



PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

16 December 2024

# Protecting students from bullying

Report 6: 2024–25

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The Honourable P Weir MP  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

16 December 2024

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*.



Rachel Vagg  
Auditor-General

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## Acknowledgement

The Queensland Audit Office acknowledges the Traditional and Cultural Custodians of the lands, waters, and seas across Queensland. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

We use the term 'First Nations people' in this report. We respect First Nations people's choices to describe their cultural identity using other terms, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particular peoples, or by using traditional place names.

## Help and Support

Are you or your child experiencing bullying and need help now? Contact details of organisations that can help are:

**headspace.org.au** 1800 650 890

**kidshelpline.com.au** 1800 55 1800

**lifeline.org.au** 13 11 14

# Report summary

Bullying is a complex social issue that can cause long-term harm to those involved. It occurs in all aspects of life and is not just confined to schools. Addressing bullying involves a wide range of stakeholders, including families, parents/carers, the broader community, and schools. Schools play an important role preventing and responding to bullying. But they cannot do it on their own, and they must work in partnership with parents/carers and stakeholders to influence student behaviours related to bullying.

This report examines whether the Department of Education's (the department's) strategies are effective in supporting the protection of students from bullying. We looked at how the department coordinates its strategies and resources and works with its schools.

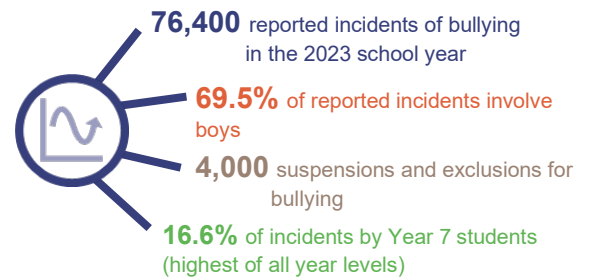
## The department's strategies to reduce bullying

The department sets the overall direction and requirements for its schools to deliver education services. Its strategies include a clear focus on student wellbeing, academic achievement, and building respectful and positive relationships which promote inclusion. Central to this is its delivery of health and wellbeing education. These areas are key in the management of student bullying. However, the department could more explicitly communicate how its strategies address bullying, particularly for students and parents. Its strategies do not set objectives, actions, or measures of success specific to the management of bullying.

The department requires each of its schools to develop and implement a student code of conduct. This documents and communicates each school's approach to bullying. If developed appropriately, the code of conduct will align with evidence-based approaches to reducing bullying. The department can enhance its review and monitoring of school codes of conduct. It should also improve the guidance provided to schools to support a more consistent application of mandatory elements. All the 50 codes of conduct we examined (out of 1,265 state schools) were missing one or more of the department's required elements. Schools often left out information on who to contact about bullying and how parents/carers could escalate a concern if not satisfied with the school's response. Many are also lengthy. As a key communication tool for students and parents/carers, the department could consider making the proforma for student codes of conduct shorter and more user friendly for parents/carers.

The department is enhancing its use of data to support its management of behavioural incidents (which include bullying). In late 2023, new dashboards were developed to enable school-level and statewide monitoring of behavioural incidents (these remain in the pilot phase with implementation anticipated for mid-2025). The department can further enhance its use of data to inform its approaches to bullying. While it records data on bullying incidents, limited data is captured on students who have experienced bullying. Similar findings have been raised in previous reviews, such as the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*. Capturing this information could allow for broader analysis and assist the department to enhance its support for students affected by bullying. The department would also benefit from greater data on emerging areas, such as cyber bullying. This would enable it to better identify and analyse cyber bullying to inform its responses, including education to parents/carers.

**Figure 1**  
Key statistics – reported incidents of state school student bullying (2023)



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.

## Monitoring the effectiveness of strategies

The department is not able to effectively determine the extent to which its strategies are effective in preventing and responding to bullying. This is partly due to the absence of measures specific to bullying incidents to monitor and evaluate against. The day-to-day management of bullying is the responsibility of schools when it occurs within the school or affects the order of the school. Individual instances are managed within this environment. While the department utilises periodic reviews of its schools to assess performance over a variety of areas, such as academic performance, these reviews do not specifically address bullying practices (they consider areas such as suspensions and exclusions which could be the result of bullying).

Stakeholder experiences and opinions are an important source of information that can be used to evaluate effectiveness and inform the further development of its strategies, policies, and resources. The department surveys stakeholders on wellbeing matters and on broader experiences with schooling. This can provide some indications on their experience of bullying. However, the department could better understand the perceptions and experiences of students, parents/carers, and teachers specific to bullying by including some specific questions about bullying and how schools manage it.

## Supporting schools to reduce student bullying

The department provides its schools with a variety of resources to help them manage bullying. These resources are important, given the demands on principals and teachers. Resources currently include:

- positive behaviour and respectful relationship curriculum and teaching materials
- access to wellbeing and other professionals to support students impacted by bullying
- support for investigation and management of cyber-related incidents
- access to some training materials relevant to bullying and behaviour management.

The department also leads national bullying initiatives that provide resources to schools, parents, and students.

The department expects schools to work with key stakeholders such as parents/carers and community groups to support a collaborative approach to the management of bullying. To support better engagement with parents/carers in their busy lives, the department needs to streamline its information and resources so they are easy to access and use. The department could also strengthen the tools and guidance available to assist schools in engaging more effectively with these stakeholders. This engagement forms a core component of better practice approaches to bullying.

Schools are provided a range of training materials to assist them in delivering educational services. However, schools would benefit from access to more targeted training on how to identify and respond to bullying incidents. In 2024, the department launched a new classroom management hub for teachers with materials related to learning, wellbeing, and positive behaviours. This is an important step, but schools would benefit from easier access to materials to assist both teachers and other support staff, such as teacher aides.



# 1. Audit conclusions

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Bullying is a whole-of-society problem which can have short- and long-term impacts on those involved. It occurs within all aspects of life, including the workplace, within the community, and within schools. Addressing student bullying requires a collective effort from a broad range of stakeholders, including families, parents/carers, the broader community, and schools.

This report examined whether the Department of Education's (the department's) strategies were effective in supporting the protection of students from bullying at Queensland state schools. We assessed whether the department's strategies and policies were effectively designed, and whether it has monitored the implementation and effectiveness of these strategies. We visited 5 schools (out of 1,265 state schools) to see how they managed bullying. This evidence was used to understand how departmental policies were implemented by those schools. It also provided us with context on how bullying was being managed at the school level, including challenges faced. Given the small sample size, it was not intended to be representative of all schools.

