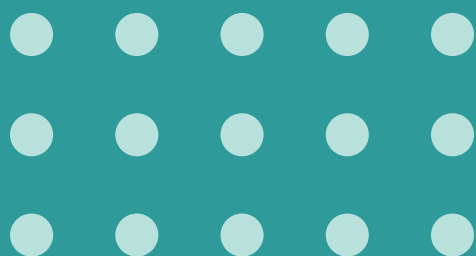
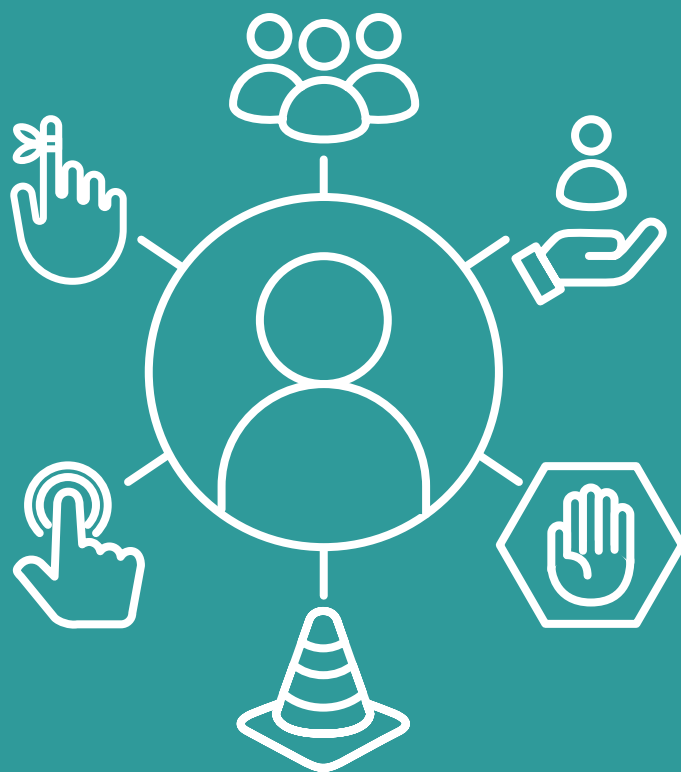


SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

PLAN OF ACTION 2024 - 2026



Government
of South Australia

Department for Education

MINISTER'S FOREWORD

The South Australian Government is committed to creating safe and supportive learning environments for students and staff in our schools. This commitment requires us to build on our Violence Prevention in Schools Roundtable efforts with further targeted actions on prevention and responses at the schools and system level.

A Plan of Action has been developed with 15 key actions that focus on the themes highlighted in the literature, data analysis, and feedback from students, parents, educators and corporate staff.

We know that an inclusive school culture promotes safety and creates a sense of belonging for students. We will continue to support restorative practices and strive to create welcoming environments where diversity is valued, and relationships are positive and respectful.

Student voice is key to inclusive school culture and to ensure children and young people feel connected and safe. We will support students to have a say in developing and implementing bullying and violence prevention approaches.

Transition times are particularly challenging for some students. The data shows spikes in bullying behaviours and incidents of violent behaviours during this time. A number of factors may contribute to this, like the change in social dynamics and hierarchies, peer pressure and changes in the school environment. We will have a strong focus on the transition from primary to high school to support students and staff in making this time a positive and successful one.

Early identification of and intervention in emerging mental health issues are essential for promoting overall wellbeing, preventing long-term problems, supporting learning outcomes and fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

We will research new mental health and wellbeing supports for students in primary schools and evaluate the impact of these supports.

We need to keep investing in our staff and building their confidence and skills to create positive school cultures, support students from diverse backgrounds and abilities and respond to violence and bullying when it occurs.

We acknowledge that our schools are highly complex environments that reflect the diversity of our broader community. We are committed to working with schools to respond to the challenges in front of them, while supporting their autonomy to focus and tailor key actions in ways that meet their unique needs. The 15 new actions will provide support across the department, and schools will engage with the new actions according to their school specific needs.

As we implement the Plan of Action, we will support schools to communicate with parents about their progress and continue engaging and working closely with parents.

Violence has no place in our schools and we have zero tolerance for any violent behaviour. It is important that our schools and community are inclusive and are a place of belonging. This Plan of Action is working towards removing the barriers to achieving exactly this.

