



Student and community insights: Building on our progress to create safe and supportive schools

Introduction

The South Australian Department for Education is committed to creating safe and supportive learning environments for all students. Addressing violence in schools is a complex issue requiring a collective effort from education sectors, staff, stakeholders, families and students. In February 2026, two key events were held with a focus on violence prevention in school communities.

The **2026 Minister Roundtable on violence prevention in schools** brought together leaders and representatives from all education sectors, government and the community. The focus was on reviewing current strategies with a systems-level lens, sharing knowledge and discussing coordinated approaches to reduce and prevent violence in schools. This event built on existing partnerships and highlighted the importance of early intervention and strong leadership.

At the same time, the **Student Forum on violence prevention in schools** gave Year 5 and Year 6 students from 13 government schools the chance to share their experiences and ideas about making schools safer and more inclusive. The Forum made sure that the voices of students were heard and valued. This reflects the department's commitment to including student perspectives in the work to improve school safety and wellbeing.

While each event had a different intent and audience, both worked towards the common goal of building safe and inclusive school communities. Incorporating both adult and student perspectives has strengthened efforts to support safe and welcoming schools in South Australia.

These events are part of the department's continued commitment to delivery of the *Safe and supportive learning environments plan of action 2024–2026*, ensuring that our strategies remain dynamic and responsive as we build upon the priorities and progress set out in the Plan.

Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Plan of Action 2024–2026 At a Glance

The Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Plan of Action is the Department for Education's roadmap for building schools where every child and young person in South Australia feels safe, valued and ready to learn. It sets priorities and practical actions across six key themes:

1. Inclusive School Culture

Fostering a sense of belonging by celebrating diversity, promoting respect, building strong partnerships and ensuring schools are welcoming for every student, staff member and family.

2. Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Supporting student and staff wellbeing through evidence-based programs, early intervention, social-emotional learning and access to tailored support services.

3. Bullying Prevention and Response

Guiding schools to take proactive, consistent action to prevent, identify and respond to bullying and harassment including clear reporting pathways, supportive interventions and whole-school strategies.

4. Physical Environments that Promote Safety and Inclusion

Ensuring physical environments are safe, inclusive and supportive, both inside and outside the classroom so everyone feels secure and connected at school.

5. Responses to Violence

Embedding trauma-informed, culturally responsive and restorative approaches to prevent and address violence, with a focus on early and consistent intervention, staff training, and strong partnerships.

6. Responding to Learner Needs

Delivering flexible curriculum approaches, personalised learning opportunities, leadership pathways, student voice initiatives and practical supports that empower every learner to succeed.

Our Commitment

Through ongoing engagement, shared responsibility and continuous feedback, we are working together with students, families, staff and the broader community to create safe, inclusive and supportive South Australian school communities.

2026 Minister Roundtable snapshot

Building on our progress to create safe and supportive schools

On 10 February 2026 the Honourable Blair Boyer, MP, former Minister for Education, Training and Skills and Minister for Police held a Roundtable on violence prevention in schools to build on progress to create safe and supportive school environments. The Roundtable brought together a range of stakeholders to collaboratively share learnings and workshop bold ideas for next steps in preventing and responding to violence in schools.



The Roundtable was attended by more than 110 people including the Minister, 50 cross-sector education and interagency partners, and external stakeholders, 15 school site representatives, and 46 departmental panelists, executives and operational support staff.

At the event, participants:

- heard directly from the Minister, reflecting on progress since the December 2022 Roundtable
- engaged in meaningful dialogue with the departmental staff and cross-sector representatives
- heard from a panel of key departmental staff about current data trends, respectful relationships education, workforce experiences and support, and evolving social and community contexts informing the work being done to address violence in schools
- learnt about trauma-informed and non-punitive approaches to unhelpful and unsafe behaviours.

Participants were also asked to identify:

- What is the system journey for children involved in violent incidents at school?
- What are the gaps, opportunities, or things we can do differently to prevent and respond to violence in schools?
- What is our collective commitment and next steps to ensure every child experiences safety and connection?
- What do we need to focus on to continue working towards schools being safe and supportive environments for students, staff and families?