The department's strategies and procedures are effectively designed in line with better practice research on bullying, and these provide its schools with an evidence-based approach to manage bullying on a day-to-day basis. However, overall strategies do not effectively communicate the department's objectives, actions, and measures specific to bullying. The department could be more explicit and better communicate how its strategies are intended to address bullying. As they are currently presented, this would not be obvious to students and parents/carers. More could also be done to use bullying related data from its schools to inform its strategies and responses.

The department's monitoring of its schools' implementation of bullying strategies could be more effective. It does not have the necessary measures and information to determine if its policies and resources are effectively supporting schools to reduce student bullying incidents. Schools operate with a high degree of autonomy in delivering education services in line with local needs, and bullying incidents are largely managed within schools. Accordingly, it is important that the department enhances its assessment and monitoring activities to determine whether schools are effective in protecting students from bullying. This includes monitoring of key areas such as documentation and communication of schools' codes of conduct. Enhancing its use of surveys would also improve the department's ability to measure its effectiveness. At present, it is not capturing sufficient detail through annual surveys to enable evaluation of its approaches.





## 2. Recommendations

We have directed the recommendations in this report to the Department of Education.

### The department's strategies to reduce student bullying

We recommend that the Department of Education:

1. clearly documents its approach to bullying. This should include the supports available for state schools to implement evidence-based prevention and response strategies. As part of this it should develop a plan for how it will implement its strategy and monitor its effectiveness
2. supports more effective communication of schools' codes of conduct through
  - redeveloping the prevention and response to bullying requirements in the State Schools Student Code of Conduct to align with current evidence-based practice and departmental procedures
  - monitoring schools' documentation of the code of conduct
  - ensuring schools provide sufficient information online to demonstrate the currency of codes of conduct
3. as part of delivering on its commitment to address recommendations from the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*, enhances its data collection to include information on students who experience bullying and cyber bullying
4. enhances its approach to monitoring student bullying by
  - improving its collection and analysis of information on the experiences of parents/carers, students, and staff specific to the management of student bullying
  - establishing processes for monitoring schools' implementation of bullying policies and when and how a region would intervene to support a school that needs assistance to reduce bullying
  - evaluating the effectiveness of its policies and resources to support schools to prevent and respond to bullying.

### The department's supports for schools to manage student bullying

We recommend that the Department of Education:

5. reviews the Parent and Community Engagement framework to include
  - up-to-date, contemporary approaches to engaging working parents/carers
  - specific guidance on engaging with parents/carers on complex policy issues such as bullying
6. makes readily available access to professional learning, teaching resources, and information for school staff about preventing and responding to bullying behaviour, including
  - how to identify bullying behaviour
  - effective approaches for responding to and reporting different types of bullying, including cyber bullying.

## Reference to comments

In accordance with s. 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, we provided a copy of this report to the Department of Education. In reaching our conclusions, we considered its views and represented them to the extent we deemed relevant and warranted. The formal response from the Department of Education is at [Appendix A](#).

## 3. Managing student bullying

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Bullying is defined as 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 is an issue which can have negative impacts, not only for people who are bullied, but also for those displaying bullying behaviours and those who witness it. Within schools, bullied students can have lower school attendance, lower academic achievement, and lower self-esteem. Bullying is also associated with numerous and lasting negative impacts on individuals' wellbeing into adulthood.

In this audit, we assessed the effectiveness of the Department of Education's (the department's) strategies, policies, and resources to support schools to protect students from bullying. We visited 5 schools (out of 1,265 state schools) across the state to see how they were using these strategies, procedures, and resources. These schools are not representative of all Queensland state schools and accordingly, outcomes of these visits cannot be extrapolated to all schools.

[Appendix B](#) provides greater detail on our audit scope and methodology.

### Identifying and responding to bullying

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Identifying and responding to student bullying can be complicated. Bullying is not always straightforward to identify, and it is not confined to the school yard. Addressing it requires a comprehensive approach involving multiple stakeholders, including schools, individuals, families, communities, policymakers, and technology companies. Schools cannot address bullying on their own, and accordingly a whole-of-school and whole-of-community approach is required. The social and psychological factors involved in bullying means that a variety of approaches are required to effectively manage bullying incidents. Our report focuses on the strategies the department has in place, which includes how it works with all stakeholders to address bullying.

#### Identifying student bullying

Bullying is not always straightforward to identify. One-off incidents are not bullying; the behaviour becomes recognised as bullying when a student or group of students repeatedly targets one or more students. While many bullying incidents are identified and recorded in the classroom, incidents often occur in areas where school staff are not present – such as toilets, playgrounds, and online. It does not always stop or start in the school yard, often occurring both within and outside school. This can make it more difficult for school staff to address it. The national initiative *Bullying. No Way!* describes 3 types of bullying:

- verbal – name calling or insulting someone
- physical – hitting or otherwise hurting someone
- social – excluding someone from social activities and groups.

When bullying occurs online and a student publishes, distributes, or shares information to a wider audience, the behaviour may be described as cyber bullying.

Bullying can overlap with other aggressive behaviours that present as one-off incidents, such as fights, harassment, or theft.

#### Students can be reluctant to report bullying

What may initially appear as a one-off incident can be difficult to recognise as bullying if the student is reluctant to report previous incidents.





Students who experience bullying can be reluctant to report bullying because they fear retaliation or escalation. Some types of bullying are subtle (such as social exclusion) and students may not realise that what they are experiencing is harmful. Understanding the different types of bullying helps students to recognise when they are being bullied and how to respond.

## Effective responses to student bullying

Responding to student bullying is complex due to the social and psychological factors involved. This can include issues like low self-esteem, past trauma, or social isolation. Research into effective responses to student bullying identifies the need for schools to deploy a multi-faceted approach, including:

- education for students, teachers, other school staff, parents/carers, and the broader community
- support and wellbeing services for those impacted by bullying (both those experiencing bullying and those displaying bullying behaviour)
- responsive anti-bullying approaches, including sanctions (such as suspensions and expulsions) and restorative practices (such as counselling and education)
- monitoring and evaluation activities to assess effectiveness of activities undertaken.

We provide further information on effective responses to bullying in [Appendix F](#).

## Addressing bullying requires a collaborative approach

Reducing bullying requires a collective effort that involves schools, parents/carers, and the broader community. Schools play an important role in this, but not the only role. They provide safe and positive learning environments which encompass student wellbeing, inclusiveness, and diversity. To effectively reduce bullying behaviours, there must be involvement from parents/carers and the community more broadly.

For parents/carers, effective collaboration through education and open communication can help them:

- recognise the signs and effects of bullying
- identify if their child might be involved in bullying. This could be if their child is being bullied or if they are using bullying behaviour
- understand the importance of maintaining open lines of communication and modelling empathy, respect, and kindness at home.

