93 respondents from high schools and 64 from primary schools were asked this survey question. All survey respondents were asked this question.

In responses to an open-ended question there was positive feedback about the online professional learning focused on middle-school students' development, but areas highlighted for improvement included raising awareness of the program, providing multiple

professional development options for different experience levels, and clearer expectations on use.

*The expectations around the use of sample units need to be clear and consistent. All sites should have the exact same level of training and access to training. [High school representative, school leadership group]*

**The Project provided transition and enrolment data to schools early to support effective planning. The new online enrolment system will also be valuable but schools encountered some system teething issues.**

The Project digitised the paper-based transition data shared between primary and secondary schools to enable teachers to access information about potential students before the end of Term 4 and plan for the transition.

The schools interviewed were generally supportive of receiving enrolment and transition data earlier – in Terms 3 and 4 - in comparison to the start of the new school year and Term 4 respectively. They said this helped in connecting with families and understanding students' backgrounds prior to their transition days as well as having better informed classroom arrangements for teachers. However, some schools experienced system issues, in particular primary schools who were responsible for data entry and had poor data collection systems (also leading to data errors), and by schools with high numbers of families with low literacy, English as a second language, and/or with limited access to digital devices.

Problems were identified with the online enrolments process (complicated and inaccessible to some groups) and online transitions process (clunky IT system that added to the workload). Additional mechanisms were needed to support enrolment (e.g. a bilingual School Services Officer calling families directly, a paper enrolment form option with school staff entering the data), as was observed by online survey participants.

*NAPLAN, PAT data was accessible for future students earlier. Digitisation of the transition paperwork was a huge change and made the admin part easier because there is an enormous amount of paper that follows a kid.*

*The online enrolment process was terrible. Huge amounts of time spent following up with parents and primary school. No support, kids put on our roll with no consultation, particularly those with learning needs. Emails direct to parents went to spam folder. This process needs extensive review. [R-12/ B-12 school, Leader]*

*High expectations with enrolment process: birth certificate, shared care representation of both families, detailed contact info for caregivers. [Primary school – Leadership group]*

**The Project expedited processes for students with additional learning needs**

The Project facilitated a shorter psychological assessments process which allowed for input from teachers where the required learning supports were agreed rather than waiting on a clinical psychologist. One Plans were also truncated to minimise the impact of data collection on schools.

**Improvements in data management and analytics were critical in addressing capacity issues and ensuring appropriate learning spaces**

The Project's most pressing issue from the outset was managing capacity, especially in high demand secondary schools. This required controversial changes to out-of-zone enrolments, enrolment ceilings, as well as improved data and forecasting. The Enrolment Capacity and Transition team was created at the end of 2020 to seamlessly join up the process of transition between schools, manage data forecasting, and create a process for parents to register interest in a school and enrol. The unit's work became enmeshed with the infrastructure division to ensure schools had the appropriate learning spaces. This involved bringing together infrastructure, system performance and business intelligence.

One output was a timeline of transition outlining what happens to students in the process and what schools have to do, overlaid with the human resources (HR) timeline and finances timeline so that schools could see what they needed to provide the system and vice versa.

Fortunately, a new, more agile enrolment management system is being introduced. A transition leaders working group is also working towards better coordination between the centre and schools so that decisions are data informed. As a result of the Project, this team is working on improving the process for Special Options places as well as a process for managing changes to the function of school buildings.

**Changes to recruitment processes brought forward timelines and gave schools more information about candidates**

Independent contractors were engaged to build and design an online recruitment system that allowed for schools to filter teachers by their level of experience. The system implemented video recordings to show teachers' personalities and moved recruitment timelines forward.

The video component received a mixed response but many stakeholders highlighted that it provided schools with a greater understanding of teachers' cultural fit. Bringing forward timelines allowed teachers to be placed earlier in some schools, enabling them to engage earlier on planning and professional development.

**However, bulk advertising of positions disadvantaged country schools that were harder to staff**

The recruitment process was more challenging in country than metro areas and in schools that are difficult to staff. Many country schools needed to readvertise positions when teachers they had selected chose city jobs. One school that we spoke to had conducted 100 panels for teaching positions. Also, some teachers struggled with the new process and there were delays in the externally coordinated referee process. See Section 6 below.

## 5. DEEP DIVE 1: STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

This section considers the effectiveness of the Project on transitioning students with additional learning needs to high school, particularly the strategies adopted to support 1) Students at risk of disengagement, 2) Students with disability, and 3) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It identifies enablers and barriers to success and highlights key learnings from the Project.

### Key findings

- The short-term transition support objectives were broadly met
- The Project revealed underlying challenges in transitioning this group to high school and the need for a more standardised approach
- The Project was a catalyst for system improvements, particularly in data management, which will have lasting benefits in supporting students with additional learning needs

### Lessons learnt – enablers

- High-level support for collaboration across divisions and problem-solving support from the project team
- A co-design process and research into the specific transition needs of each of these cohorts
- System re-engineering to streamline psychology assessments, improve continuity of information from PS to HS and One Plans for students with flexible funding models
- Collaborative partnerships between high schools and primary schools, supported by release time for teachers and senior educators (relevant to all students)
- A dedicated transition team in schools to implement evidence-based strategies
- Long lead times for change and repeated opportunities for information/visits for students and families – assisted by a staggered start for Year 7 (and Year 12) students.
- Evidence-based training around transition and learning needs of this group for teachers and School Services Officers
- Early access to enrolment data and student dashboards for schools on enrolment acceptances and declines (relevant to all students)

### Lessons learnt – barriers

- Outdated data/management systems - which made estimating demand for assistance difficult — especially for special options places - requiring a significant injection of funding in 2021. This is now being addressed.
- Lack of evidence about the needs of children at risk and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students transitioning to high school (revealed through two research projects within the Project Team dedicated to finding it)
- Complex, non-intuitive online enrolments process which was particularly difficult for families of vulnerable children, EALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Lack of information translated for EALD families with vulnerable children or children with disability
- Lack of early engagement with Aboriginal Education stakeholders and low expectations about the learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Lack of a middle school pedagogy and resources for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Lack of a 'student voice' in understanding the needs of transitioning students



## 5.1 THE PROJECT'S APPROACH TO SUPPORTING THE STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

### **The Project employed a case management approach across three strategies tailored to student group**

Three different strategies were taken to manage the issues for students 'at risk', students with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families, albeit with some cross over. Broadly the approaches were:

- *Students at risk* — the department provided \$10k to the South Australian Primary Principals' Association (SAPPA) which employed an ex-school leader to develop a transition paper. The project team researched existing tools to support students at risk of disengagement. They also supported a co-design project with SAPPA and the South Australian Secondary Principals' Association (SASPA) to develop tools and communication for schools and families. This involved a forum to discuss insights from the pilot schools, and peer-to-peer information sharing.
- *Students with disability* — funding for a research project conducted by the project team to scope the risks for the move of Year 7 to high school; funding for senior special education specialists to support schools with providing appropriate support for students with disability and vulnerable learners and assessment and allocation of Special Options places; improvements to management systems; case management support from the project team and district offices for schools and administrators struggling with the process.
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students* — Project officers in the Project team worked with the AED to engage the services of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to identify best practice in supporting the transition of ATSI students to high school. This found no benchmarking for this cohort existed, so ACER was engaged to undertake case studies with five purposively selected SA schools to illustrate examples of best practice. The detailed report and transition resources were made available to schools to support the transition of ATSI students.

Within this context, the project team supported schools in managing the double cohort of students with additional learning needs using a case management approach. The Project recognised that the move to high school represents a pressure point for many children, understanding that the primary school model provides more scope for building relationships between child and teacher. High schools have 'more space for struggling kids to fall through the cracks' and therefore require more formal support structures for vulnerable children. Families noted this case management as there was additional meetings for students with greater learning needs, as was remarked by one parent.

*We had one extra meeting to fully cover my child's needs. This gave us an opportunity to ensure there was a good understanding of our son's strengths and areas of concern. This also gave us an opportunity to discuss what issues might trigger behaviours of concern.*

**The Project supported schools to plan for students with additional learning needs through early access to data**

As mentioned earlier, schools gained earlier access to student dashboard data (in Term 3 or 4 of the preceding year rather than at the start of the year) which was particularly helpful in planning for those with additional learning needs. This reflected a decision to make central office enrolment data available to schools earlier to accommodate the double cohort, which some senior school staff said should remain standard practice beyond 2022.

**The Project facilitated collaboration across the department and between schools and provided release time for planning**

Release time helped drive collaboration between primary schools, high schools and different divisions within the department to facilitate support planning. Senior educators in district offices were provided with release time to support schools in planning the move to high school for a large group of children with additional learning needs. With assistance from the Student Support Services team, they helped to gather student information from primary schools and helped high schools with structuring support in mainstream and Special Options classes.

### 5.1.1 THE STRATEGY FOR STUDENTS AT RISK OF DISENGAGEMENT

**The Project identified the need for tools to support students at risk of disengagement**

Research, including mapping and exploration by a Year 7 to High School Senior Policy Officer and consultation with the Stakeholder Reference Group, identified the need for additional tools for schools around this group of students. The department provided \$10K to employ an ex-school leader to interview students and teachers at 18 sites to identify issues and strategies for students at risk in their transition to high school. Support included additional one-off funding for Children in Care, additional behaviour coaches, and resources such as guidance and communication to schools and families and practice-sharing around transition. In addition, the Student Support Services team coordinated research through the Senior Educator teams in district offices about their approach to supporting students with additional learning needs.

**The Project highlighted the need for additional funding to support schools sharing information about transitioning students at risk of disengagement**

Stakeholders in schools, the department and external stakeholders noted the need for ongoing additional funding to facilitate the transfer of information and support continuity of learning for students at risk of disengagement, particularly those in state care. Some also suggested more research is needed to identify the support vulnerable students and families need to successfully engage with high school.

Several schools with significant groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability, and students at risk of disengagement, as well as English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EALD) students established a transition team to liaise with primary schools and families about their students' needs. At one school we spoke to, this

included literacy and numeracy testing to ensure the right mix of classes for each teacher, family forums, as well as additional familiarisation school visits. The transition officer went out to meet the primary school teachers to learn about the needs of students coming to high school. This school also accessed grant funding to release Year 6 and 7 teachers, enabling them to provide a transition checklist as a basis for allocating appropriate resources for intervention programs. The school completed 148 one-hour student screenings and met with 150 of the 400 families of the double cohort — which they reported as a success, given the language, technology and cultural challenges around communicating with families in that region.

### 5.1.2 THE STRATEGY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

#### **The Project successfully managed Special Options placements after inaccurate data led to a shortfall of places and learning spaces**

Planning for Special Options placements proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of the Project due to data failings. Because data was collected inconsistently at the local level, demand for Special Options placements was significantly underestimated. This was exacerbated by people moving from interstate to access South Australia's disability services. However, the Student Services Officers Team, the project team, Infrastructure team and the Roundtable were able to work collaboratively late in 2021 to resolve many placement issues with schools, including commissioning refurbishments of existing buildings and some new buildings to be completed in 2022. Ultimately some did not get placed in a Special Options class because there was either no appropriate placement close to home, their families preferred them to be in the mainstream, or there were eligibility issues. Nonetheless, we heard that the Project was successful in managing the move to high school for Year 7 students with disability. Most Special Options applications were eventually allocated with significant additional funding for new learning spaces completed mid-2022. The Project's greatest success though was stimulating structural systems improvements and ongoing reform.

#### **The Project implemented system reforms to improve data on students with disability**

The project team undertook a scoping project in 2020 to identify risks for students with disability in the move of Year 7 to high school. The project team recognised that the double cohort of students moving to high school would mean hundreds of additional requests for Special Options places, as well as additional support in mainstream classes. The scoping project identified the allocations process for Special Options as the greatest risk, given the lack of real time, robust data on demand for Special Options classes. A standardised data collection template was created, with training provided in its use. Data collected in local Student Support Services offices was consolidated in central office once a month, but there were ongoing problems. The Student Support Services team created milestones that it tracked almost weekly, but even with this system in place, by mid-2021 it was evident that the number of Special Options placements had been significantly underestimated. As one stakeholder explained, there was no *'live spreadsheet until 2022 and the data was characterised by clerical errors, lack of consistency between data collection and reporting'*. As a number of stakeholders told us, the Project created the impetus for greater central oversight and uniformity of data collection processes about students with disability.

*One thing that popped up was that there is no central, accessible data for kids with disability... we've never been able to have state-wide consistency about who gets a place in Special Options. The high profile of the Year 7 to high school work and the acuteness around the timeline, and the double cohort gave us the impetus to shine a spotlight on everyone's work.*

### **High level support for the Project drove collaboration across the department to solve problems**

The project team and the Student Support Services team developed a strategy to work with schools and across departmental divisions to problem-solve support for students with a disability, especially Special Options places. The Project's high profile within the department and the former Chief Executive's imprimatur helped drive collaboration. The team established a centralised data point on MS Teams and limited access to a core group of administrators. Following the forecasting challenges of 2021, data systems for Special Options allocations have become a priority for the newly formed Enrolment Capacity and Transition team and the multidisciplinary Transition Leaders Working Group in the Department.