I strongly believe the combined actions outlined here will help move us towards the ultimate goal of reducing school-based violence. I acknowledge that this is a complex issue, with no quick fix and our work in this space will be challenging and ongoing. I feel confident we are on the right path. Together we can make great progress towards safer and more supportive learning environments.



Hon Blair Boyer MP

Minister for Education, Training and Skills

OUR PROGRESS SO FAR

The Minister's roundtable on violence prevention and responses in schools in December 2022 gave us a better understanding of the causes of violence, and suggested strategies for addressing this complex social issue.

Most of the immediate actions based on the themes identified at the roundtable have been completed, with the remaining in progress and on track. The delivered actions include the provision of direct funding to schools to support student wellbeing and restorative practices, establishment of a web page outlining services and resources, an evidence-informed External Wellbeing Programs Directory, and the delivery of student forums and a student summit.

Our focused efforts are starting to make a difference and show promising positive trends.

The use of security guards as a short term response has allowed schools time to address the underlying behaviour, resulting in fewer incidents and security guards being removed. Recent data shows reported violent incidents across 12 public schools, who were targeted for extra support including security guards, reduced term by term in 2023 as follows:

- Term 1 – 115 incidents
- Term 2 – 87 incidents
- Term 3 – 78 incidents
- Term 4 – 45 incidents

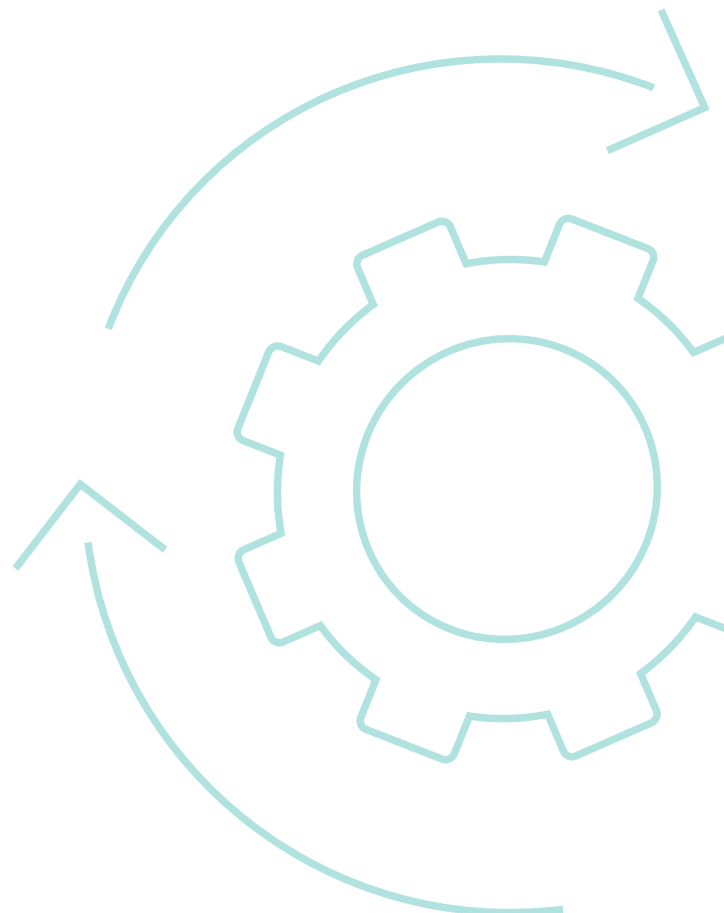
The rollout of the mobile phone policy in schools during 2023, which became compulsory from Term 3 2023, is central to the government's strong commitment to reduce violence in schools and improve education outcomes.

There has been a 29% decrease in onsite violent incidents involving kicking and punching between secondary school students in Terms 3 and 4 2023 compared to a similar period in 2022*.

It is still early days, but the positive progress is pleasing to see.

To continue to address this complex issue we commissioned Flinders University to undertake a literature review, and a jurisdictional scan has been completed to learn what other state education systems are doing to prevent and respond to school-based violence. We also undertook extensive analysis of existing data sources, which provided insight into violent incidents, which will inform how we monitor progress and measure success.

We also conducted a comprehensive consultation process, which included students, parents associations, educators, education and corporate staff and key external stakeholders.



* Manual data collection 2023



OUR PROGRESS SO FAR



WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE LITERATURE?

The literature review showed us that “the strongest predictor of engagement in and experience of violence at school is previous experience of violence, but...not necessarily at school” (Redmond et al; 2023)¹.

