

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY—SCHOOL AUDIT CHECKLIST AND SUPPORT INFORMATION

Introduction

Since 2005, all Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) schools have been required to have an anti-bullying policy or have included a section on anti-bullying within their Student Behaviour Management Policy or Student Code of Conduct. An anti-bullying and harassment policy enables schools to state clearly that bullying is taken seriously, consequences will be applied and prevention and intervention strategies will be implemented.

As a result of the recommendations of the 'Cossey Report' (Cossey 2011), schools are required to ensure that an easily locatable and well publicised link on the school website to the relevant anti-bullying policy or anti-bullying section within an existing policy is available. This is to link to the schools' resolution process for bullying. Schools are also encouraged to review their anti-bullying policy annually and involve parents and students in this process. All schools are to include as part of their enrolment process a requirement for parent/s and/or students to annually acknowledge/agree to the school's Student Code of Conduct. Many schools provide this opportunity through a school diary or an annual letter returned with parent and student signatures to the class/home group teacher.

Principals are required to provide to the School Governing Council term updates in relation to school bullying related data and trends and any anti-bullying programs/initiatives in place or being considered. This report is to be made available to the general school community via the newsletter and to be placed on the school's website for easy access by parents. Governing Councils are encouraged to include the topic of bullying behaviour as a council meeting agenda item at least once a term.

This anti-bullying policy audit checklist provides information that will help schools meet the recommended actions under 'Element 3: Policies and procedures' of the *National Safe Schools Framework* (MCEECDYA 2011). The nine elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are broken down into key characteristics with examples of key actions and practices of each characteristic detailed in the Framework's supporting Resource Manual. For example, Element 3: Policies and procedures: Characteristic 3.1 relates to 'whole school, collaboratively developed policies, plans and structures for supporting safety and wellbeing'.

The National Safe Schools Framework audit tool which is designed to assist schools to make informed judgments about the extent to which they have created and maintained a safe and supportive learning environment can be found on pp 1–5 of its Resource Manual at <<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/NationalSafeSchoolsFramework.aspx>>.

The following checklist compliments the information found in the resource *Reducing bullying in schools: A professional development resource* (DECS 2004) on pp 55–70 (Developing an anti-bullying policy), provided to all DECD schools in 2004. This document in a modified form is available at <<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/pages/bullying/saferschools/>>.

In order to comply with the requirements under the *Equal Opportunity (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2008*, it is a requirement that all DECD schools with secondary students have a sexual harassment policy based on the DECD Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy 2011, available at <<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/SexualHarassmentPreventio.pdf>>.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY—SCHOOL AUDIT CHECKLIST

District	School name and contact details	Achieved	Not achieved
Statement	Make this a clear, firm statement on the school's stance on bullying, harassment and violence.		
Definitions	For consistency, schools are encouraged to use nationally agreed to, Coalition agreed to, and Equal Opportunity agreed to definitions of bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination, cyber bullying, and sexual harassment, and provide examples of each.		
Reporting and responsibilities	How is bullying reported? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who to report to? • How to report? • When to report? • Responsibilities of the principal, staff, students, parents. 		
How to recognise a student being bullied	Provide information about the signs of bullying.		
Other considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, consider the needs of students with disabilities (including learning disabilities), students under guardianship, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, gifted students, students who are same sex attracted. • Enable parent/s and/or students to annually acknowledge/agree to the school's Student Code of Conduct. 		
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In actions responding to incidents, allow for flexibility depending on the nature, severity and extent of the bullying. Natural justice principles should apply. • Inform parents about serious incidents involving their child. • Follow up victims and perpetrators. 		
Prevention, intervention and coping strategies	Document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prevention, intervention and post-intervention strategies used • how bullying is addressed through the curriculum • coping strategies suggested by the school. 		
Training and development	Provide training and development to teachers, parents and students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will provide this training and development? • How/When? • When/How will training and development be updated? 		
Distribution list	Who receives a copy of the policy? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How/When? • Students/Parents/Teachers/Community? Who will place it on the school's website and when?		
Review date	Schools are also encouraged to review their anti-bullying policy annually and involve parents and students in this process. Date reviewed: _____ Next review: _____		
Documented processes	Document processes and forms used, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • action plans • reporting forms • follow-up documentation forms • reflection sheets • process examples (eg some/all of the 6 Methods of Intervention) • advice to parents, students and staff. 		
Further information	Provide links to useful websites.		

