CONNECTED

A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO BULLYING PREVENTION WITHIN THE SCHOOL GATES AND BEYOND

Government of
South Australia

CONTENTS

MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Every child deserves to feel safe and cared for in an inclusive community that meets their needs.

When bullying occurs, it can have a serious impact on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. This impact ripples across family, school and social relationships. Bullying harms us all.

Bullying is a complex issue that communities across Australia and the world are working hard to address. There are many differing perspectives about what bullying is, what drives it, and the most effective means to protect children from it. Advances in technology continue to change children's experiences of bullying, and expand the reach of cyberbullying into children's lives.

We face many challenges in dealing with bullying, but we do not face them alone. 'Connected – A community approach to bullying prevention within the school gates and beyond' sets out the South Australian Government's strategy to stand united with families and communities, with non-government partners, across all education sectors, to protect children and young people from bullying.

The strategy establishes our shared understanding of bullying as a complex issue that is driven by the quality of social connections in our community. It recognises that children and young people are more than just students. They are active citizens in our communities. They have extended family and kinship relationships beyond their immediate families. They have rich and varied digital lives and identities. All of these factors shape children's experiences of bullying, the times in their development when they are at greatest risk of bullying, and why some children and young people are more likely to be bullied.

In an area that has experienced ad hoc and disconnected responses in the past, the strategy provides five key actions to guide all bullying prevention responses in South Australia. This ensures that government and non-government professionals and other adults work in a consistent and coordinated way to protect children and young people from bullying. The strategy aligns

South Australia's work with the national Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, and is supported by a rigorous evidence base.

Educators in our schools and early childhood services work hard every day to prevent, identify and respond to bullying between children and young people. They work closely with parents, families and professionals to help children to feel safe and supported. The strategy will deliver specialist knowledge as well as evidence-based tools and resources to help educators respond to bullying in the most effective way. More importantly, it will connect educators with partners beyond the school gates so that we can build on our collective capacity. Together, we can give South Australian children and young people every opportunity to thrive in a community that is safe from bullying.

Hon John Gardner MP

Minister for Education

VISION AND PRINCIPLES

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (ASWF) provides the overarching vision, principles and key elements for the creation of learning communities that promote student safety and wellbeing. The ASWF vision and principles have been adapted to underpin a community approach to the prevention of children's peer-to-peer bullying in South Australia.

VISION

South Australian children and young people are thriving in safe environments that promote positive relationships, safety and wellbeing so that they can achieve their full potential.

PRINCIPLES

1 Visible leadership inspires positive environments for children.

Leaders of organisations providing services for children play an active role in building a positive environment where children and young people feel engaged, respected and safe.

2 Communities are inclusive and connected.

All members of the community are active participants in building a welcoming culture that values diversity and actively supports inclusion for all children and young people.

3 Children and young people are active participants.

Children and young people are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, and feel engaged and empowered to use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe.

4 Educators, families, professionals and community members work together in partnership.

Children and young people, families and communities collaborate as partners with educators and other professionals to support children's learning, safety and wellbeing using evidence-based resources.

5 Communities model, promote and support positive and respectful behaviour.

Organisations, children and young people, and families cultivate, demonstrate and promote a shared understanding of positive and respectful behaviour.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT OF BULLYING

"**Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm.**

It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying."

National definition of bullying
Education Council (2018)

27%

of year 4 to year 9 Australian students report being bullied every few weeks or more.[1]

Peer-to-peer bullying between children and young people is a complex social issue that has increasingly garnered national attention over the past 30 years.

Approximately one in four year 4 to year 9 Australian students (27%) report being bullied every few weeks or more.[1] Cyberbullying is less common than face-to-face bullying, with approximately one in five children experiencing online bullying in any year.[2] Australian research indicates that bullying tends to peak during the early to middle primary years, and again just prior to the transition to secondary school.[3]

Approximately

1 in 5

children experience cyberbullying in any year.[2]

Hurtful teasing was the most prevalent form of bullying experienced by students, followed by having hurtful lies told about them.[4] In 85% of bullying interactions, peers are present as onlookers and play a central part in the bullying process.[5] Contrary to popular perceptions, the roles of 'bully', 'victim' and 'bystander' in bullying interactions are not distinct.

