

Thursday, 11 October, 2012

Construction starts at new Ashford Special School

Construction is underway on a new school for students with disabilities, which will increase the capacity of the well-regarded Ashford Special School to more than 100 students with special needs.

Ashford Special School will be relocated from its Anzac Highway location to William Light R-12 School at Plympton, where a new special school is being built as part of the State Government's special school relocation program.

Education and Child Development Minister Grace Portolesi said the relocation would allow for more children with special needs to attend the school – and for them to go to school in a mainstream environment.

“Students at Ashford Special School will be able to enjoy world-class facilities at the new school, all designed to cater for students with a range of special needs,” Ms Portolesi said.

“Moving the school alongside the William Light R-12 School at Plympton will provide more opportunities for students from both schools to take part in activities together.

“They will be able to share facilities and in some cases, classes, giving students the experience of working together with their peers.

“This is another example of this Government's commitment to public education and supporting students with special needs.”

The new special school will include:

- Four sub schools, each with four general learning areas, wet areas and secure storage, withdrawal room, student amenities (fully accessible with hoists, hydraulic tables etc), calm room and secure all-weather outdoor play area (fenced, soft fall with suspension points).
- A stand-alone administration and reception area, four offices, two meeting rooms, resource area, disability access toilet, staff lounge, staff toilets, school services officers' work area and storage.
- Covered pick-up/drop-off area for students who arrive in taxis and mini buses.
- Horticultural shed.
- Storage for school buses.
- Upgrades to existing technical studies buildings on the William Light campus so they have disability access.

Principal of Ashford Special School Jen Mathwin-Raymond said the school community is excited about the move.

“The school community including the staff, the students and the families had a lot of input on the specific design of the new school, and this means we were able to ensure the two schools will work collaboratively together on the one site, sharing facilities and learning when we can,” she said.

“To help prepare for the move to the new site we have had a peer mentoring program where year 10 students from William Light work with their peers at Ashford on Health and PE Programs and gain SACE credits as part of their Personal Learning Plans.”

Principal of William Light R-12 Michele Pope said having the two schools together on the site would provide a number of benefits for students.

“The mentoring program has been a great success, and our students have really benefited from working with their peers at Ashford Special School,” she said.

“Many students continue to work with students at Ashford Special School once their mentoring program is officially completed, and some have continued in the disability sector undertaking further study or employment in the area.

“Having the two schools located on the one site will mean more students can benefit from the opportunity to work with students at Ashford Special School.”

Construction on the new site is expected to be completed for the start of the 2014 school year.