*This year I could confidently say: bring on another double cohort because we know what is going on and know what is happening because we have a transparent data set where everyone can see everyone else's work.... Only admin people have ability to edit so if something goes wrong, we know it is one of 16 people. All of these things we put in place because of hindsight... and we've empowered team managers to have an oversight of what is going on in Special Options.*

### **The project team streamlined assessment processes to enable schools to cope with the double cohort**

Other systems improvements included a template for data collection from primary schools and the psychological assessments process. Based on the 2020 scoping study, the Student Support Services team sought to streamline the assessments process, recognising that there were insufficient psychologists to complete the assessments. This process enabled special educators to make decisions in consultation with the family, the school and a phone call with the psychologist rather than a formal assessment. This freed up psychologists to focus on cases where the best options for the student were ambiguous. They developed a smaller interim One Plan for schools to reduce the administrative burden of Special Options support.

### **Flexible funding enabled schools to manage the additional work associated with transitioning a double cohort of students with disability**

The Project also provided funding for release time for a group of senior educators from their caseload to enable them to support staff working in disability or as behavioural coaches. This enabled them to see what was required at a site level and at a partnership level with primary schools and preschools. They helped support primary schools with their education plans and funding applications which could be electronically transferred to high school. One school with a large group of students with disability and behavioural issues told us that this district office special educator support was invaluable. This school prepared a separate summary of the One Plan for each student, accessible to all staff at all times to help them understand each student's needs.

### 5.1.3 THE STRATEGY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS

#### **The Project uncovered underlying problems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students moving to high school**

The Aboriginal Education Strategy 2019 to 2029 has been developed by the department, but we heard many schools struggle to implement effective strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In some country areas for example, there are difficulties in spending money for release time for Aboriginal educators to focus on supporting Aboriginal students. Our interviews with representatives from the Aboriginal Education Directorate (AED) suggest that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students would likely have benefitted from being considered as a distinct cohort earlier in the planning process for Year 7 to high school. In particular, an approach that focused on learning (not just wellbeing outcomes) and engaged relevant staff, students, families and communities from that outset would have been helpful. There remains an ongoing opportunity to improve the accessibility and cultural relevance of transition information and approaches, and teaching approaches in the middle school years.

#### **The Project revealed the need for more research on how to improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students moving to high school**

Following the advice of the AED, the Project developed a literature review with the Aboriginal Studies Association and research organisation, Australian Council for Educational Research, which found there was little national research about moving Year 7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into high school. Where there was research, this focused on wellbeing rather than educational outcomes. The Aboriginal Education Directorate (AED) and the project team advocated for a focus on educational outcomes and alignment with the Aboriginal Educational Strategy to ensure continuity of gains in learning from primary school to high school. A discussion paper examined the strategies used in five high schools and the way they had used departmental documents to support learning for Aboriginal students.

#### **The Project managed the double cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but missed an opportunity to listen to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and educators**

The Project provided additional support for transition for Aboriginal students and modified the funding model around Aboriginal students which is usually based on retrospective numbers. It also supported primary schools where they were losing double the number of Aboriginal students and high schools gaining them. However, the strategy to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students began later than the other strategies for students with additional learning needs. Moreover, co-design with schools did not involve the six dedicated Aboriginal schools or those with a high number of Aboriginal enrolments or the South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council (SAAETCC) which is the Department's Aboriginal consultation partner.

Stakeholders said the focus on wellbeing rather than educational outcomes, reflected a lack of cultural understanding, as one stakeholder who was involved in the transition later in the project explained.

*In the original plan, Aboriginal children were not identified. It was disadvantage and diverse background. We don't consider Aboriginal children to be disadvantaged or diverse — they are a group of learners in their own right who have cultural significance and needs, and they need to be respected in their own right and not lumped in with other people.*

### **Attempts to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and staff occurred too late in the process to influence outcomes**

AED conducted forums with parents about concerns in the transition of Year 7 to high school and their best advice about how high schools could support them. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who had experienced the transition into high school were asked about their learnings, pitfalls and messages for younger students and while the content was powerful, the Aboriginal Education Directorate felt it was too late in the process to make a difference to the 2022 experience. In fact, they note that student voices in general were missing from the co-design project.

*The train had already left the station and schools were well and truly into their planning. Information was coming into them too late to do things significantly differently.*

Equally, the Aboriginal workforce was consulted late in the process, at which time there was considerable anxiety about the potential loss of School Services Officer (SSO) positions. Staff were confused about what the move of Year 7 to high school would mean for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

### **The Project highlighted the need to focus on engagement in learning**

The Project highlighted significant systemic problems with the translation of the Aboriginal Education strategy in many schools. We heard that schools often sent Aboriginal education support staff rather than teachers to primary schools to gather information about Aboriginal students moving into Years 7 and 8. This information focused on friendship groups, behaviour issues and wellbeing rather than educational needs and engagement in learning. As one stakeholder noted:

*There are low expectations for Aboriginal learners. The emphasis is on being happy and compliant rather than being engaged in learning... Low expectations mean it is easy to flick off students out of sight and mind and everyone is happy but when you have students in multiple programs that take them outside of the classroom you want to question what is going on.*

### **Some schools used departmental support in the transition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners better than others**

While there were useful programs developed by the department to support Aboriginal students, their application in schools was patchy. The Shooting Stars program had been used successfully in a regional school to connect Year 7 and Year 8 girls before they went to high school. However, elsewhere, capacity limits and the double cohort meant that some Aboriginal students who would normally have the chance to enrol out of area with friends and family through the Enter for Success program, had not been able to do so.

*When P&C (people and culture) were looking at recruiting, at no stage was there a conversation around large middle school cohort of Aboriginal students and what is the pedagogy and teaching skill in this space. That conversation has never occurred.*

### **Staff shortages have limited schools' ability to implement their strategy to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners in the transition to high school**

Some schools that had received large numbers of Aboriginal students were also struggling to manage in the absence of available staff to release Aboriginal educators from other duties, and a lack of teachers trained to manage this cohort. As one principal explained: '[Aboriginal educators] teach 2 out of 5 lines so they have five out of seven periods to do that role. This year I am still getting zero applications after we have advertised. We can't equip the Aboriginal educational time – of all the years,' he said.

### **The Project identified the need for more culturally sensitive approaches to dealing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in high schools**

The project identified the need for more culturally sensitive approaches to dealing with families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students making the move from primary school to a larger and less personal high school environment.

*One thing the Year 7 to High School team picked up really well in the end but it was picked up too late was the understanding there needed to be a cultural shift around high schools' understanding of Aboriginal Year 7s coming in. Not just teachers and pedagogy. It starts with the person the enrolment form might be dropped off to or the front office where they might enquire about the uniform and costs etc.*

Equally, consideration needed to be given to making the enrolment process accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who may have a grandparent supporting them through the process. This points to providing user-friendly, mobile phone-friendly technology and paper-based alternatives.

Some of this cultural deficit may be mitigated by the 2022 rollout of the Culturally Responsive Framework but stakeholders agreed work is needed to address the issues to ensure Aboriginal students' transition to high school is supported in the long term. This will require monitoring to assess Aboriginal engagement in education through NAPLAN results, attendance and continuity of learning. Stakeholders proposed that follow-up interviews should be conducted with Aboriginal students to hear about their experience and assess their level of engagement in learning.



## 6. DEEP DIVE 2: WORKFORCE READINESS

This section considers the effectiveness of the Project on readying the workforce for the transition of students to high school. It identifies enablers and barriers to success and highlights key lessons learnt.

### Key findings

- The Project successfully filled most vacancies including transitioning primary school teachers to high school positions
- Changes to the recruitment process were introduced to help match staff and schools
- Ongoing work is needed to address skills shortages and to resolve impacts of primary school principal reclassifications

### Lessons learnt - enablers

- Extensive engagement with unions, principals' associations and other key stakeholders
- A co-design approach, engagement of educational leaders in the recruitment process
- Insights from pilot schools about the training/culture needs of transitioning teachers
- A small workforce team with the right skills
- Digital recruitment process and emphasis on cultural fit with schools
- Release time for recruitment panels and professional development attendance - although difficult to action in country areas
- Earlier recruitment process which enabled professional learning and induction for staff
- Professional learning to support the new pedagogy, although some sought more targeted training

### Lessons learnt - barriers

- A lack of a source of truth about skills, with people overstating their capabilities and underestimation of teacher retirement plans
- An exacerbated number of vacant positions due to COVID-19
- Difficulty in obtaining relief teachers in some low SES and regional schools to cover the training and recruitment panels
- Lack of focus on Aboriginal education/middle school pedagogy in the training program
- Lack of 'future-proofing'/ targeted training for teachers to work in 'tough schools'
- The loss of a staggered approach to advertising vacancies reduced incentives to join country schools

### 6.1 HOW EFFECTIVELY WAS WORKFORCE READINESS DELIVERED?

#### **The project successfully filled most vacancies including transitioning teachers in surplus primary school positions to high school positions**

Preparing the workforce to accommodate the move of Year 7 to high school was particularly challenging – technically, logistically and physically. It involved recruiting an additional 800 high school teachers and losing or re-deploying 500 primary school teachers. Additional SSOs were also recruited in significant numbers to support students with additional learning needs. The project also involved appropriate training to support a new middle school (year 7 and 8) pedagogy targeted at younger students.

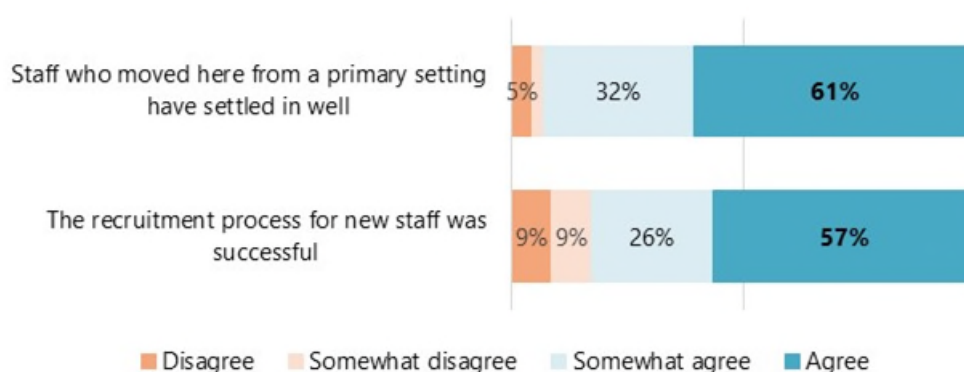


Generally, however, stakeholders perceived workforce readiness to be a success, given that high schools were able to fill most vacancies and the project transitioned surplus primary school teachers without industrial strife and public consternation.

Across multiple recruitment phases, the department filled 859 secondary teaching positions for the 2022 school year. By the end of 2021, this left 59 positions termed 'hard to fill'. A separate (BAU) 'Country regions campaign' was successful in filling 25 of these positions, bringing the number down to 24<sup>3</sup>.

This included 169 teachers who moved from a position in a stand-alone primary school into a high school position. This shift was important to support Year 7 students' learning and transition, and necessary to align with student enrolment numbers. High schools that participated in the survey reported high levels of agreement about workforce readiness (see Figure 10). Over three quarters of high school staff agreed or somewhat agreed that 'Staff who moved here from a primary setting have settled in well' (93%) and 'The recruitment process for new staff was successful' (83%), see Figure 10.

**FIGURE 10. HIGH SCHOOLS' PERSPECTIVE ON WORKFORCE READINESS**



*Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey. A total of 87 survey respondents answered the question about 'Staff who moved here from a primary setting have settled in well'. A total of 81 survey respondents answered the question about 'The recruitment process for new staff was successful'. All high school survey respondents were asked this question.*

### **The Project successfully engaged a wide cross-section of stakeholders to co-design a workforce strategy**

Given the scale and sensitivity of workforce changes, the project team invested heavily in stakeholder communications and strategy co-design to address identified issues. The workforce strategy was a multi-pronged approach developed collaboratively by the department's People and Culture workforce specialists, the project team and members of the Stakeholder Reference Group. Importantly, this included the unions and principals' associations (AEU, PSA, SAPPA and SASPA). The Project also used the Stakeholder Reference

<sup>3</sup> We note that challenges arising from COVID during 2022 meant that 75 positions were unfilled as at April 2022.

Group and Roundtable to test ideas with stakeholders as they were developed. Trust and transparency came out of this process.

### **The Project introduced changes to the recruitment system to better match staff and schools**

The transition involved advertising more than 800 jobs and approximately more than 150 positions had more than 150 applicants. To manage this scale of work, a temporary team was established to support the process when there were 100+ applications. The Roundtable enabled the Project to respond to challenges as they arose — for example, providing additional release time for schools to run their employment panels and providing wrap-around support for schools struggling with building and staffing pressures.