Research studies indicate that approximately 6–10% of children both engaged in bullying and were the targets of bullying themselves.[6]

The social, emotional and psychological effects of bullying for some children can be severe and lifelong.[7] A recent analysis by Pricewaterhouse-Coopers estimated that the costs associated with bullying in Australia totalled $2.3 billion, incurred while the children are in school and for twenty years after school completion, for each individual school year group.[8]

Peers are onlookers in

85%

of bullying interactions and play a central part in the bullying process.[5]

In 2018, SA students in year 4 to year 10 reported to experience bullying:

Monthly
50%

Weekly
18%

Rarely
32%

In South Australia, student reports about their experiences of bullying are obtained as a part of the wellbeing and engagement collection administered annually. In 2018, this survey was completed by more than 75,000 students in years 4 to 10.

In 2018 18% of children and young people in SA schools reported being bullied at least once a week. Half of all students reported that they were bullied monthly and 32% reported that they were rarely bullied. There has been a modest increase in the number of children reporting that they were rarely bullied compared to 2015 data. Verbal and social bullying were the most common forms of bullying experienced by SA students.[9]

In 2018, the Commissioner for Children and Young People undertook a consultation with almost 300 children and young people to understand their experiences and perspectives about bullying. The Bullying Project is the report of this consultation.[10]

The children and young people described most bullying as negative interactions about issues related to belonging and identity, intimate personal information, physical appearance, 'slut shaming', intelligence, race, sexuality and family slurs. They indicated that this behaviour most frequently occurred in person and at times had additional online cyberbullying interactions. These findings are consistent with the evidence from the past 30 years of research in Australia.

Children and young people identified that bullying occurred at school, at home, online and in public spaces (eg bus stops, shopping centres and sporting facilities). Their feedback demonstrated their understanding of the complexity of bullying and the individual situations, peer relationships and relationships at home that may influence bullying.

Based on the children and young people's views and feedback, the Commissioner highlighted that there were policy implications for 'the development of a comprehensive whole of community anti-bullying strategy for South Australia'.

Bullying may occur in these environments:

School

Home

Online

Public spaces

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN VOICES

Public consultation process (2018)

- A YourSAy public survey
- Attorney-General's Department Advisory Roundtable to examine civil and criminal legislative reform options
- 'Keeping children safe from bullying' conference
- Community consultation workshops
- Youth consultation by the Commissioner for Children and Young People

844 YourSAy responses

YourSAy survey identified the following could help prevent bullying:

91% families teaching through their actions

91% children's sporting/ recreational organisations

80% parenting services

79% social media and internet companies

74% popular media

74% police

92% of YourSAy respondents said adults and community members needed to model respectful and inclusive behaviour.

88% of YourSAy respondents said that community members, organisations and governments needed to set up policies about how they will prevent, identify and respond to bullying in their organisations.

YourSAy respondents ranked the importance of bullying prevention measures:

76% Promotion of a culture of reporting bullying

74% Teaching skills in resilience, managing conflict and cooperation

64% Telling children about the potential legal consequences

42% Banning mobile phones in schools

OUR APPROACH TO BULLYING

Traditionally, bullying has been seen as how one person behaves towards another. Bullying approaches were therefore based on the characteristics, traits, needs and issues of individuals that made them more likely to be the target of bullying, or engage in bullying. These approaches led to interventions that focused on individual responses to 'the bully' and 'the victim'.

Research over the past 30 years has found that describing bullying 'as a problem of individuals' is too simple. These perspectives do not recognise that bullying is embedded in social systems and structures, cultural experiences, community values and social relationships.[11]

Bullying is a social issue

There is strong evidence that bullying is best approached as a social issue in the context of:

- family, community and social relationships
- society's expectations, values and structures.[12]

Bullying is driven by the quality of social connections in a community

The strategy is based on a model that is focused on the strength and quality of social connections in a community.[13] Bullying is more likely to occur where the relationships are weakened between a child and their family, their peers, family friends and community members. Bullying may also be more likely where a child is less involved in social groups, activities and networks. Social connections may affect a child's personal commitments and beliefs about the things they value. It influences what they see as right and wrong. It also affects their goals and aspirations for themselves and their loved ones.

