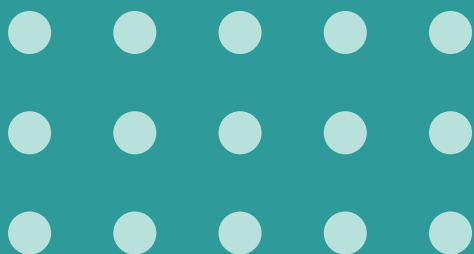


# SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

## PLAN OF ACTION 2024 - 2026





# 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



# 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 a scan of other jurisdictions to learn from their experiences.

# OUR PROGRESS SO FAR



## WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW?

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)<sup>1</sup>.

Key findings include:

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

Other findings include:

- 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 WE LEARN FROM THE CASE STUDIES?

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

Key findings include:

- 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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

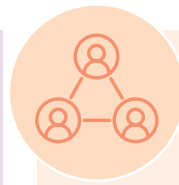
# OUR PROGRESS SO FAR



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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.

- 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.



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Stakeholders shared their thoughts and ideas regarding viable solutions.

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- 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

- 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.

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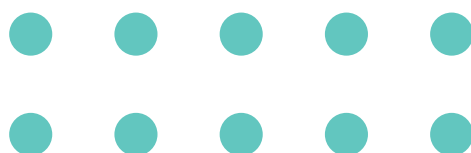
Build **students' skills and knowledge** to deal with bullying, support their peers and train other students through a students 'train the trainer' model. The model supports students to understand how their actions can prevent and reduce bullying and empower them to share strategies and knowledge with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

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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.

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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.

- complement the department’s Design Standards and Outdoor Learning Environments Standards to ensure accessible and flexible learning environments
  - Children and Students with Disability policy in environments for students with disability.

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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.

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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.

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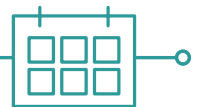


## RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE

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.

- 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.

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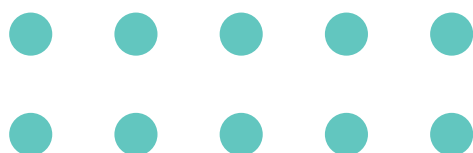
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Release and implement the new **Seeking police assistance procedure** which outlines the roles and responsibilities of school staff, police and the community during and after a violent incident. This will allow the department to use South Australia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

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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





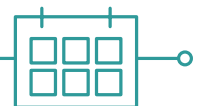
## RESPONDING TO LEARNER NEEDS

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.

Key actions include:

- 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

F 2024 E ILL:



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

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**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.