The Project sought to introduce new approaches to teacher recruitment, with the department partnering with an external recruitment agency to manage a high volume of candidates in a short time frame. The Project provided an opportunity to introduce changes to the existing system of placing permanent teachers, which many schools found was not tailored to school or teacher needs. In place, a more open and phased recruitment process was introduced in which primary school and high school teachers were not restricted to their respective sectors. In the first phase, primary school teachers could apply for specific curriculum areas and preferred locations using an online platform and teachers were provided with personal recruitment coaching. The department sought to make secondary jobs attractive to primary school teachers and to support their transition, with extra release time provided in their first couple of terms teaching in the high school system. *'The biggest win was, from my perspective, shaking up the annual placement process — we turned it on its head,'* one stakeholder explained.

The new process provided a selection process rather than an imposed choice for schools. Applicant packs were provided to schools based on geography, and selection considered capability, motivation and potential in addition to basic skills and qualifications. Candidates wrote applications around their capabilities with reference checks and were required to include a video component. The Project also introduced a digital application process with visibility of the role, the number of applicants, and the required level of experience.

Stakeholders told us that the move to include videos as part of the recruitment process was a bold change and a useful learning exercise. As one stakeholder noted: *'The prospect of change can be intimidating, but this process has shown the potential benefits.'* Yet some school leaders and staff said that the video was time consuming and was not fair for teachers who struggled to present themselves this way – especially older staff or country staff.

Stakeholders said they would normally see much more resistance to workforce recruitment reforms, but the process received good feedback from secondary schools and is expected to be brought into primary schools. Many hoped the system-wide innovations would be retained. *'What Year 7 to HS did for us, especially with pressure of COVID, was to enable us to test a completely different way of recruiting which would not have been possible without the system wide imperative,'* said one stakeholder.

### Recruitment timelines were brought forward

Recruitment occurred much earlier than usual. The shortened timeline of declaring and filling vacancies helped many schools, particularly metropolitan, with staffing completed by the start of the year. However, it did not help some country and hard-to-staff schools which had to compete with popular city schools for staff. One school had held 100 panel interviews as many appointed opted for city roles.

### The Project implemented measures to address the skills gaps in high schools but some problems remain

The Project identified that there would be skills gaps in the high school workforce with the double cohort of high school entrants. In 2019, the project began to gather data to provide a system-wide understanding of capability, beginning with gap analysis of skills, which had not been done before. The team established an employment register where teachers could list their capabilities, however, school-based stakeholders told us that this was not a robust source of truth as teachers frequently did not have the experience or ability to teach subjects they had listed as capabilities.

The professional learning introduced by the Project was also considered to be a success. However, many stakeholders noted significant workforce capability gaps remain, particularly in specialist Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and language subjects, as well as behavioural support SSO positions. *'This continues to be a real problem as the register indicates that the system has capabilities it does not have in practice,'* a school leader said. *'The staffing issue remains huge,'* we heard – especially in hard to staff areas. Others said the project had underestimated the retirement plans of primary school teachers, especially in country towns. Country schools struggled to find relief teachers so that their staff could attend training.

We received some feedback about professional learning from 14 school representatives who participated in the survey and had completed professional learning specific to teaching Year 7 in high school. For those who did participate in professional learning, more than three quarters of respondents thought that the professional learning was somewhat effective.

More broadly, however, 60% of high school representatives teaching middle school reported that the transition had a positive effect on their schools' approach to teaching students in middle school years, see Table 3 below.

**TABLE 3. THE EFFECT OF THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION ON HIGH SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO TEACHING STUDENTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS**

	Count	%
No change	22	34%
Large positive effect	20	31%
Small positive effect	19	29%

Large negative effect	2	3%
Small negative effect	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition school survey. All high school survey respondents were asked this question.

### **Measures were implemented to help address negative implications of primary school reclassification on Principal remuneration**

Measures were introduced to manage industrial concerns around school re-classifications and the potential impact on principals' remuneration. As principal classification is based on the size and complexity of their school, principals of schools that lost students were impacted the most. This led to concern from primary schools that as a smaller school, they may struggle to attract high calibre staff. In contrast, high schools were growing and needed to address that workload.

The Project developed a new classification (A9+) for the biggest schools. It also implemented a freeze on school classifications for schools losing students and maintained principals at their former level until 2023. However, as a temporary solution we heard that the impact of the move of Year 7 to high school would continue to impact primary schools and principals for some years to come, as contracts are renegotiated.

## **6.2 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE DELIVERY OF WORKFORCE READINESS STRATEGIES**

### **The earlier recruitment process enabled schools to effectively induct new staff before the start of the school year**

The earlier recruitment process enabled schools to prepare more effectively. High schools told us that this enabled them to provide valuable induction for new staff, building on learnings from the pilot schools about the importance of establishing a middle school culture and pedagogy.

### **Professional training provided useful theoretical training but more targeted training could have been useful**

Professional learning provided to teachers by professional development unit Orbis was considered to be theoretically useful. However, some suggested more training around dealing with younger students in a low SES context would have been useful. For example, one school's leadership group said it had been useful in unpacking the developmental and learning needs of 11 and 12-year-olds, but additional practical training would have been helpful. We also heard that training to support teachers in low SES or schools with challenging student behaviours would have been beneficial. A large high school told us that they had opted out of the external training program as their internal training program was more impactful.

**Release funding through the Project enabled schools to train staff in their middle school pedagogy earlier**

In addition to the formal training, some schools sent teachers out to primary schools in their partnerships to watch middle school classes, based on insights from the pilot schools, which they found valuable. A low SES school which had managed the transition well told us that spending a long time developing a clear vision for teaching and learning and a new middle school pedagogy had been a key enabler of its success. It had also benefited from bringing in new primary school staff who had a new perspective. Similarly, another school which had a large number of students at risk and students with disability said time spent on developing a new middle school culture and philosophy had been enormously beneficial. This had been supported by primary schools (and in some cases with release funding from the high schools) who allowed teachers moving into high school positions to attend training days in 2021. However, some schools – particularly in low SES and regional areas — struggled to obtain teacher relief to enable teachers to attend professional development sessions. *'There were a lot of supports offered but not sure what was do-able. Short of them coming up to take classes so we could do this job, there wasn't much they could do,'* said one team.

**The Project highlighted the need for more training around a middle school pedagogy adapted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners**

Aboriginal educators told us that teacher training and recruitment was inadequate to deal with the larger cohort of Aboriginal middle school students.

*You need to have middle school experts, teachers who are experts in this pedagogy but there's no conversation around what is the pedagogy you need to teach Aboriginal students and does this change when you have large cohorts of Aboriginal students – let alone cultural responsiveness.*

## 7. DEEP DIVE 3: LEARNING SPACES

This section considers the effectiveness of the Project on developing learning spaces for the transition of students to high school and discusses the outcomes of the strategies implemented.

### Key findings

- Learning spaces were delivered just on time for the start of the school year and feedback from schools is largely positive. This was in spite of significant challenges.
- The case-management approach helped schools find solutions where there were delays but many schools found the process stressful
- The Project drove changes in collecting data on enrolments and building use in schools
- The Project drove collaboration across divisions and schools

### Lessons learnt - enablers

- A hard deadline driven by the Chief Executive
- A skilled project team recruited for the purpose to be flexible and responsive
- Appropriate funding and flexible budget
- Continual engagement with stakeholders on risks and issues
- Structures to absorb pressures from schools

### Lessons learnt - barriers

- Inability for the department to drive system changes in other government departments, leading to delays
- Budget applications process was not modified for the volume of work
- Lack of accurate data on enrolment projections and building use

### 7.1 HOW EFFECTIVELY WERE LEARNING SPACES DELIVERED?

#### **Learning spaces were delivered just on time for the start of the school year start and feedback from schools is largely positive**

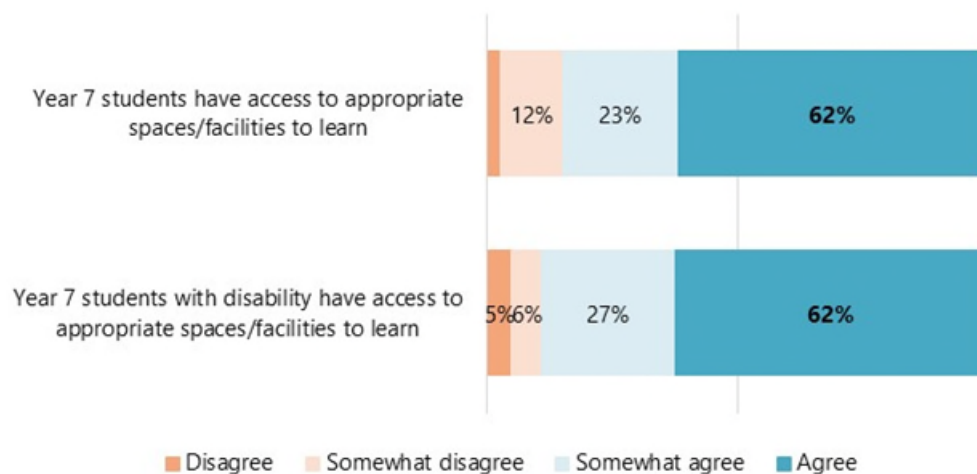
By the start of Term 1 2022, Year 7s had access to appropriate learning spaces. However, this included one school that had to activate its contingency plan, and other schools in which work continued on fit-outs and landscaping. Additional work on Special Options learning spaces was commissioned mid-way through 2021 and this is due to be completed mid-2022.

This was an enormous achievement given the scale of work involved and delays arising from lengthy budget approval processes and COVID-19 impacts on material and labour shortages. Consistent feedback from the project team, Governance Board, learning spaces working group and schools was that this was the most challenging aspect of the Project.

From the perspective of high school staff who completed our survey, over three quarters of high school staff agreed or somewhat agreed that 'Year 7 students have access to appropriate spaces/facilities to learn' (85% agree and somewhat agree combined) and 'Year

7 students with disability have access to appropriate spaces/ facilities to learn' (89% agree and somewhat agree combined). See Figure 11.

**FIGURE 11. HIGH SCHOOLS' PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNING SPACES**



Source. Year 7 to High School Transition school survey. A total of 105 survey respondents answered the question about 'Year 7 students have access to appropriate spaces/facilities to learn'. A total of 101 survey respondents answered the question about 'Year 7 students with disability have access to appropriate spaces/facilities to learn'. All high school survey respondents were asked this question.

## 7.2 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE DELIVERY OF LEARNING SPACES

### **Delivering appropriate learning spaces was the most difficult aspect of the Project**

Ensuring schools had appropriate learning spaces for the double cohort by 2022 was one of the most significant challenges the Project faced – particularly given the additional challenges of COVID, which led to workforce and material shortages. The Project provided additional funding to ensure schools had sufficient capacity, appropriate collaborative and specialist learning spaces and play spaces to support the new, younger, larger middle school cohort.

### **The Project team's case-management approach helped schools find solutions where there were delays but many schools found the process stressful**

To help schools prepare learning spaces for the arrival of year 7s in 2022, the department established a panel of providers to give schools access to pre-screened removalists for fit-outs, so that school staff did not need to do this personally over the holidays. Despite this, some school leadership teams spent the holidays working to manage the delayed builds. Many schools had to 'make do' with semi-completed or semi-furnished spaces. As one leadership team told us: *'The build was stressful – if we didn't have the staggered start, it would have been troublesome.'* COVID-driven delays such as in furniture deliveries particularly impacted Special Options spaces. This made it difficult to provide appropriate transition visits

for Special Options students, especially those with limited access to classrooms due to mobility issues.

While there were stressful moments and expectations about new facilities had to be lowered in some cases, the Project successfully delivered appropriate learning spaces. As one stakeholder explained.

*To move resources and develop infrastructure plans in four years was the biggest operational shift in schools for about 30 years.... From the perspective of such a large system level operational process – it worked as well as could have been expected.*

### **The Project drove changes in collecting data on enrolments and building use in schools**

In 2018 when the Project began, the department lacked data about projected enrolments and therefore whether schools would have adequate learning spaces. This was among the first barriers to be considered and led to systemic changes in enrolments and data collection. One stakeholder told us that while it was recognised that there had been an influx from the private to the public sector, data about expected enrolments had been limited – especially in the early stages of planning. In addition, departmental data about the purpose of school buildings was inaccurate. The department had been unaware of schools re-purposing buildings using their own funding, and this had led to capacity problems. The Enrolment Capacity and Transition Unit therefore is now focusing on matching building works with enrolment data. As a stakeholder noted:

*We had issues with schools which showed on the plans that they had a science lab but had converted it to a drama space. They'd used their own funds which is ok but if they are bringing more kids in and they need another science room, we would say: 'you've got one' but they hadn't.*

### **The Project drove collaboration across divisions and schools but struggled to expedite work through other government departments**

The project team worked with the department's Capital Works team, the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and the Roundtable which had representation from directorates across the department to plan, deliver and monitor implementation of the capital works program.

The evaluation heard that collaboration between government departments to deliver the capital works project was particularly challenging. Some respondents felt that in retrospect, it would have been easier to establish its own building authority rather than try to coordinate work through another department. Equally, preparing 67 public work submissions for a parliamentary committee before work could begin delayed the building work and, on reflection, stakeholders said if the \$4 million threshold requirement for public work submissions had been \$10 million, a third of them would have been avoided. Delays due to disputes over funding pushed some school building programs to the wire.