Social connections continue to affect a child or young person throughout their whole life. They affect their:

- relationships with their own children
- adult relationships with schools and community services
- sense of being connected to the beliefs, values and expectations of society.

Factors that increase the likelihood of bullying

Although many factors increase the likelihood of bullying, in this strategy we focus on three types of factors that influence the likelihood of children's involvement in bullying.

Individual factors

Individual factors include a child's age, gender, cultural background, religion, sexual orientation and identity, abilities and physical appearance. Research shows that although the characteristics of certain children and young people may make them more likely to be bullied, this is not the whole story. Any characteristic that sets a child apart from the group puts them at greater risk of being bullied. This suggests that, for children and young people, the social function of bullying can be to enforce what the peer group sees as acceptable. What a child's peer group sees as acceptable typically comes from what they see in the wider community. For example, expectations about gender-appropriate behaviour, ability, and appearance.[14]

One of the ways children learn how to behave is when they observe, imitate and model what they see in their personal life. Behaviours that are frequently observed and reinforced through social acceptance and positive outcomes are more likely to be repeated. A child who sees an adult engage in aggressive bullying is more likely to learn the same behaviours, especially if the bullying is not challenged by others or if the bullying is seen as having benefits.

Social dynamics

Social dynamics reflect the way that individuals or small groups of people interact with each other. There is some evidence that when a child experiences strains or pressures in different settings, they can be more likely to engage in bullying.[16]

In particular, bullying might increase if there is:

- family conflict[17]
- punishment by adults[18]
- poor peer relationships[19]
- experiences of developmental trauma or victimisation.[20]

The social dynamics around a child or young person at specific points in time may also influence whether they are involved in bullying, and may shape the nature of that experience. One example is the transition from primary to high school, when children and young people's social groups change and their places in social groups are reorganised.[21]

Bullying might also be more likely if a group's social identity is challenged. The protection of social identity might also explain why some children who engage in bullying can have strong connections to their parents, be socially skilled and be well liked by their teachers and peers.[22] In these situations, bullying might be used as a tool to gain and maintain social status.[23] In this regard, bullying does not happen in a vacuum. It reflects group and social dynamics present in some settings.

Social and cultural factors

Social and cultural factors underpin how people in a community or society see themselves and interact with other people. This can include media content through movies, television, newspapers and the internet.[24] It includes factors such as the social and cultural histories that shape a society's institutions and systems. While research in this area is still emerging, there is evidence that social and cultural factors can influence children's experiences of bullying.[25]
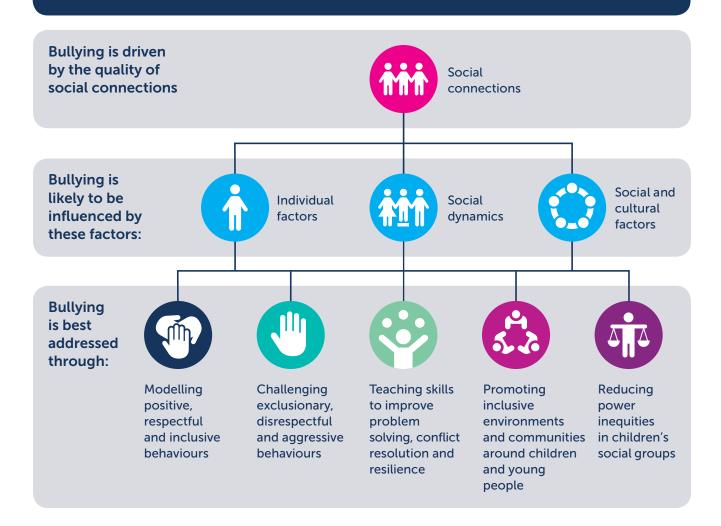
Key actions to deal with bullying

No one response will end bullying. This strategy strengthens existing bullying prevention responses in education, health and justice.

It creates coordinated and consistent responses across government and non-government organisations that aim to strengthen the social connections between a child or young person and their community.

The strategy gives us five consistent actions to deal with bullying within the school gates and beyond.