Collaboration between the school and its community sets expectations about behaviours not just at school, but more broadly in the community where children are involved (such as out-of-school sports, dance, and music activities). Raising awareness, recognising positive behaviour, and creating safe spaces can help the broader community:

- participate in campaigns to increase awareness of what bullying is and what to do if it occurs
- partner with schools to participate in anti-bullying programs, events, and awards that recognise positive behaviour
- improve overall actions and responses to bullying. This may include areas such as offering safe spaces for children, and providing information on how to report bullying anonymously.

## Roles and responsibilities for managing bullying behaviour

The department sets the strategic direction (discussed in Chapter 4) for how schools must deliver education services, which includes the management of bullying. It provides systems and resources to use when managing bullying (such as the system to record student behaviour incidents, OneSchool, and fact sheets for how to respond to a report of bullying). It also maintains dashboards that schools and regions use to monitor student achievement, attendance, satisfaction, and behaviour incidents.

The department reviews the performance of every state school on a 4-yearly cycle and supports schools to develop plans to address any improvements identified. Its 8 regional offices monitor and support schools when needed, and each school has a school supervisor. It also provides all schools with access to support staff, such as child psychologists, counsellors, and guidance officers.

Schools and principals are responsible for the day-to-day management of school behaviour (which includes bullying), protecting students from harm, and ensuring the good order of the school. Typically, principals and staff (including deputy principals, heads of department, teachers, and teacher aides) manage bullying by:

- promoting a caring, safe, and supportive learning environment for all students
- protecting the safety and wellbeing of students, including those who display bullying behaviours and those who experience bullying
- providing the appropriate supports for students, such as counselling or referral to other services
- setting the required standard of student behaviour
- intervening in incidents they see in the classroom and playground
- recording and investigating complaints from students, parents/carers, and other staff
- determining the appropriate actions for misbehaving students, including
  - consequences (such as apology, detention, suspension, or exclusion)
  - therapy (such as counselling)
- communicating to parents/carers of students involved in incidents.

Principals have autonomy to choose how they implement the department's policies and which resources to use to best respond to the local needs of their students. They also receive funding they can use to access commercial programs and training or develop their own in-house resources.

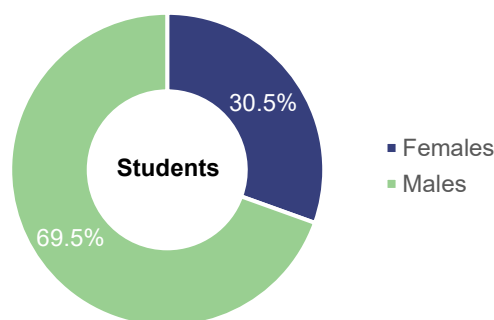
## Bullying incidents in Queensland state schools

OneSchool is the primary system used by schools to record student behaviour incidents (including bullying). In 2023, 2.49 million behaviour incidents were recorded in OneSchool. Of these, 76,400 (3 per cent) were bullying incidents. That year 56,121 individual students were reported for bullying (some students were involved in multiple incidents). [Appendix D](#) includes further information on student bullying, including students reported for repeated bullying incidents. [Appendix E](#) lists the behavioural codes available for schools when recording incidents.

Figure 3A shows the breakdown of incidents by gender.

Boys are, on average, twice as likely to use bullying behaviour compared to girls. System-wide data is not available on the number and gender breakdown of students who experienced bullying in Queensland state schools.

**Figure 3A**  
Proportion of reported bullying incidents by gender, 2023



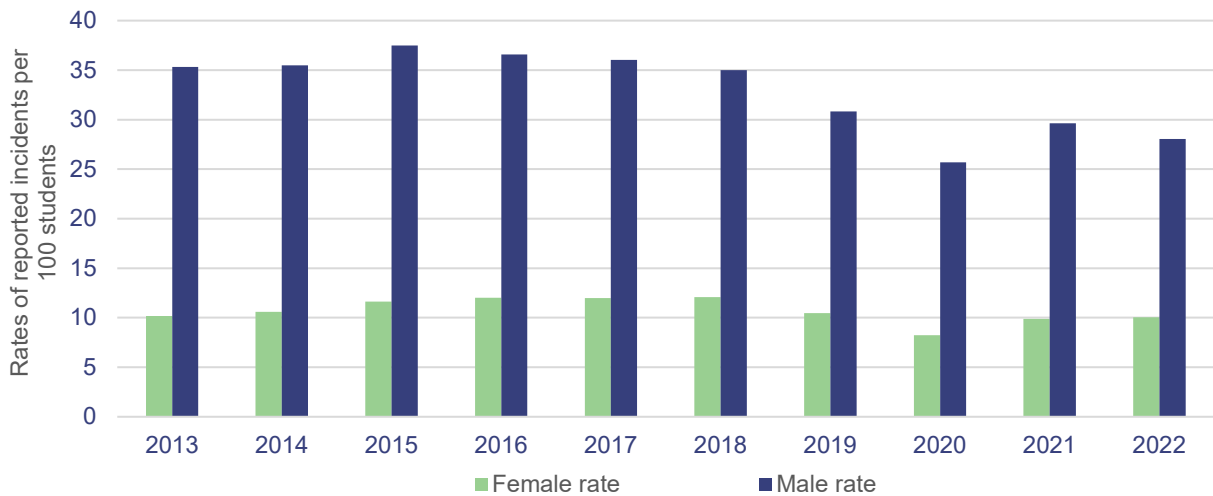
Note: Based on unique counts of students.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.

### Trends over time

Before 2023, the department recorded bullying and harassment within a single behaviour category. Figure 3B shows bullying and harassment incidents decreased from a total of approximately 125,000 in 2013 to around 115,100 in 2022. Incidents involving boys decreased from a high of 37 incidents per 100 students in 2015 to a low of 28 per 100 in 2022 (lower school attendance due to COVID-19 affected the 2020 data). Incident rates involving girls have remained relatively stable, at around 10 per 100.

**Figure 3B**  
**Trends in rates for reported incidents of bullying and harassment by gender – state schools**



Note: Numbers are counts of incidents, not students. Students are counted more than once if they are involved in multiple incidents.