*The build made a huge impact on wellbeing, everyone from staff, students, and families. We had a new person in a Year 7/8 senior leader position who was setting up their office while teaching etc... there was jack hammering outside, building going on around them. It made it messy and uncomfortable. My message to the Department is: "you didn't need to*



*do that to us and it is lucky that we are still here – we don't need that sort of stress in our lives"*

### **The Roundtable supported schools with building delays**

As noted earlier, the Roundtable was valued as a mechanism for communicating the issues schools were experiencing to the project team. The Roundtable, chaired and facilitated by the project team, met every 2-3 weeks to monitor progress and identify risks, closely with schools, to understand their challenges. However, this was a double-edged sword as the focus on building risks limited project delivery capacity. Some departmental stakeholders said that the Roundtable's approach to recording all risks raised by schools was inefficient and would have been improved by a risk calibration tool to prioritise risks. Nonetheless, the Roundtable developed a critical path for creating appropriate learning spaces. Principals felt they had someone in the department 'on speed dial' and that their concerns would be acknowledged. The Roundtable helped build trust around the Project: *'Normally there is a gap of trust between corporate and schools but there was support from the system where it was needed... whatever a school needed let us know'* said one member of the Governance Board.

## APPENDIX 1 KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND METHOD/ DATA SOURCES

Table 4 below provides an overview of the focus area, key evaluation questions and methods/ data sources.

**TABLE 4. KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND METHODS/ DATA SOURCES**

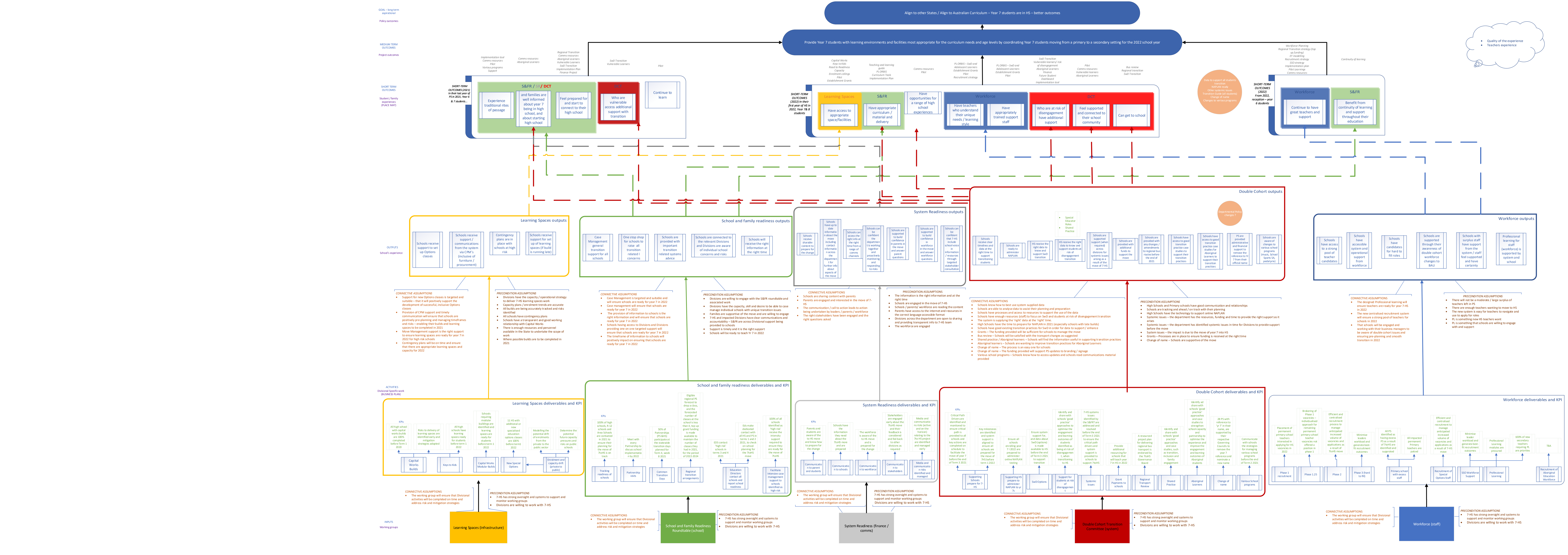
Focus Area	Question	Method/data source	Details
<b>1. Project Governance</b>	<i>Did the project deliver what it said it would, on time and within budget?</i>	Document review	Documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program logic</li> <li>• Project scope and governance for implementation 2021</li> <li>• Overarching project plan covering all aspects of system activity with monthly tracking updates and highlighted risks, as reported to the Governance Board</li> <li>• Risk registers and documented actions</li> <li>• Terms of Reference for governance groups</li> <li>• School readiness - school-by-school readiness tracking spreadsheet (large and extremely detailed), and monthly updates on school readiness to our Governance Board</li> </ul>
	<i>Was there effective oversight of the project?</i>	Consultation with governance groups via workshops and interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance Board, Stakeholder Reference Group, steering committees, working groups and other groups</li> </ul>
<b>2. Service delivery approach</b>	<i>Did schools get what they needed from the Department to support the move of Year 7 into high school?</i>	Workshop with School and Family Readiness Roundtable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop to discuss key issues and how they were identified and addressed – and to inform development of survey instruments and focus group guides</li> </ul>
	<i>Did the project's service model support schools?</i>	School survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New survey(s) to be designed for the evaluation – and potentially distributed/promoted via the Department's regular email communications to school leaders and to teachers</li> </ul>

Focus Area	Question	Method/data source	Details
		Focus groups or interviews with schools (n=10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate representatives (e.g. principals, year 7 leaders) to be determined with the Project Team</li> <li>• Representation across different focus areas, agreed to by the Project team</li> </ul>
		Community survey/submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from families on overall experiences of the transition via online survey and submission form</li> </ul>
		Document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overarching project plan</li> <li>• School-by-school readiness tracking spreadsheet</li> <li>• Monthly updates on school readiness to Governance Board</li> </ul>
<b>3. Deep dive</b>	<i>How effectively did the Department deliver these elements?</i>	Workshop(s) with learning spaces governance groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss key issues, how identified and addressed; inform data collection instruments, identification of appropriate school representatives, and focus group sampling options</li> </ul>
a) Learning spaces			
b) Workforce readiness	<i>What can we learn from how they were delivered?</i>	School survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New survey(s) for the evaluation –potential distribution/ promotion via the Department's regular email communications</li> </ul>
c) Transition of students at risk		Focus groups (or interviews) with 3 schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from 3 focus groups or interviews with 3 different schools. Schools with high levels of students with disability, Aboriginal students or students at risk of disengagement have been identified and will be highlighted as case studies</li> </ul>
		Community survey/submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from Year 7 and 8 families on overall experiences of the transition via online survey and submission form</li> </ul>
		Document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assets - school-by-school monthly tracking updates of capital works, as reported to the Governance Board</li> <li>• HR - number of positions advertised / filled / unfilled, and monthly reports to Governance Board</li> <li>• School readiness – school-by-school readiness tracking spreadsheet, and monthly updates to Governance Board</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 2      PROGRAM LOGIC

The Department's program logic is provided on the next page.







## APPENDIX 3 RISK AND MANAGEMENT

**TABLE 5. SPECIFIC RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ADOPTED THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT**

Risk	Management of risk
Department concerns	
Students with disability data was captured inconsistently based on location	Guidelines were provided to ensure consistency in the data, however data continued to be a problem in 2021 as it resulted in inaccurate forecasting. Going into 2022 this again has been addressed via the use of a SharePoint Excel was created to ensure consistency and accountability across office locations – only limited people from one office can fill it in
Double cohort – moving all kids with disability at once	Predetermined milestones and tracked weekly
School concerns	
Learning spaces not being ready	A review that was undertaken by auditor general; contingency plans developed with the project team; each governance meeting dealt with risks; risk registrar. This workstream had its own Capital Works Governance Committee, chaired by former Premier Dean Brown, to ensure there was rigour in the governance of this work. This was in addition to this being regularly tracked through the 7toHS Governance Board. In mind-2021, 7toHS was invited to join the cap works committee on a regular basis to represent school interests
Workforce Vacancies not being filled	Close monitoring with regular meetings/timelines, as well as early intervention. Using data forecasting, but also being aware it mightn't be accurate
Double cohort - too many enrolments at popular schools	Also brought in enrolment and capacity ceilings to school [previously did not exist] which was necessary- resulting in more equitable approach [impacted schools were very popular]
Capital works funding allocated under the previous Government's Better Schools Program required renegotiating with some schools to change what they could do with this money. PS ended up with too much \$\$ in some cases. Getting capital works completed in time – they finalised plans and negotiations with schools too late – no urgency	Renegotiated with the schools – some got extra money but most had to redistribute money to new buildings

Risk	Management of risk
Worried about PS teachers not going to HS resulting in surplus of PS teachers.	Did codesign work, so the solution reflected teacher's perspective (this enabled productive union discussions) PS teachers were also encouraged to move to a HS.
Principals going down a class of paygrade - Principals' remuneration changing - linked to the classification of school size and complexity	Were able to solve by promising primary school principals their grades would remain the same, secondary schools provided increases in grades even within tenure, and largest school principals got a new grade called A9+ to account for the new complexities (however, dep principals not covered in this)
Buildings not being ready for Christmas 2021	Used contractors and removalists to assist in the set-up over the holidays
Community and family concerns	
Parents concerned about PS closing down	Did a 40-school road trip, after discussions, committed to keep 3-4 teachers in those schools, regardless of student numbers
Country school kids having to travel further to high school	Road trip to discuss the 7toHS transition to parents and governance groups – meant those in country towns in some cases wanted to keep Year 7's in primary school. Policy position was developed that provided exemptions for students at eligible primary schools where they were more than 20km away from their HS (where they would develop better in a primary setting)
Kids with disability not ready	Transition to HS in year 8 – enabled individual exemptions
CBD high schools were politically controversial – managed this through parent forums	Re-zoned the areas –

## APPENDIX 4 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

This appendix provides all data collection instruments used as part of the Year 7 to High School Project Evaluation.

### A4.1 DISCUSSION GUIDES

This section captures all our questions that we decided **we had to ask** the stakeholders and does not include prompts. The guides varied in detail based on whether they were scoping interviews vs more in-depth interviews. Workshops with the Governance Board, Stakeholder Reference Group, the Roundtable, and the Project Team workshops were broad and had a limited number of questions to allow discussion between the group. Deep dive and school interviews/ focus groups were more detailed in the questions asked to get a deeper understanding of an areas/ school's circumstances.

ARTD ensured that all stakeholders were aware that their responses would be confidential and aggregated as themes. We additionally provided them with a background of the evaluation.

#### GOVERNANCE BOARD AND STAKEHOLDER REFERENCE GROUP WORKSHOPS

1. How do you think the transition for Year 7s to High School went?
2. How do you define success?
3. What was challenging?
4. What worked well?
5. What would you do differently?
6. What would you do again (for future projects)?

#### SCHOOL AND FAMILY READINESS ROUNDTABLE AND 7TOHS PROJECT TEAM WORKSHOPS

1. What were your impressions of what worked and why?
2. What could have been done differently in retrospect?
3. What were aspects of the Project that were innovative and learnings for other system-wide reform?

#### WORKFORCE READINESS WORKSHOP

1. Do you think the Project was successful from the point of view of the workforce issues, including numbers, professional development and learning and wellbeing outcomes?
2. What were the main factors in its success do you think?
3. What were the main challenges? Was the decision around how to transition primary school teachers to high school the most significant?
4. Which aspects of workforce management were instrumental to the Project's success?
5. How confident are you that the short-term objectives of the PL have been achieved? What about the long-term ambitions?



6. With reference to implementing professional development to best equip teachers for the transition, was the focus mainly on upskilling specialist year 7 teachers? Was this effective? How effective was the external delivery of PD?
7. The Project was high profile and sensitive within the community. What challenges and opportunities did this present? What were the key issues? – Demand management in popular schools? Impact on small primary schools, country schools?
8. It has been proposed that the service delivery approach with a central coordinating team and intensive in-school support was a key part of the Project's success – do you think that is the case? Were there other factors?
9. Did teachers and principals feel adequately supported and engaged?
10. Do you think the committee had the right mix of people/responsibilities on the roundtable? Was it able to progress issues effectively? Any examples?
11. Were there things about it that you would change?
12. Was there effective communication with other stakeholders (for example, Unions?)
13. Were there some risks that you felt could have been managed earlier/better? What were the factors that influenced this?
14. Did you feel that the Project was adequately resourced?

#### LEARNING SPACES WORKSHOP

1. The Year 7 to High School Project has been generally described as a success, delivering on time and within budget, especially given that it had sensitivities around the potential costs and benefits for students, workforce concerns, capacity concerns. Do you think the Project was successful from the point of view of providing learning spaces?
2. What were the main factors in its success do you think?
3. What were the greatest challenges and how did you manage these? Was it mainly the capacity issue in high demand schools?
4. Can you talk us through the demand management strategy - was this an important part of the Project's success?
5. Can you talk about the aspects of providing adequate learning spaces that your committee was responsible for?
6. It has been proposed that the service delivery approach with a central coordinating team and intensive in-school support was a key part of the Project's success – Do you think that is the case? Were there other factors?
7. Do you think you had the right mix of people/responsibilities on the committee? Was it able to progress issues effectively? Any examples?
8. Were there things about it that you would change?
9. Was there effective communication with other stakeholders?
10. Were there some risks that you felt could have been managed earlier/better? What were the factors that influenced this?
11. Did you feel that the Project was adequately resourced?
12. What were your key learnings from this project that might inform future projects?
13. Was the service delivery approach particularly important in the schools where building was delayed and given the challenges of COVID? Was this applied in country schools also?