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Provide a signed copy and a copy of the school's policy to the Regional Director by the end of the year.

Support information for a school's anti-bullying policy

STATEMENT: A clear, firm statement on the school's stance on bullying, harassment and violence

Example Statement 1

The school will provide a safe, inclusive, supportive and ordered learning environment free from bullying, harassment and violence. Bullying, including cyber bullying, harassment and violence, is not acceptable in this school and will be dealt with seriously and expediently.

The school will work with the school community and other services and agencies to support its students in being responsible and productive members of this community.

Example Statement 2

Bullying, harassment and violence are hurtful and destructive. Physical bullying *can be seen*. Cyber bullying happens *behind the screens*. Bullying, harassment and violence continue to be issues of concern for students and their parents/guardians.

Bullying, including cyber bullying and harassment and violence, is not acceptable in this school and will be dealt with seriously and expediently.

The school will work with the school community and other services and agencies to support its students in being responsible and productive members of this community.

DEFINITIONS: Nationally agreed to, Coalition agreed to, and Equal Opportunity agreed to definitions of bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination, cyber bullying and sexual harassment

Definitions should be provided for bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination, cyber bullying and sexual harassment. These definitions should be consistent with examples from *Safer DECD schools* (DECD 2011). Additional definitions can be found in the *National Safe Schools Framework resource manual* (MCEECDYA 2011, pp 40–50).

REPORTING AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Consistent with the National Safe Schools Framework Element 3: Policies and Procedures: Characteristic 3.1: Whole school, collaboratively developed policies, plans and structures for supporting safety and wellbeing

The Coalition of South Australian school jurisdictions believes surveying students regularly and developing a report and an action plan for the Governing Council are good ways of monitoring and acting upon student, parent and teacher concerns. A commitment to this in a policy would indicate the school is doing all it can to resolve the issue of bullying.

Reporting of a bullying incident

How is bullying reported?

Students are reluctant to report incidents of bullying so, when a student or parent reports an incident, this should be taken seriously. Other sources may be a school staff member or even a member of the public.

Who to report to?

Parents and students may choose to report incidents of bullying, including cyber bullying, to their class teacher in the first instance and, if the incident is serious or unresolved, to the school counsellor, principal or deputy/assistant principal, or to someone on the school's staff they have confidence in. It is difficult for the school to follow up on an incident if it is unaware of it and, therefore, reporting of incidents should be made easy and encouraged.

How to report?

Parents and students may find it helpful to write down the details of the incident as a first step. A face-to-face discussion is usually the best way of reporting an incident and, if they are dissatisfied with the outcome, they can follow up with a written statement with the request for a further meeting. If seriously concerned about the manner in which the school is dealing with an incident, a parent can contact his/her local Regional Office for support.

When to report?

Reporting of an incident should occur as soon after the incident as possible. This gives the school the best opportunity to follow up the incident and intervene.

Principals need to provide to the school Governing Council updates each term in relation to school bullying data and trends and any anti-bullying programs/initiatives in place or being considered. This report should be made available to the general school community via the newsletter and be placed on the school's website for easy access by parents.

