

HELEN'S WAY · STATUS CHECK

Where are we at? The NSW Auditor-General's recommendations on supporting students with disability

The NSW Auditor-General's performance audit *Supporting students with disability* (September 2024) made five recommendations, to be delivered by January 2026. This is a plain-language check on where they appear to stand.

A Helen's Way status check · July 2026

ABOUT THIS STATUS CHECK

This check draws only on public documents: the NSW Auditor-General's report and the Department of Education's formal response to it (both September 2024), and the Department's Interim Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026–2029 (June 2026). It reflects the position as at July 2026. A definitive account of progress would need the Department's own reporting against the January 2026 deadline, which we have not seen published; where the position is unclear from public documents, we say so. We offer it constructively — the final DIAP, due September 2026, is the opportunity to show delivery.

In brief

In September 2024 the NSW Auditor-General told the Department of Education to do five things by January 2026 to better support students with disability. The Department supported or partially supported all five. Six months past that deadline, the public evidence — the Department's own June 2026 Interim DIAP — does not yet demonstrate delivery of the two that matter most to students and families: monitoring how students with disability are actually faring, and matching support to the demand for it.

None of this is to dismiss the work underway. Funding reform is continuing, guidance is being refreshed, and the Department accepted the direction of every recommendation. But an audit deadline has passed, and the interim plan leaves the student-facing pieces either undated or unaddressed. That is the gap the final DIAP should close.

Status at a glance

THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S RECOMMENDATION (BY JAN 2026)	DEPARTMENT'S POSITION	WHERE IT APPEARS TO BE AT, MID-2026
1. At least annually, monitor the experiences and outcomes of students with disability	Support	Underway, not yet delivered for students. Monitoring to "commence... from 2025/26," but the outcomes framework was "not fully operational" at Sept 2024, and the June 2026 plan still lists the student survey with no disability breakdown or target.
2. Continue to expand the use of NCCD data to support funding allocation	Support in principle	In progress. Funding reform to link resourcing to student need has been underway since 2020 and continues.
3. Work with the Australian Government on disability-loading reviews to ensure adequate funding	Partially support	Ongoing, shared with the Commonwealth. Depends on Commonwealth-led reviews; the Department says it will keep working with other jurisdictions.
4. Enhance guidance and support on reasonable adjustments, including resolving conflicting views in a timely way	Support	Committed, but undated. The June 2026 plan includes an action to "enhance guidance and resources on reasonable adjustments," with the timeframe listed as "TBC."
5. Improve planning and delivery of targeted supports — a clear picture of supply vs demand, wait-time monitoring, less admin burden, transparent decisions	Partially support	Key elements not evident. The June 2026 plan improves the access-request form (Action 4.2) but commits to no tracking of supply vs demand or wait times — the heart of this recommendation.

Recommendation by recommendation

Recommendation 1 — Monitor how students with disability are actually faring, at least once a year

Department's response to the audit: Support

What the audit asked for:

"At least annually, monitor the experiences and outcomes of students with disability to: identify and address emerging issues; identify and promote good practice; take effective steps where there is a need to improve longer-term student outcomes; and consider the impacts of intersectionality. (Recommendation 1, p.7)"

Where it appears to be at (mid-2026): The Department supported this and said monitoring would "commence... from 2025/26." But the audit had already found its disability outcomes framework — "endorsed by the Department executive in 2022" — "was still not fully operational in September 2024" (p.5). The June 2026 Interim DIAP still lists its student measure as "My Say My Way and NSW Public Schools Survey data," with no breakdown for students with disability and no target to improve (Interim DIAP, p.23). So the commitment stands, but a working, public measure of how students with disability are faring is not yet evident.