## TRANSITION OF KIDS AT RISK (ABORIGINAL STUDENTS) WORKSHOP

1. Can you tell us about the approach you took to managing the transition to Year7toHS for Aboriginal students?
2. Was the Project successful?
3. What were the main challenges you faced and how did you manage them? What were some of the enablers?
4. How did you work with schools to ensure a successful transition?
5. How was risk dealt with?
6. What would you do again and what would you do differently in hindsight?

## TRANSITION OF KIDS AT RISK (STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY) WORKSHOP

1. Can you tell us about the approach you took to managing the transition for students with disability?
2. What were the main challenges you faced and how did you manage them?
3. Do you think teachers/families/students felt supported?
4. Did the approach vary across schools? Was there difference between metro and country?
5. To what extent do you think the 7toHS Project has been successful? How confident are you in achieving the long-term outcomes for this cohort?
6. What were the main factors for this success?
7. What would you do differently?
8. Did you think the Project Team operated effectively?
9. What are your key learnings for other projects?

## TRANSITION OF KIDS AT RISK (GENERAL) INTERVIEW

1. What was your role?
2. How were kids at risk identified?
3. What were the main issues for this cohort in the transition?
4. Can you tell me about the strategy for this cohort? Did the implementation vary across schools?
5. Was the focus more centred on leveraging existing supports as opposed to new ones?
6. Were the strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disability different? If so, can you talk more about that?
7. What were the main drivers of this strategy? Was it more successful than previous strategies?
8. To what extent do you think the Project has been successful? How confident are you in achieving the long-term outcomes for this cohort?
9. What were the main factors for this success?
10. What would you do differently?
11. Did you think the Project Team operated effectively?
12. What are your key learnings for other projects?

## SCHOOL FOCUS GROUPS

Below is the generic school discussion guide, which is followed by questions which were specifically derived for schools within specific circumstances. A wide cross-section of schools were interviewed to cover a diverse range of circumstances, including a country school, a primary school, an area school, high schools in low and high SES areas, a high school with a higher proportion of Aboriginal students, a high school with a higher proportion of students with a disability, and one of the schools involved in the pilot program.

1. What was your experience in moving year 7s to HS?
  - a) Were there particular challenges and how did you manage them?
2. What were the experiences of families/ students?
  - a) Do you think it was an easy transition?
3. How do you define a successful transition for this school? Do you think that this transition was successful?
4. What do you think worked well? Were there any strategies/enablers that allowed this to go smoothly?
  - a) Did you feel that the DfE provided your school accurate support? I.e. enough consultations, financial support, anything else? Orbis training?
  - b) Did the Project Team identify risks and manage them effectively?
  - c) Do you think that the lines of responsibility between what the schools did vs what the DfE took charge in were prioritized correctly?
5. Were there any barriers that made the transition experience harder?
6. Is there anything you would keep the same, remove or change if this process happened again?
7. Do you have any other thoughts or concerns about the impacts on schools in the future for any of the changes that occurred? i.e. principal status, exemptions for country schools

### **Questions for Specific Schools**

#### ***Country schools***

1. We understand that country schools had particular concerns about the transition of Year 7 to high school – what were the main issues for your community?
2. Did you feel they were heard and understood?
3. What strategies were adopted to support you?
4. Do you think they were effective?
5. Are they effective in the longer term?
6. Is there something else that should have been done to make the transition more effective for your community?

#### ***Primary Schools***

1. What were the key issues for Primary Schools in the transition?
2. How was your school affected?
3. Did you feel they were heard and understood throughout the Project?
4. What strategies were adopted to support you?
5. Do you think they were effective?
6. Are they effective in the longer term?

7. Is there something else that should have been done to make the transition more effective for your community?

**High principal workload**

1. We understand that many principals and staff had an increased workload due to transitioning year 7s to HS – how did this transition impact your school/ this team?
2. Did you feel they were heard and understood throughout the Project?
3. What strategies were adopted to support you?
4. Do you think they were effective?
5. Is there something else that should have been done to make the transition more effective for your school?

**Workforce readiness**

1. How effective was the PD training Orbis ran in preparing teachers for their new roles in secondary schools?
  - a) Is there anything else you would have liked to learn?
2. Was there enough done on the pedagogy in order to enable kids to feel connected to their new school as that is widely accepted as a measure of success?

**Capital works**

3. Do you feel like learning spaces were effectively implemented to support the double cohort and transition of year 7s to HS?
4. What were the key issues for undertaking capital works at your school?
5. Did this impact anything or anybody else within the school system i.e., did you feel that you didn't have an adequate amount of time to focus on other areas?
6. What were key strategies that you undertook to ensure the success? Were there any enablers?
7. Did the DfE effectively support you through this? If so, what strategies did they put in place to do so?
8. Is there something else that should have been done to make the transition more effective for your community?

## A4.2 SCHOOL SURVEY

**Introduction text***Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey*

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The questions are not compulsory (you can select 'prefer not to say') and some may not be applicable to you (you can select 'Don't know/ Not applicable').

Please complete the survey by **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022**.

ARTD Consultants has been engaged by the Department for Education, South Australia to evaluate the Year 7 to High School Transition, to support the Department to improve how schools are supported through systemic change.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. No individual person can be identified through this generic survey link. Results will be reported in aggregate – no information will be linked to specific schools.

[Please note question numbers and response labels (e.g. a, b etc.) are not shown in the online version of the survey]

### **Current school type**

Q1. Are you currently working in a:

- a) High school [DIRECT TO SECTION A]
- b) Primary school [DIRECT TO SECTION B]
- c) R to 12 School/B to 12 School [DIRECT TO SECTION A]
- d) Area School [DIRECT TO SECTION A]

### **SECTION A – QUESTIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STAFF (Q1 = a OR c OR d)**

#### **School context and school role**

QA1. Which of the following best describes your role within your school?

- a) Principal
- b) Secondary leadership group
- c) Year 7 or middle school teacher
- d) Teacher – other year groups
- e) School Services Officer
- f) Finance/business management
- g) Administration support
- h) Other (please specify)
- i) Prefer not to say

QA2. [ASK IF 'Year 7 or middle school teacher' ABOVE] In 2021 were you working at a:

- a) High school
- b) Primary school
- c) R to 12 School/B to 12 School
- d) Area school
- e) Not teaching in 2021
- f) Prefer not to say

QA3. Is your current school located in.....

- a) A metropolitan area
- b) A country/regional area
- c) Don't know/ unsure
- d) Prefer not to say.

QA4. Roughly how many enrolments does your current school have in 2022?:

- a) Less than 250

- b) 251 to 500
- c) 501 to 1,000
- d) 1,001 to 1,500
- e) More than 1,500
- f) Don't know/ unsure
- g) Prefer not to say

QA5. Please provide the name of your school below – or 'prefer not to say'.

Note that individuals cannot be identified through this generic survey link. Results will be reported in aggregate – no information will be linked to specific schools.

(Open text box)

### **The transition experience**

QA6. The following statements relate to planning within your school during 2021 for the Year 7 to High School Transition. For each statement please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree. Select 'Don't know/ Not Applicable' to statements you feel do not apply to you.

Statements about planning in 2021	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Don't know/ Not applicable	Prefer not to answer
My school was prepared for the Year 7 to High School Transition						
Staff had access to appropriate curriculum and materials to prepare for teaching Year 7						
Staff had access to the right tools to understand Year 7 students' unique needs and learning styles						
The recruitment process for new staff was successful						
Families were well-informed about the transition						
Students at risk of disengagement were provided with appropriate additional support for the transition						

The next statements relate to your current (2022) experience of the transition. For each statement please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree. Select 'Don't know/ Not Applicable' to statements you feel do not apply to you.

Statements about the current 2022 experiences	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Don't know/ Not Applicable	Prefer not to answer
Year 7 students have access to appropriate spaces/facilities to learn						
Year 7 students with disability have access to appropriate spaces/facilities to learn						
Transport and access arrangements are working well at my school						

Year 7 students are settling in well

Staff who moved here from a primary setting  
have settled in well

### **Service Delivery Approach**

QA7. Thinking about the amount of support and involvement from the Department for Education would you say your school received...:

- a) The right amount
- b) Too little support
- c) Too much support
- d) Don't know/ Not applicable
- e) Prefer not to answer

QA8. Please identify any aspects of transition planning in which you had some involvement during 2021:

- a) Recruitment for new positions
- b) Professional learning for teaching Year 7 in high school
- c) Transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement
- d) Ensuring students have access to appropriate learning spaces
- e) School finance, enrolment and business planning
- f) None of the above

(QUESTIONS A9 TO A11 ARE ASKED FOR EACH SELECTED AREA ABOVE)

QA9. Did you/your school raise any issues or concerns with the Year 7 to High School Project team regarding these areas?

[ONLY SHOW AREAS SELECTED IN QA8]

	Yes	No	Don't know/ Not applicable	Prefer not to answer
Recruitment for new positions				
Professional learning for teaching Year 7				
Transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement				
Access to appropriate learning spaces				
School finance and business planning				

QA10. To what extent were your concerns regarding each area resolved? (select one option per area)

[ONLY SHOW AREAS SELECTED 'Yes' IN QA9]

	Fully resolved	Mostly resolved	Partially resolved	Not at all resolved	Don't know/ Not applicable	Prefer not to answer
Recruitment for new positions						
Professional learning for teaching Year 7						
Transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement						
Learning spaces						
School finance and business planning						

QA11. How satisfied were you with the support you/the school received from the Year 7 to High School Project Team in relation to each area (select one option per area)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ not applicable	Prefer not to answer
Recruitment for new Year 7 positions						
Professional learning for teaching Year 7						
Transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement						
Learning spaces						
School finance and business planning						

[ASK IF QA1 = C (Year 7 or middle school teacher)]

QA12a. Did you participate in any Professional Learning specific to teaching Year 7 in high school? (select one options)

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

QA12b (If Yes). How would you rate the Professional Learning in preparing you for teaching Year 7? (select one option)



- a) Very effective
- b) Somewhat effective
- c) Somewhat ineffective
- d) Very ineffective
- e) Prefer not to answer

[ASK ALL]

QA13. How would you describe the Project's effect so far (if any) on your school's approach to teaching students in middle school years?

- a) Large positive effect
- b) Small positive effect
- c) No change
- d) Small negative effect
- e) Large negative effect
- f) Don't know/ unsure
- g) Prefer not to answer

**Overall project outcomes and lessons learnt**

QA13. Overall, how satisfied are you now with the outcome of the Year 7 to High school Transition? (select one option)

- a) Very satisfied
- b) Satisfied
- c) Dissatisfied
- d) Very dissatisfied
- e) Don't know/ Not applicable
- f) Prefer not to answer.

QA14. Please share your views on :

One or two things the Department for Education should continue doing if planning any future system reform?

QA15. Finally please share your views on:

One or two things the Department for Education should change if planning any future system reform?

Q15. There is space here if you wanted to share any other feedback. (Open Text).

END OF SURVEY

**SECTION B – QUESTIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STAFF (Q1 = b).****School context and school role**

QB1. Which of the following best describes your main role within your school?

- a) Principal
- b) Leadership group
- c) Teacher
- d) School Services Officer
- e) Finance/business management
- f) Administration support
- g) Other (please specify)

QB2. Is your current school located in...(please select one)

- a) A metropolitan area
- b) A country/regional area
- c) Don't know/ unsure
- d) Prefer not to say

QB3. Roughly how many enrolments does your current school have in 2022?: (please select one)

- a) 50 or less
- b) 51 to 250
- c) 251 to 500
- d) 501 to 1,000
- e) More than 1,000
- f) Don't know/ unsure
- g) Prefer not to say

QB4. Please provide the name of your school below – or 'Prefer not to answer'. Note that individuals cannot be identified through this generic survey link. Results will be reported in aggregate – no information will be linked to specific schools. (Open text box)

QB5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below.

Statements	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Don't know/ NA	Prefer not to answer
The implications for primary schools were appropriately managed at the system level						
Students at risk of disengagement were provided with appropriate additional support for the transition						
Families were well-informed about the transition						

QB6. Overall, how satisfied were you with the support provided to your school by the Department for Education to prepare for the transition and implications for your school?