South Australian Bullying Prevention Explanatory Model

Bullying is driven by the quality of social connections

Social connections

Bullying is likely to be influenced by these factors:

Individual factors

Social dynamics

Social and cultural factors

Bullying is best addressed through:

Modelling positive, respectful and inclusive behaviours

Challenging exclusionary, disrespectful and aggressive behaviours

Teaching skills to improve problem solving, conflict resolution and resilience

Promoting inclusive environments and communities around children and young people

Reducing power inequities in children's social groups

1 VISIBLE LEADERSHIP INSPIRES POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN

Leaders of organisations providing services for children play an active role in building a positive environment where children and young people feel engaged, respected and safe. School and organisational leaders will ensure they have clear policies that reflect a commitment to providing safe environments for children, preventing and addressing bullying, and modelling respectful behaviours. Leaders recognise their role in creating a shared vision about children's safety and wellbeing and implement this vision through skilled professionals and robust organisational processes.

Within the school gates

All education sectors will strengthen school leadership by supporting all schools to adopt a bullying prevention policy that:

- uses the national definition of bullying
- identifies the steps that the school will take to prevent and reduce bullying
- outlines how concerns about bullying can be reported and the steps the school will take to respond
- outlines how children and young people involved in bullying incidents will be supported to be safe.

All education sectors will assist educators to be skilled and confident in responding to bullying by supporting:

- all school staff to have access to foundational training about how to recognise and effectively respond to bullying, including cyberbullying
- all educators to have access to resources and materials that support them to teach about bullying, cyberbullying and online safety
- all educators to have access to a professional development module about working effectively with parents to respond to bullying concerns
- all school leaders to have access to bullying prevention resources that help them to induct and train new staff (including pre-service teachers and temporary relief teachers).

Education sectors will work together as partners to develop clear guidelines for all schools about best practice in dealing with reports of bullying, cyberbullying and online incidents.

The Department for Education will establish an online portal to support public schools to create local bullying policy implementation plans. This portal will reduce administrative burdens for schools and increase organisational accountability and transparency in the auditing of bullying policies and procedures.

Beyond the school gates

The Department of Human Services and the Department for Child Protection will strengthen legislative responses to bullying by establishing bullying prevention guidelines under section 145 (b) (ii) of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

The *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* requires certain organisations to provide child safe environments. We will work with non-government organisations to ensure that, where appropriate, they include bullying prevention guidance:

- in their code of conduct about respectful, professional and ethical behaviour of staff and supporting appropriate behaviour between children
- in their child safe environments policy about how the organisation will address children's bullying.

Child safe organisations must lodge a child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services. Compliance with the child safe environments legal requirements (including adoption of the bullying prevention guidelines) will be considered in applications for grants from the South Australian Government for child-related funding.

These initiatives will:

Model positive, respectful and inclusive behaviours

Challenge exclusionary, disrespectful and aggressive behaviours

Teach skills to improve problem solving, conflict resolution and resilience

2 COMMUNITIES ARE INCLUSIVE AND CONNECTED

All members of the community are active participants in building a welcoming culture that values diversity and actively supports inclusion for all children and young people.

School and organisation leaders respect the diversity of their local communities. They work to foster and maintain positive relationships between children and young people, between children and trusted adults, and between adults working collaboratively to support children. The strategy aims to build children's social connections so that they are active members of their school and local communities.

School and organisational leaders recognise that some children and young people may be at greater risk of bullying. These can include children with disabilities, Aboriginal children, children from culturally, linguistically, and gender diverse backgrounds, and children who are living in out-of-home care. Bullying may stem from broader issues such as racism[26] and discrimination. Our goal is that all children and young people are included in our communities.

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Within the school gates

All education sectors will develop guidelines that set out how all children will be supported to be included in education. These guidelines will assist educators to support children and young people in a way that reflects their diverse needs.

All education sectors will assist educators to be skilled and confident in supporting children's inclusion in learning by ensuring:

- all school staff have access to foundational training about the barriers to education, inclusive education practices and the needs of specific groups who are at highest risk of exclusion from learning
- all school staff will have access to foundational training about supporting students who are at the highest risk of bullying, including children with disabilities, Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, gender and sexually diverse children, and children who are living in out-of-home care
- all educators have access to the relevant resources and materials

- all educators will have access to a professional development module about working effectively with parents to support children and young people who are at highest risk of exclusion
- all school leaders will have access to resources that support them to induct and train new staff (including pre-service teachers) about inclusive education practices.