Other risk factors include:

- bullying
- social isolation
- mental health issues
- family factors
- community factors.

Studies indicate:

- the experience of violence peaks when students are transitioning from primary to secondary school
- prevention approaches that focus on student wellbeing provide the most sustainable and positive change
- interventions that reinforce a positive classroom environment, and traits such as empathy and moral engagement, can help prevent bullying and violence
- teachers are most likely to effectively intervene in incidents of bullying and violence when they have been trained and supported in approaches that are conscious and intentional, rather than controlling (Redmond et al;2023).



WHAT DID THE DATA SHOW US?

While rates of violence in schools show some overall increase, targeted and tailored support to schools is showing improvements and reductions in violent incidents.

The key trends identified in data are:

- transition times for students, such as when completing primary school and commencing high school, are times in a student’s life where they are more likely to experience or engage in bullying and violence
- violence reduces and student wellbeing increases when they experience connectedness to various areas such as community, school and external activities
- Aboriginal students, students with a disability and students in care are shown to experience bullying and violence at higher levels than their peers.

¹ Redmond, G. Ferber, K. MacKenzie, C. Mizzi, J. and Halsey, M (2023). Scoping Review on Violence and Responses to Violence in Schools: Final Report, Centre for Social Impact and College of Business, Government & Law, Flinders University

OUR PROGRESS SO FAR



WHAT DID STUDENTS TELL US?

Student forums were convened in terms 1 and 2 in 2023 and engaged 228 students across 21 different schools and programs. The forums culminated in a student summit in term 2, where 77 students from 24 schools came together.

Themes and recommendations from the students included:

- schools having an enhanced focus on student wellbeing
- professional development for teachers on the needs of vulnerable student groups and an awareness of diversity
- safe spaces at school that are easily accessed
- education programs for students and teachers on recognising and responding to bullying behaviour
- programs for students and teachers to develop skills in conflict resolution
- more options for structured activities before, during and after school.



WHAT DID THE STAKEHOLDERS TELL US?

Stakeholders shared their thoughts and ideas regarding viable solutions.

Further actions required to address violence prevention and responses in schools included:

- a focus on social and emotional wellbeing for students and staff, including social and emotional learning
- promoting inclusive and respectful behaviour, through the use of restorative practices and other evidence-based programs
- ensuring safe and nurturing school environments including having wellbeing hubs and centres
- bullying prevention and responses that are supported by teacher education, and a student voice in decision-making
- focus on building school cultures that are inclusive and respectful for all, supported by strong leadership and enhanced school, family and community partnerships
- strengthening responses to violence supported by restorative practices, counselling and behaviour mentoring.

PLAN OF ACTION

Key themes and actions



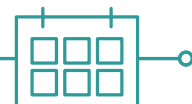
INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

Schools that welcome and support students from diverse backgrounds, experiences, abilities and gender help everyone to feel included and engaged. Understanding the experience of others and engaging students to contribute to wellbeing at their schools builds positive relationships and contributes to school culture and student wellbeing.

We will continue to:

- support the Autism Inclusion Teachers program in primary schools
- provide practice guidance to staff supporting learners with additional needs
- support schools to access professional development through the trauma-informed practice in education approach
- ensure all schools deliver the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum teaching respectful relationships and child safety
- implement the Culturally Responsive Framework across the department
- support schools to engage with the department's Community Liaison Officers for culturally and linguistically diverse learners
- support LGBTIQ+ children and young people
- promote existing resources and training opportunities that build staff understanding and capacity to meet the needs of the diverse range of learners
- work with schools and stakeholders to include students into school governance structures.

FROM 2024 WE WILL:



1

Ensure every school embeds **wellbeing outcomes** along with achievement outcomes through:

- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation using a range of indicators (e.g. Wellbeing and Engagement Collection)
- Strengthened focus on site wellbeing improvement
- Expansion of the local policy implementation tool (LPIT) to support schools to develop their local wellbeing approach and communicating it to their school community

2

Work with schools to support **students to have a say** in how to strengthen safety and positive culture at their school including:

- Incorporate student engagement in the governing councils training to support schools to further involve students in their local school council
- Promote and support individual schools to use the student voice framework (Voicelt) to help students share their thinking, make decisions and action ideas for wellbeing and safety

3

Release the updated **Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum** which includes new activities and resources to support teachers in delivering respectful relationships, consent and child safety education aligned with the Commonwealth consent policy framework.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

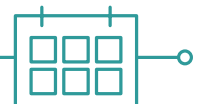
Enhancing wellbeing supports in schools helps all students to feel safe, included and valued. Transition can be a particularly challenging time. We know it is important to support students to develop and recognise their social and emotional skills and needs.