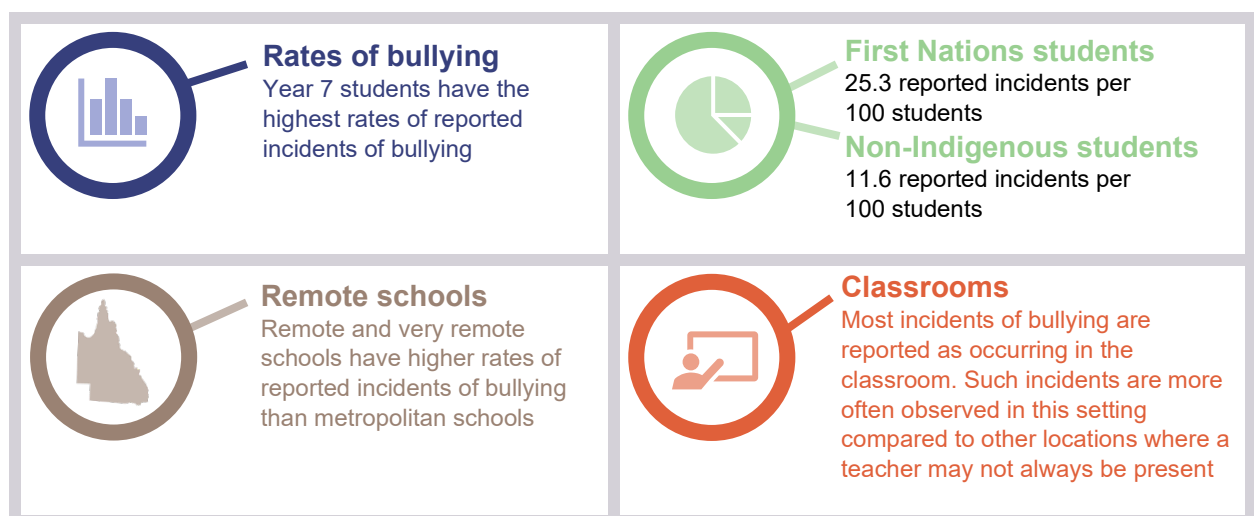
Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.

From the beginning of the 2023 school year, the department created new categories and split bullying and harassment into 2 separate categories. It also provided clearer definitions to staff. The new categories are listed in [Appendix E](#). Future trends in bullying will be clearer from 2023 onwards as the counts of harassment incidents can be considered separately.

In the 2023 school year, in addition to the nearly 76,400 reported bullying incidents, schools reported nearly 61,900 harassment incidents (combined total: 138,300). Given the change in definitions and categories, these totals should not be compared to prior year data sets.

Our analysis of the bullying incidents reported by state schools in 2023 identified that some groups of students, some schools, and some student cohorts may need more support to address bullying behaviour than others. Figure 3C summarises a selection of high-level patterns.

**Figure 3C**  
**Patterns in reported incidents of bullying in state schools, 2023**



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.

[Appendix D](#) provides more detail on the patterns in the bullying incident data.

## 4. The department’s strategies to reduce student bullying

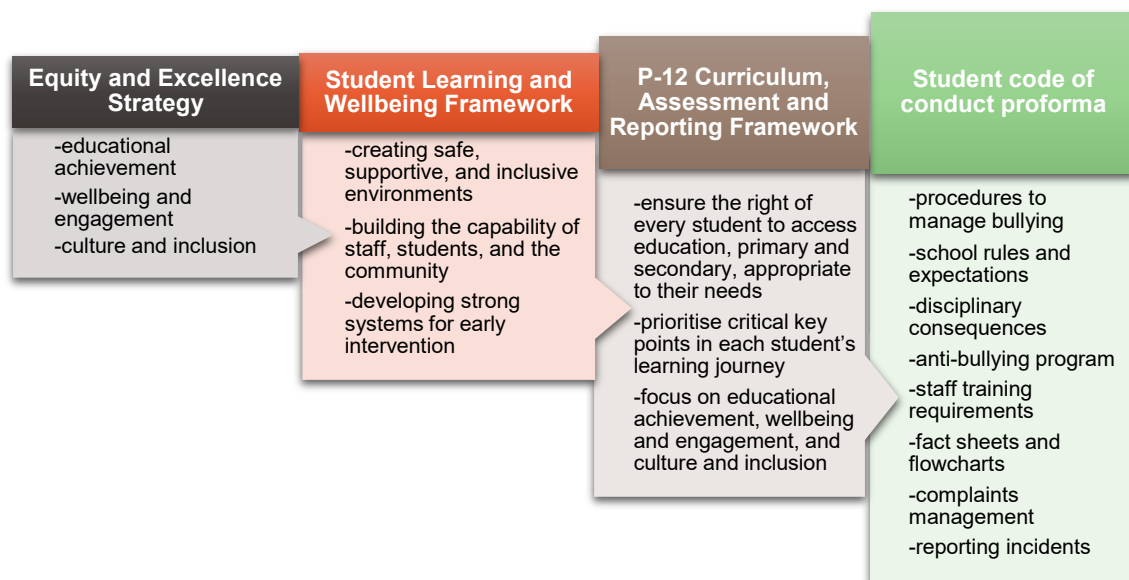
Effective responses to reducing student bullying highlight the need for involvement and action from a variety of stakeholders, including families, parents/carers, the broader community, and schools. In this chapter, we report on how the Department of Education (the department):

- coordinates and communicates its strategies to address student bullying (including communications with stakeholders outside of schools)
- collects and analyses data to understand the extent and nature of bullying in schools
- monitors and evaluates if its strategies are effectively reducing bullying.

### Strategies to address student bullying

The department sets the strategic direction and environment for how its schools must deliver education services (including managing bullying). This is communicated through 3 key documents: the *Equity and Excellence Strategy*, the *Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework*, and the *P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework*. Schools must follow specific procedures for the day-to-day management of bullying. The department mandates them through the *Student code of conduct proforma*, which is a required document under the student discipline procedure. Figure 4A summarises these documents.

**Figure 4A**  
Strategic documents and procedures to manage bullying



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education documents.

The department’s current strategies require schools to focus on the support and wellbeing of students, create a sense of belonging, and establish a positive environment for teaching. Central to this is the delivery of health and wellbeing education to students. This approach is a core element of evidence-based, holistic approaches to bullying. We discuss the materials and supports provided to schools to deliver these education services in Chapter 5.

The department previously had an anti-bullying action plan, *Stand out from the crowd*, which was released in 2018. It developed the action plan in response to a parliamentary inquiry into cyber bullying. The plan has now expired, and is no longer in use, with actions finalised in 2020.

## A more coordinated approach to reducing bullying is needed

The *Equity and Excellence Strategy; P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework*; and the *Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework* cover elements of effective approaches to bullying. However, these documents do not mention bullying or set objectives, targets, or strategies specific to bullying. This makes it difficult to determine how the department coordinates, communicates, and measures bullying to ensure its approaches are effective in reducing it.

Addressing the prevalence of bullying across the state school system requires a coordinated and unified approach from the department, its school staff, parents/carers, and the broader community. Enhancing its strategy and framework to clearly document its approach would help the department to communicate expectations and responsibilities for preventing and addressing bullying consistently to everyone. This would complement the communications provided to parents/carers on how schools manage bullying through the student code of conduct (discussed further below).