Recommendation 2 — Use NCCD data to steer funding to need

Department's response to the audit: Support in principle

What the audit asked for:

"Continue to expand the use of NCCD data to support funding allocation in accordance with the needs of students with disability. (Recommendation 2, p.7)"

Where it appears to be at (mid-2026): The Department supported this in principle. It has been reforming disability funding since 2020 to link resourcing to a student's functional need rather than diagnosis, and says it is exploring how NCCD data can inform targeted funding. This is genuine, continuing work — the audit's concern was that it has not been timely.

Recommendation 3 — Work with the Commonwealth so schools are adequately funded

Department's response to the audit: Partially support

What the audit asked for:

"Work with the Australian Government on reviews of the disability loading settings to ensure NSW public schools are adequately funded to support students with disability. (Recommendation 3, p.7)"

Where it appears to be at (mid-2026): The Department partially supported this, noting that whether the loading is "adequate" is genuinely hard to determine and depends on Commonwealth-led reviews. It says it will continue to work with the Commonwealth and other states and territories. Progress here is shared and largely outside the Department's sole control.

Recommendation 4 — Give schools and families clearer guidance on reasonable adjustments — and a way to resolve disputes

Department's response to the audit: Support

What the audit asked for:

"Work with stakeholders to enhance guidance and practical support to public schools and families on reasonable adjustments for students with disability, including ways to resolve conflicting views in a timely manner. (Recommendation 4, p.7)"

Where it appears to be at (mid-2026): The Department supported this. The June 2026 Interim DIAP includes an action to "enhance guidance and resources on reasonable adjustments for schools" — but the timeframe is listed as "TBC" (Interim DIAP, Action 2.2, p.32). The "resolve conflicting views in a timely manner" element connects directly to the independent complaints pathway families still do not have (see Helen's Way Priority 4). Committed, but not yet dated or delivered.

Recommendation 5 — Match support to demand, and stop making families wait blind

Department's response to the audit: Partially support

What the audit asked for:

"Improve the planning and delivery of targeted supports by: (a) obtaining a clear and timely picture of the supply of, and demand for, targeted supports at a local and statewide level to identify and address constraints; (b) monitoring the time taken for targeted supports to be provided to eligible students, and addressing delays; (c) reducing the administrative burden for schools in applying; and (d) making the basis for decisions transparent to schools and families. (Recommendation 5, p.7)"

Where it appears to be at (mid-2026): This is the one where the gap is clearest. The audit found the Department "does not maintain waiting lists for students deemed eligible for targeted supports where the support is not available" and "does not monitor the time taken for targeted supports to be provided," so "cannot tell how long students with identified needs are waiting" (p.5). The June 2026 Interim DIAP's answer is a "new Access Request system and streamlined process" (Action 4.2, p.40) — a better application form. It does not commit to tracking supply versus demand, or wait times, which is the core of the recommendation. On the public evidence, those elements are not yet addressed.

What this means — and what we're asking

Two of these recommendations go to the heart of what families experience: whether the system is watching how students with disability are actually doing (Recommendation 1), and whether there is enough support to go around, provided in reasonable time (Recommendation 5). Both were due by January 2026. Both remain, on the public evidence, unfinished — and the June 2026 interim plan does not yet close them.

Helen's Way asks that the final DIAP (due September 2026) explicitly pick up the Auditor-General's recommendations for students — with dates attached — so that an independent audit's findings translate into changes families can see. We would welcome working with the Department to get there.

Sources. NSW Auditor-General (Audit Office of NSW), *Supporting students with disability* — performance audit, 26 September 2024: recommendations and January 2026 deadline (p.7); outcomes-framework and targeted-support findings (p.5); the Department of Education's response positions (Appendix 1, pp.78–82). NSW Department of Education, *Interim Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026–2029* (June 2026): student measures (p. 23); reasonable-adjustments guidance (Action 2.2, p.32); access-request process (Action 4.2, p.40). Verified against the source documents, July 2026.

Helen's Way — turning shared lived experience into meaningful change for neurodivergent learners. Prepared July 2026. This is an advocacy resource, not legal advice, and is offered in a spirit of partnership with the Department. helensway.au