The role staff have in understanding students' needs is critical, especially to support the mental health needs of children in primary school, and as they transition into high school.

We will continue to:

- deliver a future focused, evidence informed, health and physical education curriculum to support respectful relationships between all students
- deliver the School Mental Health Service in high schools to support early intervention in emerging mental health issues
- deliver telepractice services to schools providing greater access and options for learner support
- promote the range of mental health and wellbeing services available to schools through the internal catalogue of department services and the External Wellbeing Program Directory
- provide wellbeing services to schools through the National Student Wellbeing Program
- promote the Wellbeing Educator toolkit and teacher resources including on mindfulness, understanding emotions, coping with stress, empathy and hopefulness
- share the expertise of the Social Skills Program delivered successfully in behaviour and learning centres
- support staff to access the Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing procedure and the myWellbeing program.

FROM 2024 WE WILL:



4

Invest up to \$3.1 million over 2 years to research a new school based approach to support the **mental health and wellbeing** of primary school students.

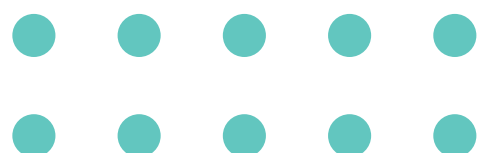
5

Extend Parents in Education (PiE) **parent engagement** grant funding for a further year into 2025 with a continued focus on bullying and violence prevention through strengthening parent and school partnerships.

6

Increase our focus on students' **social and emotional wellbeing** when transitioning to high school, which has been identified as a time of increased reports of bullying and violent incidents. This will include:

- identifying and promoting proven tools and resources to support quality transition for students
- providing grant funding to selected schools to capture good practice case studies and implement identified evidence-informed transition approaches.



PLAN OF ACTION

Key themes and actions



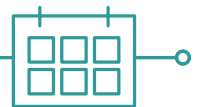
BULLYING PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Peer-to-peer bullying between children and young people is a complex social issue that needs a multifaceted response. We have a strong commitment to reducing bullying and improving student wellbeing at school. During student forums, it was made clear that students wanted education programs to develop their skills and knowledge to deal with bullying. This is supported by school staff encouraging positive and respectful behaviour and using effective practices to address behaviours of concerns when they happen.

We will continue to:

- use findings from the evaluation of the Bullying Prevention Strategy to inform future bullying prevention work
- promote the use of practice guidance, resources and training that support bullying prevention and response
- promote the specialised resources for learners including students with disability, Aboriginal students, children in care and LGBTQIA+ students
- promote the National Day of Action against bullying and violence and provide funding to registered schools for National Day of Action activities
- promote the eSafety toolkit for schools and cybersafety school resources
- share resources for school community and parents such as Online Safety: A Guide for Parents and Carers
- work with South Australian Police on school programs on bullying and violence
- support schools to identify and promote their local bullying prevention approach to their parents and school community.

FROM 2024 WE WILL:



7

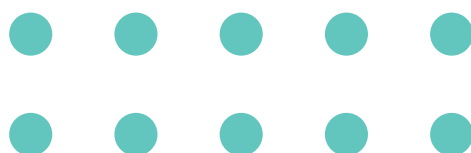
Build **students' skills and knowledge** to deal with bullying, support their peers and train other students through a students 'train the trainer' model. The model supports students to understand how their actions can prevent and reduce bullying and empower them to share strategies and knowledge with their peers.

8

Provide educators and schools with training and new resources to better understand the challenges faced by **LGBTQIA+ students**, including bullying and wellbeing. This will build school capability to support student diversity and inclusion, and foster understanding in the wider school community.

9

Update the department's **bullying prevention requirements** in schools using good practice examples from schools where there has been a reduction in bullying.





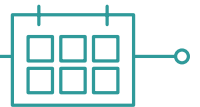
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT PROMOTE SAFETY AND INCLUSION

Safe and inclusive schools include the people, buildings and spaces where our students learn. Understanding where students feel safe and areas needing improvement is fundamental to creating safe learning environments. We understand that providing more activities during recess and lunch improves student connectedness and wellbeing.