The department could consider aspects of the previous *Stand out from the crowd* action plan, which advocated a community-wide approach to bullying and cyber bullying and focused on cooperative actions from students, teachers, support staff, parents/carers, local business owners, leaders, and elected officials. The action plan focused on 3 areas:

- **act** – everyone has a responsibility to take action to prevent and respond to bullying
- **collaborate** – bullying affects everyone, and people need to work together to find solutions
- **educate** – education is key to creating positive, safe, and inclusive school environments.

The department could reference materials available in other jurisdictions when considering how it communicates its approach to bullying. [Appendix C](#) details some of the approaches to bullying in selected jurisdictions across Australia and New Zealand.

### Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Department of Education clearly documents its approach to bullying. This should include the supports available for state schools to implement evidence-based prevention and response strategies. As part of this it should develop a plan for how it will implement its strategy and monitor its effectiveness.

## The department could help schools better document and communicate their approach to managing student bullying

### The department's student code of conduct proforma aligns to evidence-based approaches to managing student bullying

The department's primary mechanism for setting the procedures for its schools to manage bullying is through a student code of conduct. All schools must develop their own local student code of conduct using the department's proforma. The proforma includes 11 mandatory elements related to bullying. Codes of conduct also cover other elements of school discipline, such as use of social media, complaints, and use of mobile devices.

The department's 11 mandatory elements meet evidence-based better practice research for managing student bullying (see [Appendix F](#) for the analysis we compiled on evidence-based approaches). Successful approaches include key areas such as who parents/carers and students should contact if involved in a bullying incident, and the supports available for students who have been bullied.

## Communication to students, parents/carers, and the community through the student code of conduct could be improved

In addition to outlining school procedures, student codes of conduct are also the primary method schools use to communicate with parents/carers and students on how school staff will manage student bullying. The student codes of conduct are long (based on the 31-page proforma sent to schools) and difficult for parents/carers to easily find information.

The length and language used in the student codes of conduct may be appropriate for school staff, but this may not be the case for students and parents/carers. This increases the risk that these key groups may not understand how schools manage bullying, and that practices adopted by schools do not align with stakeholder expectations. This communication is important, given the whole-of-community response required to effectively address bullying.

We visited 5 schools (out of 1,265 state schools) and met with representatives from 3 of the parents and citizens associations from these schools. They all commented that the student codes of conduct were lengthy documents that were difficult to understand. The peak body, P&Cs Qld, made similar comments about the usability of the student codes of conduct based on phone calls for help with bullying from its members.

The department can streamline these documents to ensure key stakeholders read, understand, and use them.

## Student codes of conduct need greater guidance on the mandatory elements

We randomly selected 50 schools from across Queensland and assessed their student codes of conduct. All 50 codes of conduct omitted one or more of the mandatory elements for addressing bullying based upon the publicly available codes of conduct. We did not validate these omissions with each of the selected schools.

Most schools did not include:

- details of the professional development for staff (98 per cent)
- the threshold for reporting to police and or child protection services for bullying matters (94 per cent)
- the whole school program to prevent and address bullying (76 per cent).

Other important areas which some schools had omitted (from the sampled schools) included the complaints management process for bullying incidents, and the single point of contact for information on bullying policies and approaches at the school.

Most schools did include:

- the description for how they would promote positive behaviours (98 per cent)
- the possible disciplinary consequences for students using bullying behaviour (100 per cent).

The department's proforma includes guidance, but could be clearer. It would benefit from incorporating further detail to help schools meet the expected requirements.

Omissions in the student codes of conduct do not mean these elements are not in place within schools. Our findings relate to how these areas are communicated to students and parents/carers. Our audit did not assess individual schools' compliance with these requirements or individual case management of bullying incidents within schools.

## The student codes of conduct are not always reviewed and signed annually

The department's policy mandates that each school must undertake an annual minor review of its student code of conduct. This is to ensure it remains current and has the correct names and contact details of staff and the parents and citizens association. The principal and the president of the parents and citizens association should sign the student code of conduct annually to show it is current.



Each school must also undertake a comprehensive review, including community consultation, every 4 years to ensure it has the support of parents/carers to implement the school rules as detailed in the student code of conduct. The department's policy states that schools must develop their student codes of conduct with the involvement, engagement, and collaboration of the parent body.

Of the 50 student codes of conduct we reviewed:

- 40 (80 per cent) had not been signed by the principal and president of the parents and citizens association in the current year
- only 30 (60 per cent) included a statement of support from the parents and citizens association.

This increases the risk that details for key contacts, such as the parents and citizens association or school staff who handle bullying complaints, are not up to date. It also raises the question of whether these key parties were involved in developing the code of conduct, and whether they understand the schools' approaches. While schools and individuals may have concerns regarding publishing signatures on public websites, more could be done to clarify the currency of these documents and how parents/carers can obtain hard copy originals.

At 3 of the 5 schools we visited, we were able to meet with representatives of the parents and citizens associations. They all commented that they had not had input into developing the student code of conduct. At 3 of the 5 schools we attended, the current president had not signed the student code of conduct.

#### Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Department of Education supports more effective communication of schools' codes of conduct through:

- redeveloping the prevention and response to bullying requirements in the State Schools Student Code of Conduct to align with current evidence-based practice and departmental procedures
- monitoring schools' documentation of the code of conduct
- ensuring schools provide sufficient information online to demonstrate the currency of codes of conduct.

## Understanding the extent and nature of student bullying

Understanding the extent and nature of bullying occurring and students at higher risk can help the department to coordinate its strategies and resources. This would ensure they are appropriately aligned to the needs of its schools and stakeholders.

### The department could better understand how many students experience bullying

The department could better understand the nature, extent, and impact of bullying by recording more details on those students who experience bullying. At present, it is limited in how this information is recorded in its OneSchool system.

The system enables recording of detailed information on behaviour for those students displaying unacceptable behaviours. Schools can currently capture information such as the time, date, and nature of bullying incidents. OneSchool allows for freeform text capture, which schools can elect to use to capture further detail on the incident, including details of the student(s) experiencing bullying. This can include information on supports provided to the student and updates regarding the outcomes of any interventions. While the department could collate this freeform data, it does not enable effective monitoring. This impacts the department's and schools' ability to collate and assess actions undertaken to support students.

Capturing and analysing information on those students who have experienced bullying would provide the department with valuable data to enhance its policies and strategies. It could also enable:

- better support for these students
- assessment of the impact on their wellbeing, attendance, and academic performance.

Collection of data forms an important part of strategy implementation. Specific to bullying, literature such as *Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying* by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization highlights the importance of accurate data on prevalence and trends in school violence and bullying. It states that evidence-based approaches should be informed by accurate, comprehensive, and disaggregated data. While the department has some of this information through data collection on incidents, this is not currently complete given the limited data available on those who are impacted by bullying. We discuss other forms of data collection, such as surveys, later in this chapter.