- a) Very satisfied
- b) Satisfied
- c) Dissatisfied
- d) Very dissatisfied
- e) Don't know/ Not applicable
- f) Prefer not to answer

QB7. Would you say your school received...:

- a) The right amount of support and involvement from the Department for Education
- b) Too little support and involvement from the Department for Education
- c) Too much support and involvement from the Department for Education
- d) Don't know/ Not applicable
- e) Prefer not to answer

QB8. During 2021, did you/your school raise any issues or concerns with the Year 7 to High School Project team regarding the following areas? (select one option per area)

	Yes	No	Don't know/ not applicable	Prefer not to answer
Staffing implications for your school				
School size implications for your school				
Travel implications for Year 7 students				
Transitioning students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement				

QB9. To what extent were your concerns regarding each area resolved? (select one option per area)

[ONLY SHOW AREAS WHEN 'Yes' SELECTED IN QB8]

	Fully resolved	Mostly resolved	Partially resolved	Not at all resolved	Don't know/ Not applicable	Prefer not to answer
Staffing implications for your school						
School size implications for your school						
Travel implications for Year 7 students						
Transitioning students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement						

QB10. How satisfied were you with the support you/the school received from the Year 7 to High School Project Team in relation to each area (select one option per area)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ not applicable	Prefer not to answer
Staffing implications for your school						
School size implications for your school						
Travel implications for Year 7 students						
Transitioning students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement						

### **Overall project outcomes and lessons learnt**

QB11. Overall, how satisfied are you now with the outcome of the Year 7 to High school Transition? (select one option)

- a) Very satisfied
- b) Satisfied
- c) Dissatisfied
- d) Very dissatisfied
- e) Don't know/ Not applicable
- f) Prefer not to answer.

QB12. Please share your views on:

The top 1 or 2 things the Department for Education should continue doing if planning any future system reform?

QB13. Finally please share your views on:

The top 1 or 2 things the Department for Education should change if planning any future system reform?

QB14. There is space here to provide any other feedback that you wanted to share regarding the Year 7 to High School Transition that has not been covered above (Open Text).

END OF SURVEY

## A4.3 FAMILY AND CARERS SURVEY

### **SMS invitation text**

The SA Department for Education wants to hear from Year 7 families and carers about how you found the move of Year 7 to high school, to help us learn from your experiences so we can get better at what we do.

Click this link to a 10 minute survey to have your say. Your feedback will be anonymous. The survey is open until Wednesday 18th May 2022. Thank you!

### **Introduction text**

*Year 7 to High School - Survey for Year 7 families and carers*

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey about your experiences with the move of Year 7 to high school.

Moving Year 7 to high school has been a big change in South Australia. The South Australian Department for Education has asked us – ARTD Consultants – to do some research to find out what worked well and what could have been done better.

This survey should only take 10 minutes. It will be open until Wednesday 18th May 2022.

Your responses will be strictly confidential. No individual person or school can be identified through this link. Survey responses will be analysed as a group.

### **Introduction**

Q1. Which of the following best describes your Year 7 child?

My Year 7 child...

- g) started high school this year
- h) will complete Year 7 in an eligible primary school following discussion with the principal
- i) attends an R-12/ B-12 School or Area School
- j) prefer not to say

Q2. Overall, how satisfied were you with the level of support received to prepare for Year 7?  
(select one option)

- a) Very satisfied
- b) Somewhat satisfied
- c) Somewhat dissatisfied
- d) Dissatisfied
- e) Prefer not to answer

ASK IF Q1=a) OR c) OR d)

Q3. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please select one option per statement. You can choose 'Don't know/ Not Applicable' to any statements that you do not have a view about, or does not apply to you.

Statements	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Don't Know/ Not applicable	Prefer not to answer
My school has been well prepared to receive Year 7s this year						
Teachers have been well prepared to teach Year 7s this year						
Last year I felt well-informed about the move						
Transport and drop-off/pick-up arrangements are working well at my school						
My child is settling into Year 7 well						

ASK IF Q1=a) OR c) OR d)

Q4. Does your Year 7 child have a disability or additional learning needs?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

ASK IF YES AT Q4

Q5. How much do you agree or disagree that your child received the right amount of support in the lead up to Year 7?

- a) Agree
- b) Somewhat agree
- c) Somewhat disagree
- d) Disagree
- e) Don't Know/ Not applicable
- f) Prefer not to say

ASK IF Q1=b

Q6. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- i) That your child received the right amount of support in the lead up to Year 7.
  - ii) That your concerns about moving your child to high school for Year 7 were addressed.
- a) Agree
  - b) Somewhat agree
  - c) Somewhat disagree
  - d) Disagree
  - e) Don't Know/ Not applicable
  - f) Prefer not to say

ASK ALL

Q7. In your opinion, what positive activities did your school do to help prepare your child to move into high school?

Q8. How could your school improve the transition of students from primary school to high school?

## APPENDIX 5 ADDITIONAL SURVEY DATA

This appendix provides all survey data from the School and Family and Carers survey. The appendix is organised per survey question.

### A5.1 SCHOOL SURVEY

#### Are you currently working in a:

Over half of survey respondents were from high schools with another third of respondents were from primary schools (see Table 6 in Appendix 5). There was a small percentage of survey respondents from R-12 schools/B-12 schools and area schools.

**TABLE 6. ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING IN A...**

	Count	%
High school	90	51%
Primary school	68	39%
R-12 school/B-12 school	13	7%
Area school	4	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey

#### Which of the following best describes your role within your school?

Most frequently survey respondents' roles were secondary leadership/ leadership group (33%), Principal (17%) or a Year 7 or middle school teacher, see Table 7. Respondents who were currently working in a high school followed a similar pattern of responses. Respondents that were currently working in a primary school were also frequently teachers in other year groups (27%), School Services Officer (10%) or Administration support (10%).

**TABLE 7. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' ROLE**

	High school		Primary school		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Secondary leadership/ Leadership group	45	42%	12	18%	57	33%
Year 7 or middle school teacher	28	26%	0	0%	28	16%
Principal	11	10%	19	28%	30	17%



Other (please specify)*	8	7%	1	1%	9	5%
Teacher – other year groups	7	7%	18	27%	25	14%
School Services Officer	6	6%	7	10%	13	7%
Administration support	2	2%	7	10%	9	5%
Finance/business management	0	0%	3	4%	3	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey. \*Other (please specify) responses included a Wellbeing Leader, B-12 Intervention Leader, B-12 Literacy, Data and Pedagogy senior leader, Currently teach Year 7s, 8s and 12s, Deputy Principal, Middle School Coordinator, Well-being support or Youth worker.

### In 2021 were you working at:

Those respondents that were currently working in a high school in 2022 were also most likely to have been working in a high school (50%) or a primary school (39%) in 2021, see Table 8.

**TABLE 8. HIGH SCHOOL ROLE IN 2021**

	Count	%
High school	14	50%
Primary school	11	39%
R to 12 School/B to 12 School	3	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey

More than half of respondent (64%) worked in high school or primary school that was in a metropolitan area, see Table 9 in Appendix 5. The location of both high schools and primary schools followed a similar pattern as overall responses.

### Is your current school located in...

**TABLE 9. LOCATION OF CURRENT SCHOOL**

	High school		Primary school		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
A metropolitan area	71	67%	39	59%	110	64%
A country/regional area	35	33%	26	39%	61	35%
Don't know/ unsure	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%

<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>100%</b>
--------------	------------	----------	-----------	-------------	------------	-------------

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey

### **Roughly how many enrolments does your current school have in 2022?**

Overall, most survey respondents worked in schools where enrolments were 1,001 to 1,500 (27%), 251 to 500 (24%) or 501 to 1,000 (27%), see Table 10 in Appendix 5.

**TABLE 10. ENROLMENTS OF HIGH SCHOOLS AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

	High school		Primary school		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
50 or less	0	0%	9	14%	9	5%
51 to 250	0	0%	22	33%	22	13%
Less than 250	12	11%	0	0%	12	7%
251 to 500	15	14%	26	39%	41	24%
501 to 1,000	18	17%	9	14%	27	16%
1,001 to 1,500	47	44%	0	0%	47	27%
More than 1,500	14	13%	0	0%	14	8%
Don't know/ unsure	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey

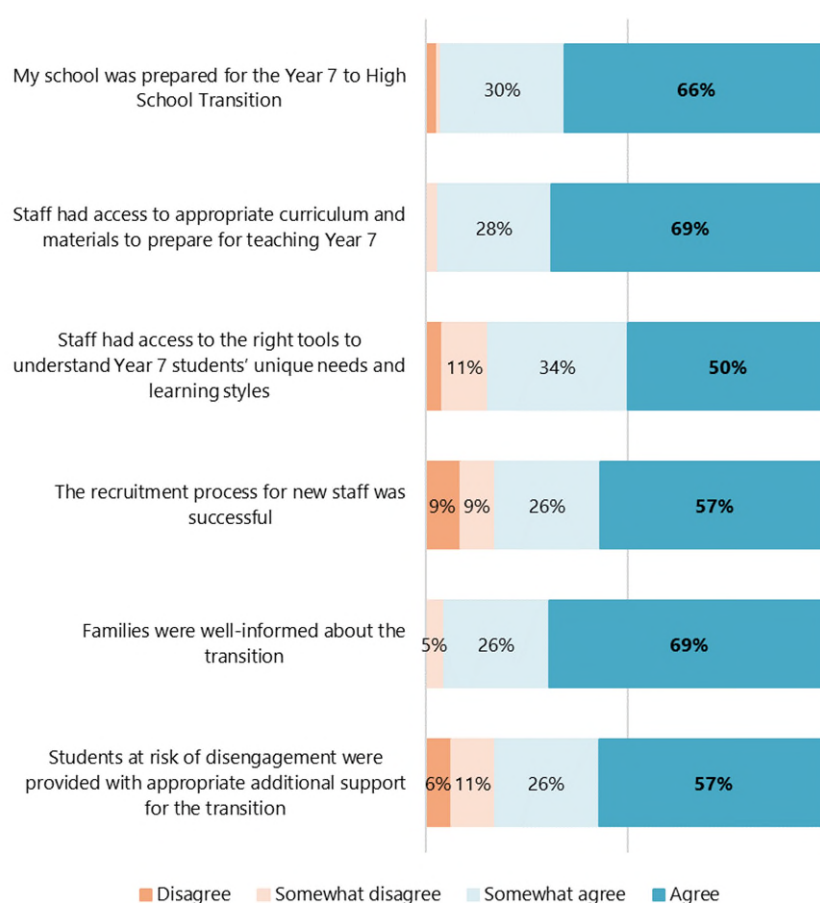
### **Please provide the name of your school below**

This question has not been reported on to protect the anonymity of survey respondents.

**The following statements relate to planning within your school during 2021 for the Year 7 to High School Transition. For each statement please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree. Select 'Don't know/ Not Applicable' to statements you feel do not apply to you.**

School and family readiness: 66% of high schools surveyed agreed and 30% somewhat agreed that their school was prepared for the transition. 69% agreed that staff had access to appropriate curriculum and materials to prepare for teaching Year 7, none disagreeing. 50% agreed that their staff had access to the right tools to understand Year 7 students' unique needs and learning styles, with 11% somewhat disagreeing (see Figure 12).

**FIGURE 12. HIGH SCHOOLS' PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL AND FAMILY READINESS**

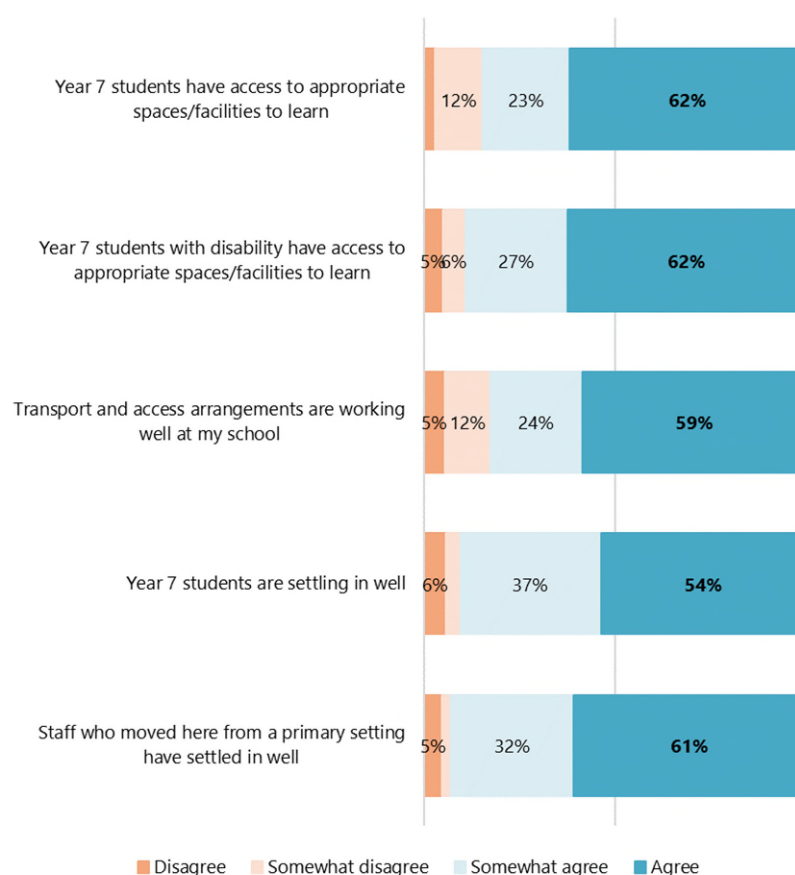


Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

**The next statements relate to your current (2022) experience of the transition. For each statement please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree. Select 'Don't know/ Not Applicable' to statements you feel do not apply to you.**

High schools reported high levels of agreement with the Year 7 to Transition, see Figure 13. The combined agree and somewhat agree were all above 75%. High schools reported had the highest level of agreement with 'Staff who moved here from a primary setting have settled in well' (93%) and 'Year 7 students are settling in well' (91%).