Key messages from the 2026 Minister Roundtable

South Australia's education system is committed to creating safe, supportive, and inclusive schools where every student can thrive. There is a shared responsibility across the sector to build a flexible education environment that values every voice, uses data well and supports both system and targeted approaches. Strong connections with health, education, community, and family groups are essential, as are strategies that include early intervention, supportive relationships, and coordinated, trauma-informed actions.

Participants in the Roundtable brought a range of perspectives, discussing both the strengths and challenges facing schools. They emphasised the importance of a positive school culture, empowering staff, involving families in real and meaningful ways and addressing gaps in support, fairness and consistency. There was broad support for practical, evidence-based solutions that encourage partnerships and help build shared skills. These approaches are seen as essential for guiding policy and ensuring every child and young person is supported to learn and grow in a safe environment.

The focus and direction of this event are closely aligned with the outcomes of the 2025 Anti-Bullying Rapid Review and the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian Schools, highlighting the importance of acting early, building strong relationships, working together and using whole-school, evidence-based strategies to keep school communities safe and inclusive.

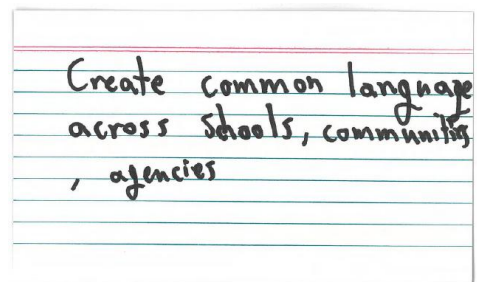
Early and consistent intervention

Participants highlighted the positive impact of providing early and consistent support, especially during key transitions such as starting school and moving between schools. By offering ongoing support at these times, schools can help prevent and reduce incidents of violence. Participants also saw opportunities to strengthen support for young people as they finish school, ensuring they remain connected and well-supported beyond their school years.

[Plan of Action themes 2, 5, 6]

What we heard from adults and experts:

- Clear, system-wide guidance helps schools maintain consistent and strong approaches to wellbeing, even in complex or challenging situations.
- Including social-emotional learning and wellbeing topics in the curriculum supports students' holistic development and helps them build essential life skills.



Trusting relationships and trauma-informed practice

Discussions emphasised the benefits of building strong, trusting relationships between students, staff, and families to support student safety and wellbeing. By adopting trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches across the whole school, communities can create lasting positive change and strengthen the foundations for every student's success.

[Plan of Action themes 1, 2, 5, 6]

What we heard from adults and experts:

- Strong partnerships between schools, families, and community organisations are essential for supporting student engagement and wellbeing.
- Embedding trauma-informed and restorative practices into the curriculum, along with ongoing professional learning in these areas, helps create more supportive learning environments that meet diverse student needs.
- Prioritising wellbeing for everyone in the school community, including staff, leads to improved engagement and positive outcomes.

Whole of community (in + out of school) involved in Restorative Practices learning + implementation. Not a once off

Collaboration and practical, scalable solutions

Participants recognised the value of strengthening partnerships and collaboration within the wider education ecosystem, which includes students, families, staff, government and non-government agencies and community partners. They emphasised the importance of practical, evidence-based strategies such as enhancing staff training, expanding opportunities for student and parent voice, and supporting staff to build the skills needed to respond to diverse student needs. Participants also identified opportunities to create more consistent and equitable support systems, ensuring all students have access to the resources required for success.

[Plan of Action themes 1, 6]

What we heard from adults and experts:

- Flexible curriculum design allows schools to respond to the unique needs of their students and local communities.
- Increasing student voice in school and departmental decision-making ensures meaningful opportunities for participation.
- Sharing effective practices between sites strengthens staff capability across the system.

An ecological approach to meeting children's needs within their school, family and community.
It's all connected.

