

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 1268**  
**Asked on 8 November 2022**

**DR C ROWAN** ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

With reference to the Department of Education Annual Report 2021-22 which revealed declining attendance rates in every region in Queensland over the last five years—

Will the Minister (a) explain the declining attendance and (b) advise what is being done to ensure attendance rates improve?

ANSWER:

Attendance at school is vital to improving students' educational outcomes, general wellbeing and their future employment options.

In recent years, particularly the atypical effect of the COVID-19 health pandemic and disruptions due to significant weather events, including floods, have impacted student attendance in Queensland.

Students, parents, schools, local communities and government services all play a role in improving school attendance.

A suite of support resources for schools and parents are available on the Department of Education's Every Day Counts website at [www.education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/initiatives/every-day-counts](http://www.education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/initiatives/every-day-counts). These resources include comprehensive strategies and tools to develop, communicate and implement attendance improvement plans.

At the local level, schools use a range of strategies to sustain and improve attendance, including ensuring positive and welcoming school environments, and providing engaging curriculum and extracurricular activities. Additionally, schools engage with parents and students to identify and address barriers that prevent attendance and facilitate access to support services for students and families, where appropriate.

Providing holistic support for students is critical in maximising attendance, including support for student mental health and wellbeing.

Commenced in July 2021 and being implemented over three years, the Queensland Government's \$106.7 million Student Wellbeing Package (the Package) is significantly increasing the number of psychologists or other wellbeing professionals employed to provide support for students' mental health. The Package also includes the GPs in Schools Pilot, a free GP service being provided to students in 50 schools one day per week.

Psychologists and other wellbeing professionals employed through the Package are well-placed to provide support for mild to moderate mental health concerns and assist students to put strategies in place that support their attendance. Further, GPs can assist with mental health plans for students to ensure they can access support for their mental health outside of school. GPs can also diagnose and provide treatment for other health issues that may be presenting a barrier to students' attendance.

Student attendance is featured across a number of the nine domains of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT). The NSIT is used for all school reviews in Queensland state schools and every school has a review at least every four years. The NSIT highlights the importance of:

- having high expectations for attendance;
- the analysis and discussion of a range of data sets including attendance; and
- strategies to maintain and lift attendance rates.

School review reports may contain findings that affirm attendance rates and associated strategies, as well as improvement strategies focused on attendance or student engagement more broadly. Following a review, school leadership teams in partnership with their Assistant Regional Director, analyse the findings and determine appropriate responses to the improvement strategies highlighted in the report, which may include a focus on attendance or student engagement more broadly.

Assistant Regional Directors oversee the quality of educational outcomes for all students in assigned schools through supervising and monitoring the principal's and school's performance. This includes supervising principals to ensure communities are positively and actively engaged with their school and considering key indicators of student wellbeing and outcomes, such as days of lost learning due to absence or disciplinary action.

Assistant Regional Directors, with the support of other regionally-based expert staff, ensure regional structures and processes are in place to support and advise principals and schools.