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Beyond the school gates

The Department for Education will collaborate with local government partners to pilot a community recreation program in the City of Playford council area for children and young people. The program aims to strengthen children's involvement in community programs which is a protective factor against bullying. The program will also support children to learn social skills, conflict resolution and problem solving in the context of tabletop gaming.

The Guardian for Children and Young People and the Training Centre Visitor will provide a strengthened focus on children's experiences of bullying in residential care and custody at the Adelaide Youth Training Centre, and provide recommendations to enhance bullying prevention in these settings.

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These initiatives will:

Challenge exclusionary, disrespectful and aggressive behaviours

Teach skills to improve problem solving, conflict resolution and resilience

Promote inclusive environments and communities around children and young people

Reduce power inequities in children's social groups

3 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Children and young people are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, feel connected and empowered to use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe.

Within the school gates

All education sectors will support schools to strengthen children's knowledge and understanding about bullying, cyberbullying and cybersafety by:

- providing access to evidence-based resources and curriculum content for children to learn socio-emotional skills, resilience and help-seeking skills

- providing access to evidence-based resources and curriculum content for children to learn about bullying, cyberbullying and online safety

- working in partnership with Youth Law Australia to develop curriculum content about South Australian laws about bullying, cyberbullying and online safety; this content will focus on children's rights and responsibilities to others.

The Department for Education will empower students to lead bullying prevention initiatives within public schools by working with the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia to:

- support students to design and implement whole-school student-led bullying prevention initiatives

- develop a 'train the trainer' model to enable children to develop skills and knowledge to deal with bullying, support their peers, and train other students

- develop best practice approaches for engaging young people in policy development and flexible models of student engagement and participation for schools that are endorsed by young people.

Beyond the school gates

The South Australian Parliament has embedded its appreciation of the authentic participation of children and young people through the establishment of independent statutory roles

in the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*, including:

- the Commissioner for Children and Young People whose role is to promote and advocate for the rights and interests of children and young people in South Australia

- the Commissioner promotes participation by children and young people in making decisions that affect their lives, and makes recommendations about matters related to the rights, development and wellbeing of children and young people at a systemic level

- the Guardian for Children and Young People whose role is to promote the best interests of children and young people under the guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection, and advocate for their rights

- the Child Development Council whose role is to prepare and maintain the Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People, and advise on its effectiveness in supporting children's safety, wellbeing and participation in the South Australian community.

The government has recognised the particular needs of Aboriginal children and young people through the creation of the new position of Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People will:

- create mechanisms for young people to advise decision makers and urban planners about the establishment of safe child and youth-oriented spaces that support them to be connected, creative and confident

- undertake a comprehensive consultation process across the major sport codes to develop child-designed bullying prevention initiatives to support respectful and inclusive sporting environments.

These initiatives will:

Model positive, respectful and inclusive behaviours

Challenge exclusionary, disrespectful and aggressive behaviours

Teach skills to improve problem solving, conflict resolution and resilience

Promote inclusive environments and communities around children and young people

Reduce power inequities in children's social groups

4 EDUCATORS, FAMILIES, PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP

Children and young people, families and communities collaborate and consult as partners with educators and other professionals to support children's learning, safety and wellbeing.

Within the school gates

All education sectors will contribute to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's development of cyberbullying training for all pastoral care workers under the National School Chaplaincy Project Agreement. This will ensure that pastoral care workers are skilled and knowledgeable in supporting children and young people to be safe from bullying and cyberbullying.

The Department for Education will support parents to be informed and skilled at supporting their children to be safe from bullying by:

- providing a series of parent education sessions about bullying at different developmental ages and stages, and for children with specific needs who may be at greater risk of bullying

- providing parent resources and fact sheets about how to work with schools to address bullying, what to do if their child is bullied, and what to do if their child engages in bullying.

Beyond the school gates

The Department for Education will promote community awareness and education about bullying prevention to ensure a common understanding and shared responsibility for bullying across the South Australian community.

