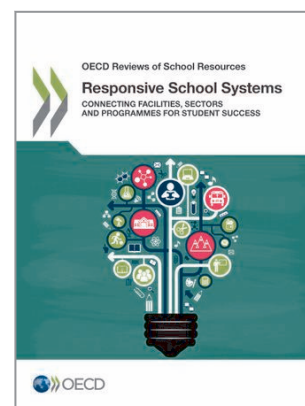# OECD *Multilingual Summaries*
Responsive School Systems
Connecting Facilities, Sectors and Programmes for Student Success

Summary in English

This report is the second in a series of thematic comparative reports bringing together the findings of the OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools (School Resources Review). It provides analyses and policy options to assist governments in promoting educational quality, equity and efficiency through the organisation of school facilities and education services in a context of changing demand for school places and evolving student needs. Following the introduction, the report's three main chapters focus on the thematic areas below:

- Chapter 2: How the distribution of responsibilities for the school network and different steering tools can contribute to the effective organisation, distribution and size of educational facilities.

- Chapter 3: How the school network can be adapted to demographic changes and student needs to support policy objectives in urban, rural and remote areas.

- Chapter 4: How education services can be co-ordinated across levels, sectors and programmes to support students' vertical and horizontal transitions.

Chapter 1 introduces the trends that motivate the report and provides the context for the subsequent analyses. Countries are confronted with demographic trends, economic and social changes, as well as new and evolving educational objectives. Adjusting educational infrastructures and the services they deliver in response to these trends is crucial to ensure that students can continue to benefit from a high-quality education where they need it. Although physical resources account for a relatively small share of total educational expenditure in most school systems, they are critical to enable all actors in the system to work as effectively as possible towards students' success.

The governance of responsive school networks requires effective steering and co-ordination

Chapter 2, Governing the school network, analyses the roles and responsibilities different actors assume in governing a system's school facilities and how the relationships between them affect the system's capacity to respond to changing educational demand and student needs. As OECD school systems have grown in administrative complexity, they are increasingly characterised by multi-actor and multi-level governance arrangements. These developments generate both opportunities and challenges for the governance of school networks and depend on an adequate allocation of responsibilities and strong co-ordination between national, regional and local authorities. Education authorities have a range of steering and co-ordination mechanisms at their disposal that they should use to facilitate the strategic planning of school networks at the central, regional and local levels. To ensure that the school network is responsive to the needs of today's and tomorrow's learners, the chapter recommends that reforms should seek to: invest planning authority at the appropriate level of government and strengthen horizontal co-ordination mechanisms; build capacity for school network planning supported by the collection and maintenance of high-quality data; balance incentives for network efficiency with the need to maintain high-quality provision in small schools and remote areas; and ensure equitable access to capital funding.

Efficient regional responses to changing educational demand are guided by equity and students' needs

Demographic shifts, regional economic developments and changing student needs have generated costly mismatches between educational demand and the supply of school places in many OECD

countries. Chapter 3, Adapting the school network to changing needs in urban, rural and remote areas, analyses efficient responses to this challenge and assumes a territorial perspective to acknowledge the significant heterogeneity that many countries face across different parts of their school network. In this context, responding to changing demand and student needs requires strategies that are sensitive to local contexts and take educational quality, equity and student well-being as their guiding principles. To do so, authorities need to identify and address equity concerns early on, engage relevant stakeholders and carefully evaluate ongoing network reforms. School network consolidation may be unavoidable to guarantee adequate learning environments for all students. Nevertheless, systems need to carefully weigh its costs and benefits and consider the potential efficiency gains afforded by sharing resources across providers, school clustering or the strategic redistribution of education services across sites. To adapt school networks to changing demand and student needs, the chapter recommends that reforms should aim to: consider a range of strategies to enhance the efficiency of school networks with overcapacities; compensate for efficiency, quality and equity challenges experienced by remote schools; and strategically respond to capacity shortages in urban school networks.

Educational levels, sectors and programmes must be aligned to support students' vertical and horizontal transitions

Chapter 4, Co-ordinating educational levels and sectors to improve student trajectories, examines the distribution of the educational offer across levels and pathways in schools and the co-ordination between its different components. A failure to effectively co-ordinate the educational offer risks the duplication or fragmentation of services. It also creates barriers to students' smooth progression across levels and their transition into post-secondary education or the labour market. To improve student trajectories, systems need to consider both the vertical co-ordination of levels and grades as well as the horizontal co-ordination of parallel sectors and programmes. Providing a variety of educational pathways has the potential to more closely match each student's interests and needs but also risks increasing segregation and a fragmentation of the educational offer. Tackling duplications between programmes, enhancing their alignment with post-secondary opportunities and guiding students to programmes that correspond to their interests and needs thus plays an important role in reaping the benefits of a diversified offer. To improve the co-ordination of educational levels, sectors and programmes, the chapter also recommends that reforms should seek to: enable students' smooth vertical progression by improving collaboration across levels and addressing grade repetition and drop out; ensure greater permeability between educational pathways; and strengthen the identification and supportive placement of students with special educational needs.

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