**FIGURE 13. HIGH SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE ON THE TRANSITION**



Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### Thinking about the amount of support and involvement from the Department for Education would you say your school received...

More than half (51%) of high schools through that the Department for Education provided the right amount of support, see Table 11.

**TABLE 11. HIGH SCHOOL'S PERSPECTIVE OF THE SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION**

	Count	%
The right amount	33	51%
Too little support	29	45%
Prefer not to answer	3	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### Please identify any aspects of transition planning in which you had some involvement during 2021 (High schools)

Survey respondents from high schools were most frequently involved in the following aspects of transition planning; transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement, professional learning for teaching Year 7 in high school and ensuring students have access to appropriate learning spaces, see Table 12.

**TABLE 12. HIGH SCHOOLS SURVEY RESPONDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN ASPECTS OF TRANSITION PLANNING**

	Yes (n)
Transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement	56
Professional learning for teaching Year 7 in high school	46
Ensuring students have access to appropriate learning spaces	42
School finance, enrolment and business planning	33
Recruitment for new positions	27
None of the above	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### Did you/ your school raise any issues or concerns with the Year 7 to High School Project Team regarding these areas?

For those respondents that were involved in an aspect of the transition planning they were then asked if they raised those aspects of the transition planning as an issue or concern with the Year 7 to High School Project Team.

Most frequently high schools raised issues about transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement, access to appropriate learning spaces and school finance and business planning to the Year 7 High School Project Team, see Table 13.

**TABLE 13. HIGH SCHOOLS ISSUES OR CONCERNS RAISED WITH THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT TEAM**

	Yes		No		Total		DKNA	Prefer not to answer
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	n
Recruitment for new positions	5	24%	16	76%	21	100%	6	0
Professional learning for teaching Year 7	4	13%	28	88%	32	100%	12	1
Transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement	12	29%	30	71%	42	100%	12	0
Access to appropriate learning spaces	14	42%	19	58%	33	100%	8	0
School finance and business planning	7	29%	17	71%	24	100%	7	2

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### To what extent were your concerns regarding each area resolved?

Across all concerns, three quarters of respondents or more noted that their concerns were resolved to some extent (fully, mostly or partially), see Table 14.

**TABLE 14. THE EXTENT TO WHICH HIGH SCHOOLS' CONCERNS REGARDING EACH AREA WERE RESOLVED**

	Fully resolved		Mostly resolved		Partially resolved		Not at all resolved		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
Recruitment for new positions	0	0%	2	50%	1	25%	1	25%	4	100%

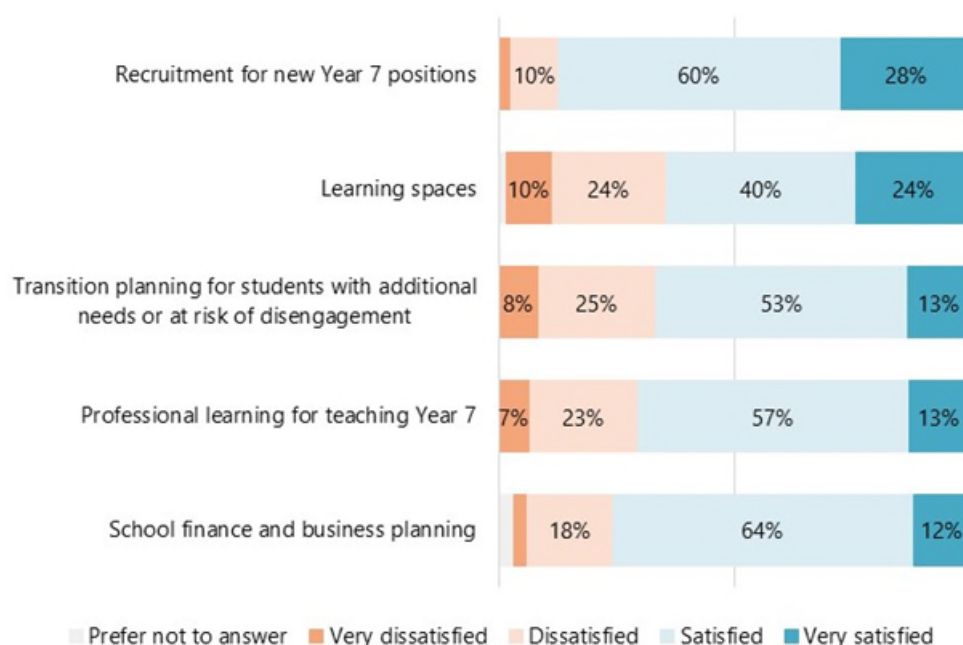
Professional learning for teaching Year 7	0	0%	2	50%	1	25%	1	25%	4	100%
Transition planning for students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement	2	18%	4	36%	5	45%	0	0%	11	100%
Learning spaces	2	17%	3	25%	4	33%	3	25%	12	100%
School finance and business planning	3	43%	2	29%	2	29%	0	0%	7	100%

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### How satisfied were you with the support you/the school received from the Year 7 to High School Project Team in relation to each area?

Over half of all high school's survey respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support received from the Year 7 to High School Project Team, see Figure 14. The highest levels of satisfaction was for 'Recruitment for new Year 7 positions' (88%) and 'School finance and business planning' (76%). The lowest level of satisfaction was with 'Learning spaces' (65%).

**FIGURE 14. HIGH SCHOOL SATISFACTION WITH THE SUPPORT YOU RECEIVED FROM THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT TEAM**



Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

**Did you participate in any Professional Learning specific to teaching Year 7 in high school?**

Over half of high school respondents did not participate in the Professional Learning specific to teaching Year 7 in high school, see Table 15.

**TABLE 15. HIGH SCHOOLS PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

	Count	%
No	14	61%
Yes	8	35%
Prefer not to say	1	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

**How would you rate the Professional Learning in preparing you for teaching Year 7?**

For those high school survey respondents that did participate in Professional Learning, it was largely seen as somewhat effective, see Table 16.

**TABLE 16. HIGH SCHOOL'S RATING OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

	Count	%
Somewhat effective	7	88%
Very ineffective	1	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.



**How would you describe the project's effect so far (if any) on your school's approach to teaching students in middle school years?**

There were varied opinions about the Project's effect so (if any) on High school's approach to teaching students in middle school years, see Table 17.

**TABLE 17. HIGH SCHOOL'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE PROJECT'S EFFECT (SO FAR) ON YOUR SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO TEACHING STUDENTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS**

	Count	%
No change	22	34%
Large positive effect	20	31%
Small positive effect	19	29%
Large negative effect	2	3%
Small negative effect	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

**Overall, how satisfied are you now with the outcome of the Year 7 to High school transition?**

Nearly all high school respondents were either satisfied (70%) or very satisfied (19%) with the outcome of the Year 7 to High school transition, see Table 18.

**TABLE 18. HIGH SCHOOL'S SATISFACTION WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION**

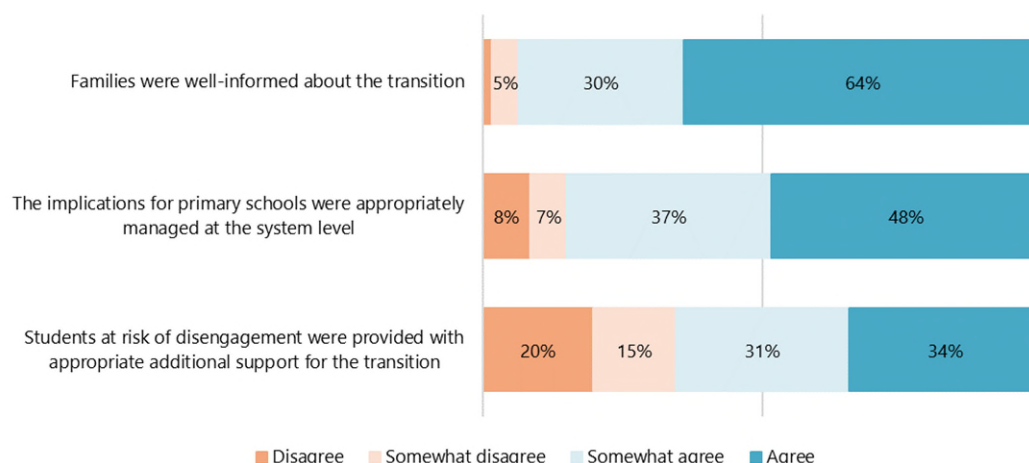
	Count	%
Satisfied	55	70%
Very satisfied	15	19%
Dissatisfied	7	9%
Very dissatisfied	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below (Primary school)

Primary schools reported had high levels of agreement with the Year 7 transition, see Figure 15. The highest level of agreement was for 'Families were well-informed about the transition' (94%) and the lowest level of agreement was for 'Students at risk of disengagement were provided with appropriate additional support for the transition' (66%).

**FIGURE 15. PRIMARY SCHOOLS PERSPECTIVE ON THE YEAR 7 TRANSITION**



Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### Overall, how satisfied were you with the support provided to your school by the Department for Education to prepare for the transition and implications for you school?

Most primary school survey respondents were satisfied (42%) or very satisfied (42%) with the support provided to their school by the Department for Education to prepare for the transition and implications of the Year 7 to High school transition, see Table 19.

**TABLE 19. PRIMARY SCHOOL SATISFACTION WITH THE SUPPORT PROVIDED TO YOUR SCHOOL BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION**

	n	%
Satisfied	39	42%
Very satisfied	39	42%
Dissatisfied	11	12%
Don't know/ Not applicable	3	3%
Prefer not to answer	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

**Would you say your school received....:(Primary schools)**

Over half (61%) of primary schools reported that there was the right amount of support and involvement from the Department for Education, see Table 20.

**TABLE 20. PRIMARY SCHOOLS' PERSPECTIVE ON SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION**

	Count	%
The right amount of support and involvement from the Department for Education	41	61%
Too little support and involvement from the Department for Education	14	21%
Don't know/ Not applicable	9	13%
Prefer not to answer	2	3%
Too much support and involvement from the Department for Education	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

**During 2021, did you/your school raise any issues or concerns with the Year 7 to High School Project team regarding the following areas? (Primary schools)**

Survey respondents from Primary schools were most frequently raised the following issues or concerns with the Year 7 to High School Project Team: transitioning students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement, school size implications for your school and Staffing implications for your school, see Table 21.

**TABLE 21. PRIMARY SCHOOLS ISSUES OR CONCERNS RAISED TO YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT TEAM**

	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Staffing implications for your school	17	36%	30	64%	47	100%
School size implications for your school	18	38%	29	62%	47	100%
Travel implications for Year 7 students	4	8%	45	92%	49	100%
Transitioning students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement	25	48%	27	52%	52	100%
<b>Total</b>						

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

**To what extent were your concerns regarding each area resolved? (Primary schools)**

For those respondents that answered 'yes' to raising an issues or concerns to the Year 7 to High School Project Team they were then asked if those concerns were resolved. For primary schools all concerns about travel implications for Year 7 students were fully resolved, see Table 22.

**TABLE 22. THE EXTENT TO WHICH PRIMARY SCHOOLS' CONCERNS REGARDING EACH AREA WERE RESOLVED**

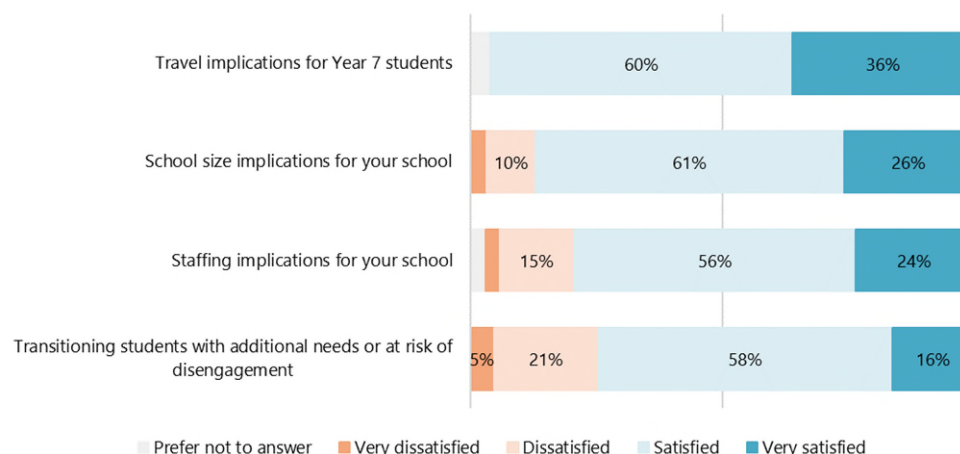
	Fully resolved		Mostly resolved		Partially resolved		Not at all resolved		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
Staffing implications for your school	6	40%	4	27%	1	7%	4	27%	15	100%
School size implications for your school	2	14%	5	36%	3	21%	4	29%	14	100%
Travel implications for Year 7 students	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%
Transitioning students with additional needs or at risk of disengagement	3	13%	9	39%	8	35%	3	13%	23	100%

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### How satisfied were you with the support you/ the school received from the Year 7 to High School Project team? (Primary schools)

More than three quarters of primary school respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with all of the support received from the Year 7 to High School Project Team, see Figure 16.