The South Australian Government will continue to strengthen community knowledge and awareness about bullying through:

- SA Health (Parenting SA) Parent Easy Guides about children's behaviour, cyberbullying and cybersafety

- the Parenting and Family Support program's parenting information, strategies and referral pathways to support children's behaviour

- the Legal Services Commission's delivery of community education programs about bullying, including criminal laws that relate to bullying and cyberbullying

- South Australia Police's delivery of the ThinkUKnow cyberbullying and cybersafety program in community settings for parents, carers and professionals.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) will continue to provide child and youth mental health services to address the emotional, behavioural and social needs that might arise from children's experiences of bullying.

The Department for Education will partner with not-for-profit organisations to raise awareness about bullying and its impact, including for parents and carers in the community.

The Department for Education and SA Health will collaborate through a Public Health Partner Authority Agreement to explore applying a public health approach to bullying that addresses children's peer-to-peer bullying at a population level.

In March 2020, the Department for Education will celebrate the tenth anniversary of the National Day of Action in South Australia as a community event by:

- providing grants to community organisations to promote bullying prevention for children and families in their settings

- providing grants to public schools to collaborate with community partners to prevent bullying.

These initiatives will:

Model positive, respectful and inclusive behaviours

Challenge exclusionary, disrespectful and aggressive behaviours

Promote inclusive environments and communities around children and young people

5 COMMUNITIES MODEL, PROMOTE AND SUPPORT POSITIVE AND RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR

Organisations, children and young people, and families cultivate, demonstrate and promote a shared understanding of positive and respectful behaviour. Behaviour is developed through children's life experiences and family and social context. It is recognised that some children need additional support to learn the skills to behave in respectful ways that value the right of others to be safe in our community.

Within the school gates

All education sectors will support educators to implement effective bullying prevention and behaviour support policy and practices through practice guidance, case examples and learning materials.

The Department for Education will provide grants for public schools to implement evidence-based programs that support positive behaviour and address bullying, including:

- the targeted expansion of the PEACE Pack program based on the findings of the pilot program implemented in 2018
- piloting the Friendly Schools program across all public schools in the Greater Gawler partnership.

All education sectors will explore opportunities for joint training and program implementation across education sectors to increase consistency and collaboration.

Education staff with a key role in supporting children's behaviour and wellbeing across all sectors will have access to specialist professional development to increase their skills and capacity to:

- respond to entrenched and complex bullying
- lead restorative practices following complex, entrenched and high profile bullying incidents
- support school-based educators who require additional expertise and specialist knowledge.

Beyond the school gates

South Australia Police will continue to enforce the criminal law where bullying constitutes a criminal offence, including the prosecution of offences such as:

- assault, causing harm, threats to kill or cause harm, stalking, and acts to create risk of harm in the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935*
- offensive conduct, humiliating, degrading and indecent filming, threats to distribute invasive or indecent images offences in the *Summary Procedures Act 1953*.

The Legal Services Commission will continue to ensure the provision of legal advice and assistance for children and young people in matters relating to bullying.

These initiatives will:

Model positive, respectful and inclusive behaviours

Challenge exclusionary, disrespectful and aggressive behaviours

Teach skills to improve problem solving, conflict resolution and resilience
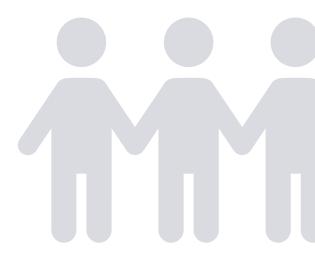
SYSTEM ENABLERS

Responding to bullying requires changes to systems to make it easier for key stakeholders to be effective in implementing change.

The South Australian Government is committed to ensuring that our bullying prevention initiatives are cross-sectoral, collaborative and evidence-based. To do this, we have established the Bullying Prevention Coalition to provide high level strategic advice to guide bullying prevention reform within the school gates and beyond. Chaired through the Department for Education, the coalition reflects our shared commitment and our shared ownership of bullying prevention in South Australia.

Within the school gates

The Department for Education will strengthen public education data systems to provide consistent and practical information for school leaders to guide their bullying prevention responses. The department will:

- develop standardised data sets that will allow schools to collate their school data about bullying and report on bullying trends to their school community for transparency and accountability
- provide improved student behaviour and wellbeing data for school leaders. This will support leaders to analyse their local needs, and plan effective responses to reduce bullying and increase student wellbeing
- implement an online bullying prevention survey tool and implementation plan that will support school leaders to seek feedback from their school community about local needs and develop an implementation plan to address those needs
- develop an online portal to allow centralised auditing of school bullying prevention implementation plans.

