

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE (Of which some notice has been given)

Wednesday, 12 September 2012

Hon Jon Ford to the Minister for Education.

I refer to the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne regions and I ask -

- (1) What support is available to teachers in each of these regions who have:
 - (a) chronically disruptive students who suffer from mental disabilities for example, foetal alcohol disorder ?
 - (b) abusive and or threatening students?
 - (c) abusive and or threatening parents?

I thank the Hon. Member for some notice of this question.

Teachers in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne are provided with the same support as teachers in all regions of the State.

1(a) The *Schools Plus* program supports schools in providing supplementary resources for students with an eligible diagnosis to access the curriculum. There are eight eligibility categories, including intellectual disability and severe mental health disorder. The Department of Education provides resources to public schools as a flexible allocation so they can choose to implement the most appropriate interventions and strategies that best support the needs of their students.

Assistance for schools is also available from the Department's Statewide Specialist Services. This includes the Visiting Teacher Service at the School for Special Educational Needs: Disability, which supports schools and teachers with classroom strategies for students with disability.

The Department's School for Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health also provides educational support for students whose physical or mental health prevents them from successfully participating in their own school programs.

Additional support is provided through the School Psychology Service. This service employs over 260 School Psychologists who provide assessment and intervention support and advice for teachers to assist students. The Government made a commitment to progressively appoint an additional 60 school psychologist FTE and this has been reached well ahead of time.

1(b) Improving student behaviour and providing ongoing support to public schools that have students displaying challenging behaviour is a priority for the State Government.

This Government has committed an additional \$47.7 million over five years, \$12.747 million in 2011-12, for the implementation of the *Better Behaviour and Stronger Pastoral Care* strategy, which is in addition to the existing level of funding (\$16.445 million annually) for the Behaviour Management and Discipline Strategy. The *Better Behaviour and Stronger Pastoral Care* strategy allows for both prevention and early intervention programs to be implemented in schools to improve student behaviour.

Schools have access to a range of interventions to address the challenging behaviour of students before resorting to suspension and exclusion. These interventions are:

- classroom management techniques;
- the development and implementation of individual behaviour management and risk management plans; and
- access to specialist staff, including school psychologists, school chaplains and behaviour centres.

Incidents involving weapons are dealt with as a serious breach of school discipline and if a prohibited or controlled weapon is involved, students are immediately suspended. An exclusion order is the most extreme sanction that can be applied to a student in a public school, and is reserved for the most serious and disruptive behaviour.

School psychologists provide vital social-emotional, behavioural management, mental health and learning support for students in public schools. The School Psychology Service maintains a commitment to providing individual student support and school-wide support in student behaviour and mental health.

School psychologists continue to coordinate and facilitate preventative mental health programs, such as Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) and Youth Mental Health First Aid.

In cases where students are committing or threatening to commit a criminal act, principals are encouraged to involve the local police. The Department of Education enjoys a very good relationship with WA Police.

1 (c) The principal of a school is responsible for ensuring the good order and safety of the school and has the authority under the *School Education Act 1999* and the *School Education Regulations 2000*.

The principal may:

- warn the parent that such behaviour is not appropriate and will not be tolerated at the school.
- issue directions pursuant to regulation 69 or a Prohibition Order to stop the parent from entering the school premises pursuant to Regulation 78.

If these actions are not sufficient, school principals can engage with the police for the issuing of a Misconduct Restraining Order or Violence Restraining Order. In situations where parents behaviour threatens the safety and wellbeing of staff or students, principals are encouraged to involve the local police.



Minister for Education