## Previous reports have proposed improved data collection

Over the last 5 years, international and national inquiries have highlighted the importance of improving data on the school experience of students with disability, including their experiences of bullying.

In 2019, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities raised concerns that there was no national disaggregated data on how many students with disability experienced bullying. It recommended that governments expand existing data collections for students with disability to include the number of bullying incidents.

In October 2020, the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability* (the commission) released its interim report. It stated that the New South Wales and Queensland state school systems do not routinely record and use data about the experiences of students with disability. The commission was concerned about the lack of data on the number of students bullied.

In its 2023 final report, the commission recommended that state and territory governments should report data to the Education Ministers Meeting on the educational experiences of students with disability. The data should include the number and type of reports involving violence or abuse against students with disability, including bullying and harassment.

At the time of our audit, the department was still working to address these recommendations. It has committed to working with the Australian Government and other jurisdictions to strengthen data and evidence to support best practice and meet the intent of the recommendation in the Queensland context.

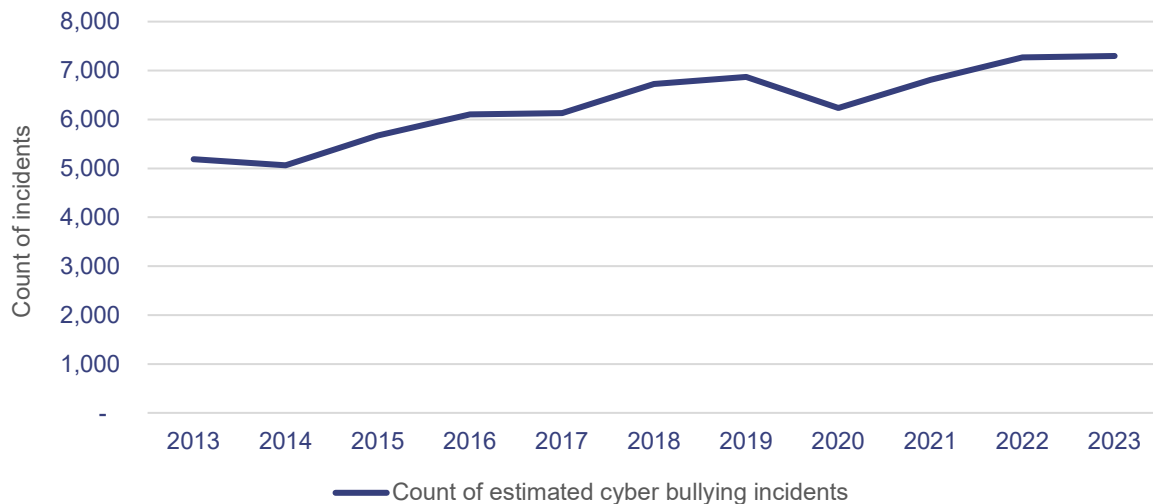
## Data on the extent and nature of cyber bullying would be beneficial

Cyber bullying is emerging as an increasing problem. Cyber bullying is a type of bullying that includes the use of technology such as mobile phones and social media. The national eSafety Commissioner reports that nationally there were 2,383 reports of cyber bullying in 2023 compared to 1,700 in 2022 – an increase of 40 per cent (not all incidents are reported to the eSafety Commissioner as there are multiple pathways for parents/carers to seek assistance). The department has recognised this as a problem and has a separate cyber bullying fact sheet for schools and has established the reputation management and cyber safety team to support schools with serious cyber incidents including bullying, as reported in Chapter 5. The department has also implemented a mobile phone ban within its schools.

School staff can record incidents that relate to cyber bullying, however OneSchool does not have a specific identifier for cyber bullying. We conducted analysis of reported bullying incidents from the freeform text describing them to identify words related to cyber bullying. Our analysis in Figure 4B found that since 2013 the number of cyber bullying incidents has increased from 5,144 in 2013 to 7,275 in 2023, an increase of 41.4 per cent. Note that this analysis is only an indicator that cyber bullying may have occurred. The nature of this analysis means it is not as reliable as other data within OneSchool, which details the specific nature of the incident. [Appendix D](#) presents further analysis of bullying data.

The department would benefit from the collection of data on the number of cyber bullying incidents to better understand the effectiveness of the student codes of conduct and the recent restrictions to accessing mobile phones in schools. Cyber bullying occurs both within and outside of schools, where students have increased access to social media and other online technologies. This makes it a challenging area for schools to monitor and address. Parents/carers play an important role in monitoring online behaviour. Additional data would assist the department in understanding the extent of cyber bullying. This enhanced understanding could complement its education and collaboration with parents/carers on how to manage cyber bullying behaviours.

**Figure 4B**  
**Estimated number of reported cyber bullying incidents**



Note: COVID-19 reduced the time students attended school in 2020.

Source: Queensland Audit Office based on Department of Education data.

## The department is improving its use of data, but greater analysis is needed

Schools analyse their data on behaviour incidents to monitor and manage incidents within their school community (including bullying).

The department is improving its collection and use of this school-level information to assist in the management of bullying. In late 2023, the department started a project to analyse the behaviour incidents recorded in OneSchool (see details of this pilot dashboard in the box below). This project remains in the pilot phase and is expected to be finalised in mid-2025. Implementing this will help enhance the department's understanding of:

- the full extent and nature of student bullying across regions and the state
- schools with higher/lower than average rates of student bullying
- the extent and impact of emerging areas, such as misuse of social media.

Greater understanding of behavioural incidents could support more effective and targeted strategies, including the ability to intervene earlier and identify schools that need additional support to reduce student bullying.

The department monitors and analyses aspects of the metrics and measures included in its *Equity and Excellence Strategy* and *Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework*. This includes measures such as suspensions and exclusions, which may occur due to bullying. While this analysis gives the department information about some of the most serious incidents, it does not enable early identification of issues and trends impacting students. The new dashboard will enable this analysis to be undertaken.

Each of the 5 schools we visited analysed student behaviour incident data to identify school-level trends and issues. They commented on how difficult it was to access the data they wanted from OneSchool and the inability to identify students who have experienced bullying. This was impacting their ability to monitor actions undertaken to respond to incidents and ensure resolution.

## The department has commenced projects to monitor behaviour incidents

In 2023, the department commenced 2 projects to support stronger monitoring of student behaviour, as described in the box below. The projects will provide schools and the department with a range of new reports, including reports of bullying incidents at both the school and regional levels. The department was still in the piloting phase at the time of the audit, so we were unable to assess the effectiveness of these approaches.