We will continue to:

- complement the department's Design Standards and Outdoor Learning Environments Standards to ensure accessible and flexible learning environments
- support schools in implementing the Children and Students with Disability policy in consideration of designing safe environments for students with disability.

FROM 2024 WE WILL:



10

Provide practical ideas for how schools can identify and address **areas of lower safety inside and outside** the classroom. Grant funding of up to \$5000 is available through the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence to create protective physical environments.

11

Develop a **physical and movement activities** resource directory for schools to use during unstructured times (e.g. lunch and recess) to promote positive social interactions.

PLAN OF ACTION

Key themes and actions



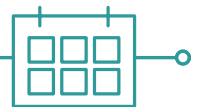
RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE

Being involved in or witnessing a violent incident at school can be confronting. While only a small amount of these incidents happen, working together with South Australia Police, teachers, support staff, students, parents and the community to respond to violence is crucial.

We will continue to:

- provide a timely response to violent behaviour that considers the needs of everyone involved
- support safety and recovery for students and staff who have been harmed by violence
- intervene with students who have caused harm to others, to help them develop the skills for safer behaviour in the future
- implement and review the Student Use of Mobile Phones and Personal Devices policy
- assist schools to respond to critical incidents with the support of the Social Work Incident Support Service
- monitor and review the implementation and impact of the restorative practice funding to schools
- provide tailored and intensive support and resources to schools where there has been escalated and ongoing patterns of violence.

FROM 2024 WE WILL:



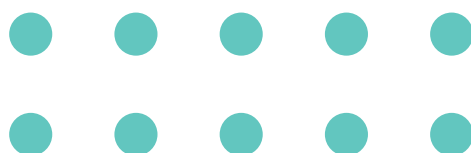
12

Release and implement the new **Seeking police assistance procedure** which outlines the roles and responsibilities of school staff, police and the community during and after a violent incident. This will allow the department to use South Australia Police services more consistently and effectively and foster closer working relationships in violence prevention and responses.

13

Provide **statewide training and advice** to support the implementation of the revised Suspension, exclusion and expulsion of students procedure to:

- reinforce behaviour expectations
- promote restorative approaches to prevent repeated behaviour
- support site leaders in their decision making
- identify supports needed for positive behaviour change





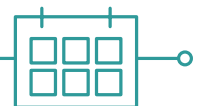
RESPONDING TO LEARNER NEEDS

Our students are the life of our schools. We welcome and support all students to feel included and engaged. To allow students to flourish, we recognise that all students are unique and bring varied experiences and perspectives. Teachers and support staff are committed to achieving the best outcomes for all children and young people.

We will continue to:

- support schools to develop contextually relevant responses to violence through the Behaviour Support Policy and Behaviour Support toolkit
- support selected schools to implement the Positive behaviour for learning framework
- enhance Student Wellbeing Leader professional practice by focusing on violence prevention and response at the annual Student Wellbeing Leader Conference
- develop and deliver online learning modules about preventing and responding to violence
- implement face-to-face training to embed culturally responsive restorative practice within school communities
- implement the new Tailored Learning Provision (TLP) model in 12 sample schools as part of the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) redesign
- support schools to use the site support function for guidance on how to best utilise the supplementary level funding grant and the Individual Education Support Program (IESP) to improve outcomes for students with

FROM 2024 WE WILL:



14

Promote the Self-Regulation Service to increase staff **understanding of student self-regulation** and strategies to support students.

15

Enhance staff knowledge and skills in violence prevention and response by:

- tailoring training for particular staff roles, including, Aboriginal Education Workers, Early Career Teachers and School Service Officers
- providing restorative practice training and support
- developing a practice guide to support the use of restorative practices for students with a disability.

EVALUATING OUR IMPACT

This dynamic Plan of Action will build on our ongoing work by implementing new initiatives and addressing specific areas of concern, as identified in the research and based on what students, educators and stakeholders have told us.

We will continue to learn from our work and develop our understanding as a system on what is having the greatest impact. In addition to internal review activity at the specific action level, an evaluation of the overall Plan of Action will be undertaken.

We know achieving lasting change with a complex social issue such as violence requires a long-term and sustained effort. Investing in preventative approaches are the most effective way of achieving the long-term goal of reducing violence in our schools.

As learnings of the effectiveness of components of the plan are observed, the Plan of Action will evolve and respond to emerging opportunities and issues.