2026 Student Forum snapshot

The next stage – Building safe and supportive schools

The Student Forum provided a structured opportunity to capture primary student perspectives to validate and strengthen school and system-level approaches to reduce the incidence and impact of violence and bullying behaviour in schools. Students engaged directly with the former Minister in a collaborative activity and during “Recess with the Minister” where they shared their experiences and ideas for creating safe and supportive learning environments.

The Forum was attended by Year 5 and 6 students from 13 South Australian government primary schools, representing metropolitan and regional communities:

- Angle Vale Primary School
- Black Forest Primary School
- Blair Athol North B-6 School*
- Bridgewater Primary School
- Darlington Primary School
- Hackham West School
- Keithcot Farm Primary School
- Murray Bridge North School
- Port Noarlunga Primary School
- Ridgehaven Primary School
- St Agnes School
- Woodcroft Primary School
- Woodville Primary School.



“Be a safe space for others but [don’t] forget that you need a safe space too.”



“Thank you for making the schools amazing and safe.”

At the forum, students:

- shared their perspectives and experiences on what helps them feel safe and supported at school
- explored strategies used in other schools that could be adapted in their own settings
- heard directly from the Minister, who reinforced the importance of student voice in shaping safer and more supportive schools
- identified one practical action they could implement at their school to support the safety and wellbeing of other students
- provided a written message to the Minister sharing their insights.

*An individual session (at their school) was held for invited students as they were unable to attend on the day.

Key messages from the 2026 Student Forum

The Student Forum, led by Department for Education staff and school educators, gave students a voice in what makes schools safe and supportive. Students shared their experiences and ideas through group discussions, interactive digital tools, school reflections, and direct messages to the Minister for Education.

Students highlighted the importance of positive peer relationships, a sense of belonging, trusted adult support, inclusive spaces, and clear responses when issues arise. Their feedback showed how vital it is for students to be heard when shaping school policies and priorities.

The forum's focus reflects the priorities previously identified in the department's Student Voice Report and the Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Plan of Action 2024–2026. Student input confirmed the ongoing need to prioritise inclusion, wellbeing, and effective responses to bullying and violence in South Australian schools.

Peer relationships and connections

Students expressed that building positive relationships with peers is key to feeling safe and connected at school. They appreciated opportunities to strengthen these connections through clubs, activities, school events, and structured programs that encourage friendship and involvement across the whole school community.

[Plan of Action themes 1, 2, 4, 6]

What we heard from students:

- Students recognised that interest-based clubs, sports teams, and structured activities are powerful in building friendships and a sense of belonging.
- Initiatives like buddy programs, lunchtime clubs, and whole-school events foster inclusion, reduce isolation, and help establish positive, respectful school cultures.
- Safe, diverse physical environments like shaded seating, quiet retreats and inclusive play spaces promote wellbeing and encourage peer interaction.
- Classroom strategies that include structured breaks, opportunities for student voice, and collaborative activities further support engagement, emotional regulation, and positive relationships.

Trusted adults and accessible support

Students emphasised the importance of approachable, visible support at school. They identified teachers, School Support Officers, and other trusted adults as essential for safety and wellbeing. When problems like bullying or harmful behaviour occur, students depend on these adults to listen and act effectively.

[Plan of Action themes 2, 3, 4, 6]

What we heard from students:

- Students highlighted the importance of upstander skills and active engagement in creating a safe school culture where they feel comfortable reaching out to trusted adults for support with bullying and other concerns.

“Everyone needs a person to trust but you have to be one as well.”

- Supportive environments and resources such as regulation spaces, calm corners, wellbeing hubs and sensory tools help students manage emotions and stay engaged in learning.
- Breakfast clubs, snack breaks and affordable canteen options, and safe spaces like school libraries, all contribute to student wellbeing and help ensure students are focused and ready to learn throughout the school day.

Visible supports and student voice

Students highlighted the importance of having clear pathways for reporting concerns and easy access to wellbeing support, so they can feel confident their voices will be heard and their concerns addressed. They also expressed a desire for sensory tools, more inclusive play spaces, leadership opportunities, and regular chances to share their perspectives, ensuring that all students are supported and included.