### Work in progress



#### Pilot dashboard to monitor student behaviour

In late 2023, the department commenced development of a pilot dashboard to monitor behaviour incidents. The dashboard aims to support its *Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework* by delivering priority intelligence and insights to schools, regions, and central staff. The dashboard will give users access to reports on the full range of behaviour incidents recorded in OneSchool.

At the time of this report, the project remains in the pilot phase. The department advised this is expected to be released to all schools in the second half of 2025.

#### Corporate online reporting dashboard

The department has developed a corporate online reporting dashboard that will integrate data from multiple source systems, including finance, human resources, and OneSchool. The dashboard aims to provide central and regional staff with better information for strategic planning, oversight, and decision making.

At the time of this report, the project remains in the pilot phase. The department advised this is expected to be released to all schools in 2025.

The dashboard will track regional and school performance trends, including bullying.

### Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Department of Education, as part of delivering on its commitment to address recommendations from the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*, enhances its data collection to include information on students who experience bullying and cyber bullying.

## Monitoring and evaluation of strategies to reduce student bullying

Approaches shown to effectively reduce bullying (see [Appendix E](#)) include measures of success and evaluation of the outcomes for students. Given the autonomy provided to schools in how they respond to bullying, it is important that the department monitors whether current approaches are being implemented as intended and are effective.



## The department should assess if its approaches to bullying are effective

The department does not measure whether its strategies and policies have the desired impacts on bullying within schools. This is partly due to the lack of defined measures and targets within its strategies. The department undertakes monitoring of broader measures, which may be used as proxy measures for bullying. This includes:

- surveying stakeholders on how behaviour is managed generally and whether students feel safe in schools
- monitoring and measuring measures such as suspensions and exclusion and academic performance.

These areas are important to monitor; however, the absence of specific bullying data and measures limits the department's ability to know whether its approaches to reducing bullying are working. We discuss the use of surveys further below.

The department has previously undertaken an external evaluation specific to cyber bullying practices, which are a subset of bullying (see the section below for more detail). It also conducts surveys of key stakeholders and monitors school performance in a range of areas. However, this analysis does not relate specifically to bullying and it has therefore not been able to effectively evaluate the outcomes of its policies on bullying to date.

### Inconclusive evaluation on cyber bullying processes

In 2023, the department engaged a university to independently evaluate the effectiveness of current processes used to address reported incidents of cyber bullying across all Queensland school sectors (state and non-state).

The evaluation gave the department useful information on the design of its policies and resources related to cyber bullying (which are also available to non-state schools), but not on whether stakeholders thought they were effective. Researchers tried to survey stakeholders, to understand how schools were implementing the materials, but principals of the schools (state and non-state) contacted did not give consent for their schools to participate and no responses were received.

The researchers found the department provides well-outlined policies and resources to schools, with clear responsibilities for staff. However, as the researchers did not receive any responses to their survey, they were unable to determine stakeholder views on the effectiveness of the department's approaches in reducing bullying.

The evaluation made recommendations to all school sectors (state and non-state) in Queensland including:

- that school-held data from reported incidents be collected, monitored, and analysed to reveal possible patterns
- that supports and resources for schools are strengthened to improve the knowledge of those who may witness a bullying incident
- the need to provide greater clarity to principals on the required response to incidents involving more vulnerable students (especially First Nations students as well as students with disability given the legislative responsibilities in relation to harassment and victimisation).

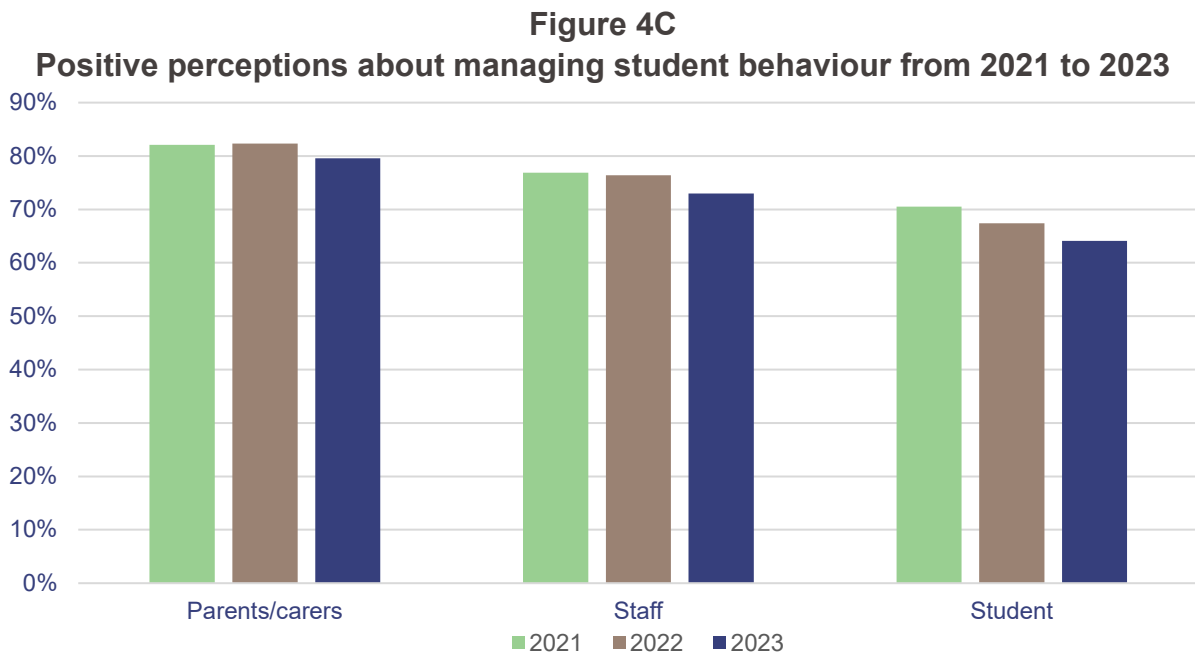
### The department needs more information on parent/carers, student, and staff opinions on the management of student bullying and cyber bullying

The department does not know how satisfied parents/carers, students, and staff are with how schools manage student bullying and cyber bullying. Each year, the department surveys these key stakeholder groups about how well each school manages student behaviour, alongside other key questions aligned to its strategies.



The department does not include survey questions about the extent of bullying or how schools manage it. Without collecting this information from key stakeholders, the department cannot fully understand or assess perceptions of how schools manage bullying. This also limits its ability to identify and respond to changes in the extent or nature of student bullying.

The school opinion survey asks broad questions about how well schools manage student behaviour, which are important for a holistic assessment of its approaches. Figure 4C shows that, since 2021, parents/carers, students, and staff have reported declining positive perceptions of behaviour management. It is unclear whether perceptions of bullying management contribute to this decline.