Responsibilities of principals, staff, students and parents

The principal will decrease the likelihood of bullying and violence in the school if he/she:

- develops, implements and reviews regularly the school's anti-bullying policy (ie schools are encouraged to review annually and to involve staff, parents and students)
- surveys regularly all or a random selection of students, parents and teachers, in line with the review schedule for the school's policy
- provides to the Governing Council updates each term in relation to school bullying data and trends and any anti-bullying programs/initiatives in place or being considered and includes the topic of bullying behaviour as a council meeting agenda item at least once per term
- ensures that new staff and new students and their families are aware of the school community's negotiated anti-bullying policy and the decision-making procedures open to them if they wish to influence school practice
- ensures the inclusion, as part of the school's enrolment process, a requirement for parents and/or students to annually acknowledge/agree to the school's Student Code of Conduct
- provides students with orientation in school policy, at least when they are in transition (eg Years 3 and 8), and particularly in the school's anti-bullying policy and other relevant behavioural expectations, with follow up at least in Years 6 and 10
- manages the incidents of bullying in a way that is consistent with the DECD School Discipline Policy
- provides in-service training and development to counsellors and other key staff in effective strategies in managing bullying, such as in the Six Methods of Intervention as, described in 'Bullying in schools: Six methods of intervention'
- ensures ongoing training and development of teachers, induction of students and the provision of information to parents
- manages a whole-school-change approach to ensure the Keeping Safe child protection curriculum is implemented in all year levels
- ensures that all parents
 - have access to the school's anti-bullying policy, the DECD *Bullying and harassment at school: Advice for parents and caregivers* leaflet, and information about the Keeping Safe child protection curriculum and related documents, including providing them on the school's website
 - have access to the reports to Governing Council each term, via the newsletter and on the school's website
 - are aware of their rights to advocacy and of avenues open to them should they have grievances relating to the school's management of an incident of bullying.

School staff members will decrease the likelihood of bullying and violence in the school if they:

- develop and foster positive relationships with students and families
- communicate and interact effectively with students and engage in cooperative problem-solving relationships to address issues of bullying
- participate in developing, implementing and reviewing the school's anti-bullying policy, curriculum and in-service offerings, and the procedures for managing incidents of bullying
- critically reflect on practices and develop the knowledge and skills needed to manage incidents of bullying successfully
- establish, maintain, make explicit and model the school's expectations relating to bullying
- participate in training and development related to decreasing bullying in schools
- support students to be effective bystanders.

Parents will support the school in maintaining a safe and supportive environment if they:

- keep the school informed of concerns about behaviour, their children's health issues or other matters of relevance
- communicate in a respectful manner with the school staff about issues of concern soon after these concerns arise
- follow up on these concerns and, if necessary, contact the Regional Office if the concerns are not resolved following intervention by the principal.

Students will support the school in maintaining a safe and supportive environment if they:

- are respectful towards other students, staff and members of the school community
- participate in sessions regarding the school's anti-bullying policy, the Keeping Safe child protection curriculum, being an effective bystander, and other sessions regarding behavioural expectations
- communicate with an appropriate adult if bullied or harassed or if they are aware that someone else is being bullied or harassed
- learn to be an effective bystander, so that bullying and harassment are discouraged through peer influence.

HOW TO RECOGNISE A STUDENT BEING BULLIED: Information about the signs of bullying

Students who are being bullied or harassed may not talk about it with their teachers, friends or with the school's counsellors. They may be afraid that it will only make things worse or they may feel that it is wrong to 'tell tales'.

This is why parents and teachers have an important part to play in helping the school and the student deal with bullying. A change in behaviour in students may be a signal that they are being bullied or they have some other concern.

Signs

Some signs that a student is being bullied may be:

- unexplained cuts, bruises or scratches
- damaged or ripped clothing
- vague headaches or stomach aches
- refusal to go to school
- asking for extra pocket money or food
- tearfulness, anxiety or difficulty sleeping
- 'hiding' information on mobile phones, emails or in comments on their social networking pages.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Disabilities, guardianship and more

In establishing an anti-bullying policy, it is important to consider students with a disability, gifted students, Special School students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students in care (guardianship), and students who are same sex attracted. Schools should include in education plans any issues related to bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination or child protection matters for students with a disability (Negotiated Education Plan), an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student (Individual Learning Plan) and students under guardianship (Individual Education Plan).

