

Media release

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ASHLEY SCHOOL AT 'A VERY HIGH STANDARD'

Dr Grant Davies, Tasmania's Custodial Inspector has recognised the teachers at Ashley School for creating a positive and supportive learning environment despite facing significant challenges in the youth detention centre's learning environment.

"Teaching is a challenging profession and teaching children and young people in youth detention is particularly complex," Dr Davies said. "The school's student population is constantly changing, with children and young people often only staying in detention for a short time.

"Students may be disengaged from education, display challenging behaviours and have vastly different educational needs to their peers.

"They often have a history of negative experiences of schooling in the community and this is frequently interrelated with trauma histories which can significantly affect students' ability to engage in education on social, emotional and cognitive levels.

"Our youth education inspection - conducted in May and August 2024* - found Ashley School is performing to a very high standard, helping children and young people in detention make educational gains."

Dr Davies said staffing challenges at Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) in recent years had added to these complexities, with low youth worker numbers and behavioural and safety concerns leading to 'lockdowns' and restrictive practices that meant students were unable to attend some or all of the scheduled classes on some days, despite wanting to go to school.

Dr Davies said that Ashley School had implemented several strategies to adapt to individual students' learning needs and the nature of the transient population.

"Ashley School's teaching approach is grounded in trauma-informed, restorative principles and understanding not only of each student's learning needs, but also their social and emotional needs," he said. "For an observer, this translates to small class sizes, high teacher-to-student ratios, differentiated and flexible learning (including practical, skills-based workshops), clear expectations and positive behavioural support, and engaging student-teacher interactions.

"Children and young people in detention have shared they like Ashley School, with some saying it is 'better than school on the outside' and they prefer school days compared to the school holiday period."

Dr Davies said the challenges facing Ashley School were often outside of the school's control, including access to digital resources, AYDC's impending closure, transitioning students to community schooling and capacity to offer vocational education and skills-based programs.

He has made four recommendations in the *Looking towards the future: Youth education inspection report 2026* [\[link\]](#) to improve the opportunities for children and young people at AYDC to engage in Ashley School.

1. The Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) should ensure children and young people in detention have equitable access to digital learning.
2. The Department for Education, Children and Young People should facilitate increased and equitable access to relevant vocational education, training and work experience (both onsite and offsite) for children and young people in detention.
3. The Department for Education, Children and Young People should investigate alternative methods of education provision and delivery to ensure children and young people in detention have full and uninterrupted access to education and programs.
4. In collaboration with Ashley School, the Department for Education, Children and Young People should develop a tailored, well-resourced program to support Year 11 and 12 students transitioning from youth detention into community schooling.

“It is worth noting that AYDC, together with the broader Department for Education, Children and Young People, is actively working to increase staff numbers and thereby facilitate children and young people’s full participation in school and other programs,” Dr Davies said.

The Department’s response to each recommendation has been included in the report.

A youth-friendly version of the report can be found here: [\[link\]](#)

**The Office of the Custodial Inspector conducted an initial inspection with consultant Irene Morgan on 31 May 2024. However, AYDC was in lockdown, resulting in the cancellation of Ashley School programs. They returned to AYDC on 13 and 14 August 2024 to observe classes and other activities at Ashley School. This report captures the findings and observations from both inspection visits, as well as more recent information supplied by Ashley School and observations from our regular monitoring visits. Since December 2024, these monitoring visits have occurred at least twice a month.*

ENDS

***Issued by Paula Catchpole on behalf of the Office of the Custodial Inspector.
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