**FIGURE 16. PRIMARY SCHOOLS SATISFACTION WITH THE SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT TEAM**



Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### Overall, how satisfied are you now with the outcome of the Year 7 to High School Transition? (Primary schools)

Most primary schools were satisfied (68%) or very satisfied (19%) with the outcome of the Year 7 to High School Transition, see Table 23.

**TABLE 23. PRIMARY SCHOOL'S SATISFACTION WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION**

	Count	%
Satisfied	40	68%
Very satisfied	11	19%
Dissatisfied	6	10%
Very dissatisfied	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

### Coding frameworks for qualitative survey questions

In the school's survey we asked respondents to list 1-2 things that the DfE worked well on and what could be improved upon in any future system reforms. The tables below provide the coding framework for survey questions that gathered qualitative feedback.

**TABLE 24. CODING FRAMEWORK - PLEASE SHARE YOUR VIEWS ON: THE TOP 1 OR 2 THINGS THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION SHOULD CONTINUE DOING IF PLANNING ANY FUTURE SYSTEM REFORM?**

Primary Code	Secondary Code	PS n	HS n	Total n
1. Consider the impacts on primary school and high school settings	a. General	3	0	3
	b. Consider the loss of funding for resourcing – leadership funding/ downgrading	1	0	1
2. Clear and transparent communication	a. With families	6	2	8
	b. With schools – all levels	5	3	8
	c. Stakeholder engagement	1	3	4
	d. Newsletters	3	0	3
	e. Emails	2	0	2
3. Training	a. Online	3	2	5
	b. Middle school orientated		1	1
4. Providing funding for	a. Transition	3	2	5
	b. Kids to be successful	1	0	1
	c. Furniture for new learning spaces	0	1	1
	d. Learning spaces capital works	0	2	2
5. Providing extra support for	a. Project teams	3	0	3
	b. Transition programs	1	1	2
	c. Ensuring schools are ready		2	2
6. Data	a. Continue to forecast data for schools and address issues	0	1	1
7. Kids at risk support – at transition	a. Extra support for kids at risk in transition	6	5	11
8. Systems changes	a. Making information/ portal available at an earlier date (transition data)	3	2	5

	b. Continue enrolment process and include supports	1	1	2
	c. Coordinated transition days	1	2	3
	d. More transition day	0	2	2
9. Research/ evidence	a. General	1	0	1
	b. Pilot schools	0	3	3
10. Workforce	a. Ability for staff to move between HS and PS	1	2	3
	b. Midyear recruitment/ successful recruitment	0	4	4
	c. Not so good recruitment	0	1	1
11. Planning		0	2	2
12. Continue as is		1	0	1
13. Other		2	6	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>98</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.

**TABLE 25. CODING FRAMEWORK – FINALLY PLEASE SHARE YOUR VIEWS ON: THE TOP 1 OR 2 THINGS THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION SHOULD CHANGE IF PLANNING ANY FUTURE SYSTEM REFORM?**

Primary Code	Secondary Code	PS n	HS n	Total n
1. Supporting schools	a. Size of school and implications	2	1	3
	b. Extra admin staff support	1	0	1
	c. More time to prepare	0	2	2
	d. Curriculum planning	0	3	3
	e. Funding (initiatives, small schools)	2	7	9
2. Staffing implications	a. TRTs non-existent	3	0	1
3. Stakeholder engagement	a. Meetings with schools	0	3	6
	b. Portal to engage	1	1	1
	c. Individual coordinator per school	3	0	1
4. System changes	a. Review of transition days	1	1	4
	b. Enrolment processes – too difficult, needs refinement	0	4	5

	c. Transition data	1	3	3
5. Communication	a. Consider how to communicate with different types of schools	2	0	1
	b. Communicate in a timely manner	1	0	2
6. Workforce	a. Secondments for primary school teachers in high school settings	0	0	1
	b. Low category schools	0	3	3
	c. Not well supported	0	1	1
	d. Did well	1	1	1
7. Kids at risk	a. Engagement/ support increase	0	2	3
	b. More funding	0	3	3
8. PD	a. Multiple PD ops/ awareness of training	0	3	3
	b. Ensure a same level of training across all schools	0	2	2
	c. Orbis	0	2	2
9. Learning spaces	a. Timeline to be reconsidered	0	2	2
	b. How spaces are calculated	0	2	2
	c. What was promised	0	1	1
10. Consistency across HS with transition process		2	0	2
11. Went well		1	0	1
12. Other		6	4	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>75</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School Transition School Survey.



## A5.2 FAMILY AND CARERS SURVEY

### Which of the following best describes your Year 7 child? My Year 7 child...

There were 172 individual responses to the survey. It is possible that multiple members of the same family answered the survey. Of these, 148 had a child who started in high school in 2022, 18 had a child starting in an R-12/ B-12 School or Area School, 2 had a child who remained in an eligible primary school and 3 preferred not to say, see Table 26.

**TABLE 26. 'MY YEAR 7 CHILD...'**

	n	%
started high school this year	148	87%
attends an R-12/ B-12 School or Area School	18	11%
Prefer not to say	3	2%
will complete Year 7 in an eligible primary school following discussion with the principal	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100%</b>
Missing	1	

Source. Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers

### Overall, how satisfied were you with the level of support received to prepare for Year 7?

Most families were also very satisfied with the level of support provided received to prepare for Year 7 (with 38% somewhat satisfied and 38% very satisfied, see Table 27).

**TABLE 27. FAMILIES SATISFACTION WITH THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT RECEIVED TO PREPARE FOR YEAR 7**

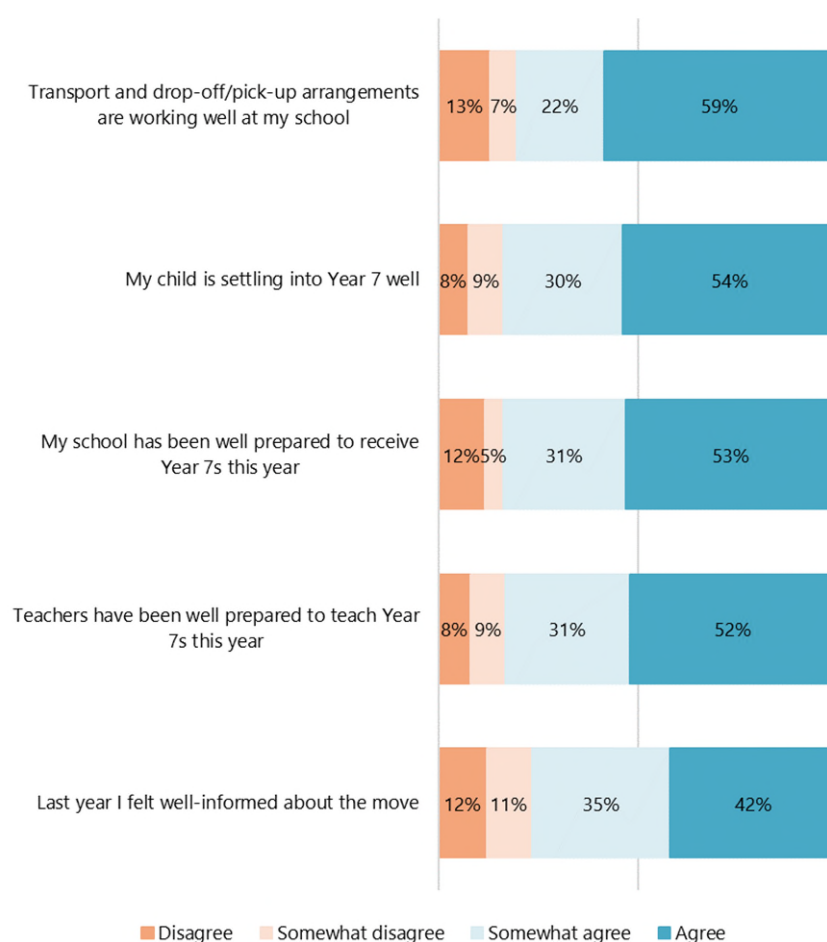
	Count	%
Somewhat satisfied	65	38%
Very satisfied	65	38%
Somewhat dissatisfied	22	13%
Dissatisfied	19	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers

**Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.**

More than three quarters of families that responded to the survey, agreed or somewhat agreed across all items when asked about the Year 7 to High School transition, see Figure 17.

**FIGURE 17. FAMILIES PERSPECTIVE ON YEAR 7 TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION**



Source. Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers

**Does your Year 7 child have a disability or additional learning needs?**

Most families that participated in the surveys did not have a Year 7 child that has a disability or additional learning needs, see Table 28.

**TABLE 28. DOES YOUR YEAR 7 CHILD HAVE A DISABILITY OR ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS?**

	n	%
No	127	78%
Yes	29	18%

Prefer not to say	6	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers

**How much do you agree or disagree that your child received the right amount of support in the lead up to Year 7?**

Over half of families reported that they agreed (32%) or somewhat agreed (32%) that their child received the right amount of support in the lead up to Year 7, see Table 29.

**TABLE 29. FAMILIES PERSPECTIVE ON THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SUPPORT PROVIDED IN THE LEAD UP TO YEAR 7?**

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Agree	9	32%
Somewhat agree	9	32%
Disagree	6	21%
Somewhat disagree	4	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source. Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers

**The question below from the Family and Carers survey had less than 5 respondents so was not reported on.**

Q6. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- i) That your child received the right amount of support in the lead up to Year 7.
- ii) That your concerns about moving your child to high school for Year 7 were addressed.
- g) Agree
- h) Somewhat agree
- i) Somewhat disagree
- j) Disagree
- k) Don't Know/ Not applicable
- l) Prefer not to say

## Coding frameworks

In the family and carers survey we asked respondents to list positive activities that their school did to help prepare their child in the move into high school and also what schools could do to improve the transition of the move into high school. The tables below provide the coding framework for survey questions that gathered qualitative feedback.

For positive activities we heard the most that both transition days and school information events extremely helpful.

For activities that could be improved upon we heard the most that extra transition days were necessary as well as the need to prepare schools better.

**TABLE 30. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT POSITIVE ACTIVITIES DID YOUR SCHOOL DO TO HELP PREPARE YOUR CHILD MOVE INTO HIGH SCHOOL?**

Code	Explainer
Transition Days	Transition days were helpful, including activities run
School info nights/ days for families/ carers	Information nights/ days were informative for families/ carers
The staggered start for Year 7s and 8s	The COVID influence staggered start was helpful to get the Year 7 and 8s transitioned into school
Teachers meeting primary school students prior to them going to the school	Including going to the primary school, meeting at transition days, etc
Communication to families and students	Included communication early about transitions e.g. what their child's time table would look like and what their day would entail
High school students coming across to primary schools for a day	
Dedicated middle school / leadership focus	This is the learning spaces, leadership and teachers
Supportive teachers	Focus on not only how to learn, but also how to support others, developmental experiences
Extra support for students with greater learning needs (n=1)	Provided meetings to discuss best ways to work with their children
Peer support program	Was a good support for students transitioning
Support for kids in remote areas	School students able to stay with their peer group for year 7
Ability to practice things	For example, school drop offs
Area school – nothing changed	

Children enjoyed more/ got excited about high school

Everything done well by the schools

Source. Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers

**TABLE 31. HOW COULD YOUR SCHOOL IMPROVE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL?**

Code	Explainer
Extra transition days	At least more than one to up to a whole week
Better prepare students and families prior to joining the ins and outs of their high school	This includes explaining processes for transition, how high school differs to primary school, and daily school stuff e.g. where to park your bike
Consider homework levels	Transition students into more homework, explaining difference between assignments and homework and ensuring that students aren't overwhelmed
Continuity of learning	Take into account what students had learned previously
Communication	Teach families about how communication will look going forward e.g. portal training Communication for non gov's to be as good as gov schools Send out communications around time tabling earlier Allow teachers and families to meet prior to their child starting
Have a greater understanding of disability needs	Include disability needs in transition data Teachers to be more aware of disability needs
Clear guidelines on enrolment	Precise information on enrolment including timelines of having to be within the zone area
High school teachers to meet primary school students prior to them transitioning	
School not helping with anxiety despite saying they would	
Having equipment ready at schools	E.g. computers families had paid for
Department transparency	On policies, staffing structures, etc
Addressing bullying	Mobile use in schools have enabled this
Dedicated areas for year 7s	
Buddy time	
Public transport tips	

Not happy with the transition and purpose  
for it

---

Area/r-12/b-12 schools have more of a  
transition focus (n=1)

---

Source. Year 7 to High School – Survey for Year 7 Families and Carers

**This is the end of the final report for the Year 7 to High School Project Evaluation.**

**-ENDS-**