All schools should include, as part of the enrolment process, a requirement for parents and/or students to annually acknowledge/agree to the school's Student Code of Conduct.

ACTIONS: Responses to incidents, follow-up and reporting to parents

Some flexibility is needed in how incidents are tackled, depending on, for example, the nature, severity and extent of the bullying. When sanctions are applied, they should be appropriate to the severity of the offence. In extreme cases, under the Regulations pursuant to the Education Act, principals can suspend or exclude students from attendance at school if they:

... act in a manner that threatens the safety or well being of a student or member of staff of, or other person associated with the school (including by sexually harassing, racially vilifying, verbally abusing or bullying that person).

Principals can use these Regulations for incidents that occur off-site and/or out of school hours if another student's safety or wellbeing has been threatened. Therefore, these Regulations can be used for incidents of cyber bullying or violence (see Circular to Principals May 2009).

The student who has been bullied may need support and assistance from the school after the problem has been resolved. This is because the effect of being bullied may result in continued anxiety, which can affect a student's capacity to learn.

'Response level and types of behaviour' provides a guide regarding behaviour descriptors and suitable levels of response.

Follow-up of students who are victims or perpetrators of bullying may be required to ensure they feel safe at school and remain connected to the school following an incident.

The State Government's response to the Cossey Report (Cossey 2011) requires site leaders to notify parents of the victim of violence at the earliest opportunity.

PREVENTION, COPING AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: Information about prevention, coping and intervention strategies

Students should be informed of the school's policy and what students can expect if they are the perpetrator or the victim of bullying. Student coping strategies used by the school should be detailed with a note that these will be different for each individual depending on the circumstances.

The school's curriculum strategies that strengthen the school's anti-bullying policy, including implementation of the Keeping Safe child protection curriculum, should be developed, communicated and implemented. These curriculum strategies should also be documented.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: Information about when, how, to whom and by whom training and development is offered

Providing professional learning opportunities for teachers and induction of students are essential if consistent practice is to occur around the prevention of and intervention after incidents of bullying, harassment or violence. Parents should also be provided with information about school policies via the school's website, in the school's newsletter, and at information evenings. There is a direct link between schools providing quality staff training and development and student induction and effective implementation of an anti-bullying policy.

As there is also a link between positive classroom practice and a lower incidence of bullying, harassment and violence, teachers within their first five years of employment with DECD should complete a course in *Your classroom: Safe, orderly and productive*. If teachers are interacting with students who have significant behavioural issues, principals should consider if they require training in *Non-violent intervention*, available from the Regional Office.

DISTRIBUTION LIST: Details of when, how, to whom and by whom the policy is communicated

Part of the development and documentation process for a school policy should be the recording of who is provided with the policy, when and by whom, and in what form. The communication of the policy via a newsletter and the school's website also needs to be noted.

REVIEW DATE: Policy review schedule

All schools are encouraged to review their anti-bullying policy annually, and involve parents and students in this process.

Schools should state the date that the policy was published or reviewed and when the next review is due.

As part of site visits, Regional Directors will sight school anti-bullying policies and report on compliance levels, and the quality of the policy and its integration into the culture of the school.

DOCUMENTED PROCESSES: List of documents involved in the process of creating and managing the policy

Part of the development and documentation process for a school policy should be the recording of all the documents relating to the creation and management of the policy.

The documents should be attached to the policy.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Links to useful websites and/or organisations

The Department for Education and Child Development's website provides a comprehensive list of information and links regarding bullying and harassment at

<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/pages/bullying/bullyharassment/>

In regard to cyber safety information and links, go to

<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/pages/cybersafety/36219/>

Schools should add any other relevant websites.