[Plan of Action themes 1, 3, 4, 6]

What we heard from students:

- Students value clear, accessible options for reporting bullying, including digital and non-confrontational pathways, as these help them feel safe and heard.
- Children and young people are interested in leadership opportunities such as forums and student parliaments that empower them to influence their school environment, share ideas with other schools and contribute to positive change.
- Regular opportunities for student feedback help ensure school practices are responsive and relevant to their experiences.

"I want everyone to feel safe and supported at school by having a variety of different ways to stop bullying."

Connecting perspectives

The 2026 Minister Roundtable and Student Forum demonstrated the strong, shared commitment across South Australia to creating safe, supportive, and inclusive schools for all students. At both events, participants identified priorities they believe can prevent violence, strengthen school culture and create safe learning environments.

- ❖ A genuine student voice, including having a central role in shaping policy and educational priorities.
- ❖ Inclusive and respectful school environments that support diversity and foster a sense of belonging for all students.
- ❖ Mental health and wellbeing supports in schools, particularly in addressing anxiety, trauma and access to services.
- ❖ Authentic partnerships between schools, families and community, and positive relationships between students and trusted adults or mentors for student success and wellbeing.
- ❖ Whole-school approaches to bullying prevention and response, including clear processes, development of upstander skills and active support from trusted adults.
- ❖ Innovative learning environments, including flexible spaces, effective use of technology, and co-designed approaches.
- ❖ Transparent and ongoing feedback mechanisms, along with clear communication about how student ideas contribute to positive change.
- ❖ Opportunities for leadership, collaboration, and collective action among students, schools and the wider community.

The agreement between students and stakeholders on these values highlights the importance of student-centred, supportive and forward-thinking approaches, paving the way for genuine inclusion and lasting improvement in South Australian schools.

By bringing together leaders, educators, community partners and students, these events emphasised the value of collaboration, embracing diverse perspectives and working towards practical solutions that make a difference for young people. Participants agreed that early action, strong relationships and shared responsibility are central to addressing challenges such as violence and bullying.

These findings reflect what we have heard from people across the community in recent local and national consultations. We will continue to listen to students, families, educators, and across-government and community partners as we build on progress under the *Safe and supportive learning environments plan of action 2024–2026*. The ideas and insights gathered from both adults and students will guide the department's efforts and reinforce the importance of listening to those at the heart of the education ecosystem.

Our work remains flexible and responsive to needs and experiences of schools and the evolving landscape of education. By listening to students, working with partners, and using proven approaches, our schools support every child and young person to learn, connect and thrive in safe, welcoming environments.

The department also acknowledges the appointment of the Honourable Lucy Hood, MP, as Minister for Education, Training and Skills and looks forward to her leadership in advancing these shared priorities and goals.

RECENT ACTION OF SA GOVERNMENT

Bullying and violence prevention and response

2022

Minister roundtable on violence in schools

Positive Behaviour for Learning pilot begins

2023

Report from roundtable released with 12 immediate actions

Consultation through student forums and summit resulting in Student Voice Report

Mobile phone ban implemented

Autism Inclusion Teacher in every primary school

School Mental Health Service

2024

Release of Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Plan of Action

Three new online learning modules to understand and respond to violence in schools

Social Media Summit - NSW and SA

\$1m in Safe Spaces grants to schools

Training for school leaders in Restorative Practices

Respectful Relationships Education project begins

2025

MOAA with NSW on sharing bullying prevention resources

Implementation of the updated Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum

Governing Council and school board forums on building positive relationships in schools

Support of Anti-Bullying Rapid Review

Across-government working group to support SA's approach to bullying as a community issue

Leading the nation on a social media ban

2026

Second Minister roundtable on violence in schools and student forum

Commence review of the department's bullying prevention requirements to strengthen school policies and support implementation of the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian Schools

Wait Mate program to delay smartphone introduction in all South Australian primary schools