Beyond the school gates

The Attorney-General's Department will map civil and criminal responses to bullying to ensure that there is clarity and consistency about the most appropriate responses to bullying of different levels of severity and seriousness.

The Department for Education will work with external service providers to build their capacity to deliver high-quality, evidence-based bullying prevention and support programs and services, including by adapting the Steps To Examine Programs and approaches for Schools (STEPS) decision making tool.[27] This tool will help external providers to ensure that their programs and services:

- have a strong theoretical evidence base
- are sustainable and feasible
- have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing bullying
- are consistent with the national definition of bullying.

Encouraging the use of STEPS by external providers will make it easier for schools and organisations to make informed decisions about the bullying prevention programs and services they use.

The Department for Education will partner with universities and leading academics to fund research about bullying to ensure that the evidence-base is locally, nationally and internationally relevant. This includes research exploring the impact of bullying on learning and wellbeing of all children, not just those directly involved.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Measuring bullying rates and the success of bullying prevention initiatives has been a complex issue for researchers, education authorities and other organisations.

The number of bullying incidents recorded by educators, or reports of bullying by students, may not reflect the nuanced nature of bullying:

- bullying may be covert and not easily detected by educators and other adults
- children and young people may be reluctant to report bullying
- children's understanding of bullying may be varied, which may result in a range of non-bullying behaviours being reported, or bullying not being reported.

While increases in the number of bullying reports may reflect genuine increases in bullying, it may also reflect positive changes such as:

- increased awareness of bullying
- increased ability to identify bullying
- clearer and simpler processes for reporting bullying
- increased confidence that bullying will be addressed.

For these reasons, the success of the strategy will be evaluated through measuring the reduction in the number of children being re-victimised by bullying and the number of children re-engaging in bullying. These measures reflect our capacity to be responsive to the needs of children when bullying occurs. It measures the strength and effectiveness of our responses to prevent further bullying.

Reducing the incidence of bullying is essential. But the absence of bullying is not enough to support children to feel safe and included at school. Children's sense of connectedness with their school and community, and the quality of their relationships with safe adults and peers are protective factors against bullying. These factors help us to measure the effectiveness of the strategy in increasing children and young people's social connections, and in promoting safe, positive and inclusive school climates.

Collaboration is most effective when there is a shared understanding of the problem and shared responses between schools, children and their families. Alignment between children's reporting of bullying, parent reports of bullying, and teacher reports helps us to understand our progress towards achieving this shared understanding and response.

Increase measures

- An increase in the number of children who report feeling included at school and having positive relationships with teachers and peers.
- An increase in alignment between student and teacher reports of bullying and departmental data.

Reduction measures

- A reduction in the number of children reporting being re-victimised by bullying behaviour.
- A reduction in the number of children re-engaging in bullying behaviour.

This is the beginning.

The statewide Bullying Prevention Strategy provides a shared vision and a shared road map for how the South Australian community can work together to keep children and young people safe from bullying. But the work does not end here.

Join us. Consider the role that you can play in bullying prevention. Consider the opportunities within your community to strengthen relationships, model inclusion, and give children and young people the tools they need to be safe from bullying.
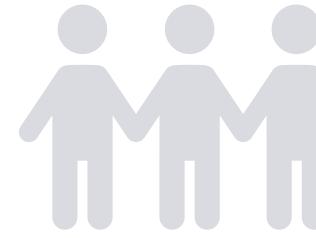
Together we can build a stronger and safer community for South Australian children and young people.

OUR PARTNERS

Connected – A community approach to bullying prevention within the school gates and beyond is a partnership between:

- Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
- Attorney-General's Department
- Catholic Education South Australia
- City of Playford
- Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People
- Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Department for Child Protection
- Department for Education
- Department of Human Services
- Guardian for Children and Young People
- Legal Services Commission
- SA Health
- South Australia Police
- Training Centre Visitor
- Youth Affairs Council of South Australia
- Youth Law Australia

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