Notes: Question for parents/carers and staff – Student behaviour is well managed at this school. Question for students – Student behaviour is well managed at my school. Response rates for the survey are relatively high – parents/carers (23.5 per cent); students (52.2 per cent); and staff (61.1 per cent).

Source: Department of Education school opinion survey.

The department also encourages schools to participate in its optional *Queensland Engagement and Wellbeing Survey*. In 2023, 121,000 (33 per cent) students from 572 state schools participated. This survey covers 12 aspects of student wellbeing and engagement, but does not ask specific questions about bullying. Other jurisdictions – like South Australia, Victoria, and New Zealand – have wellbeing surveys for schools to administer that cover student perceptions of bullying. [Appendix C](#) provides more information on approaches in other jurisdictions.

## Regions monitor aspects of school performance, but reviews have not covered bullying to date

Regional performance and assessment meetings occur twice each year across all 8 regions in Queensland, and include follow-up activities and site visits. They focus on how schools are progressing on the priority support measures from the department’s *Equity and Excellence Strategy*. A team from the central and regional offices meets to review performance data to prioritise support for schools and inform system priorities. The assessments are based on data analysis linked to the achievement of the following priority support measures:

- educational achievement
- attendance
- disciplinary absences (suspensions and exclusions)
- student opinion survey data.



The reviewers use quantitative and qualitative data to inform the regional performance and assessment meetings, including evidence from school reviews. To date, reviews have not specifically focused on bullying. This is an area which school reviews should consider in the future to enable an assessment of bullying management within schools.

### Schools are reviewed every 4 years, but not on their anti-bullying policies

The department conducts formal reviews of schools every 4 years. The school reviews consider how schools manage student behaviour generally, but not how schools prevent or respond to bullying specifically.

As a result of the reviews, some schools receive priority support to help them improve in key areas. During 2023, 48 schools were identified as needing priority support. The reviewers identified that improving the management of student behaviour was a common focus.

The department could do more to check that schools have fully implemented its policy to work with parents/carers and develop the student code of conduct. This would help inform any evaluation of the effectiveness of its strategies.

#### **Recommendation 4**

We recommend that the Department of Education enhances its approach to monitoring student bullying by:

- improving its collection and analysis of information on the experiences of parents/carers, students, and staff specific to the management of student bullying
- establishing processes for monitoring schools' implementation of bullying policies and when and how a region would intervene to support a school that needs assistance to reduce bullying
- evaluating the effectiveness of its policies and resources to support schools to prevent and respond to bullying.



## 5. The department's support to schools

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This chapter is about the supports the Department of Education (the department) provides to help schools manage, prevent, and respond to bullying. It covers:

- guidance to engage with parents/carers to develop school anti-bullying policies
- training for school staff to be able to identify and respond to bullying
- resources to support students to use positive behaviours and build respectful relationships
- the support staff who provide wellbeing services to students
- coordination of national initiatives to raise awareness of bullying
- central expertise and support to address individual complex cyber bullying incidents.

### Helping schools address the complex challenges associated with bullying

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Teachers and schools face a range of workload pressures that include teaching, communicating with parents/carers, lesson planning, and managing student needs and behaviours. Developing school-specific programs and teaching resources, and managing bullying incidents can be challenging and time consuming for schools and teachers. Schools also have the responsibility of managing incidents which may have occurred outside of school and within the broader community (if they affect the good order of the school). This heightens the importance of the department helping schools engage effectively with external stakeholders.

The department provides schools with a wide range of resources to help them manage bullying, such as the *Positive Behaviour for Learning Framework* materials that help schools raise awareness of bullying and how to manage it. However, it could develop additional resources to support schools to:

- partner with parents/carers to develop holistic anti-bullying programs
- give schools/teachers and support staff better access to anti-bullying training modules.

### More guidance will help schools better partner with parents/carers to develop anti-bullying approaches

The department has a framework for parent/carer engagement, titled *Parent and Community Engagement* (PACE). PACE focuses on traditional engagement approaches such as face-to-face meetings and newsletters. The department could modernise the framework by providing more strategies or examples on the use of modern technologies, such as social media, online events, or communication methods best suited for working parents/carers.

The department requires its schools to develop their local anti-bullying approach in partnership with parents/carers, as part of the student code of conduct (see Chapter 4 for our assessment). It does not provide detailed examples to schools on how to specifically engage parents/carers on complex issues such as bullying.



Without greater guidance to help its schools successfully engage parents/carers, there is a risk that parents/carers may not:

- understand the school's approach to reducing bullying
- know how to support their child if they are involved in or affected by bullying
- be confident to report any incidents or situations that meet the department's definition of bullying.

Principals and staff at all 5 schools (out of 1,265 state schools) we attended were not aware of PACE and had not used it. They also commented that it was challenging to get parents/carers to come to face-to-face events to discuss school policies. Given the difficulty schools expressed in engaging with busy parents, the department could pilot a small number of engagement projects in partnership with the peak body, P&Cs Qld. The department could then make the successful approaches available to other schools.

#### Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Department of Education reviews the Parent and Community Engagement framework to include:

- up-to-date, contemporary approaches to engaging working parents/carers
- specific guidance on engaging with parents/carers on complex policy issues such as bullying.

## Easier access to anti-bullying training will benefit staff

Effective anti-bullying programs rely on professional development for staff in recognising and responding to bullying. The department could do more to support its schools to ensure all staff can identify bullying and know how to respond. Without a consistent approach to training, individual staff may lack the confidence to act when they see bullying or have it reported to them.

While the department provides training programs and online courses for new and existing teachers on a range of topics, none of the training is specifically about student bullying. In particular, there is an absence of training materials to assist school staff (including teachers and support staff) to recognise and respond to student bullying.

Other states in Australia offer specific anti-bullying training and resources. These include an anti-bullying interventions course, along with a variety of anti-bullying classroom materials, bullying prevention and cyber bullying programs, as well as PowerPoint presentations, student worksheets, and speaking notes for teachers. Queensland could reference these materials in considering the need for additional training for its teachers.

The department mandates that staff complete its safety training annually to keep themselves and others safe. This mandatory training makes it clear that the department has no tolerance for bullying of any kind.

This training covers a range of topics, including student protection responsibilities and ways to foster an inclusive and respectful environment. The department also provides guidelines to assist staff in reporting incidents such as potential harm to students and student online safety, which includes cyber bullying.

The department recently launched a new classroom management hub which could also provide an efficient repository of resources and training modules specific to bullying for staff to access.





### New initiative

#### Classroom management hub

In 2024, the department released its new classroom management hub, which provides teachers with access to resources that offer an overview of practices teachers can use related to student learning, wellbeing, and behaviour.

The hub provides a range of general resources on managing classrooms, building positive relationships, and organising teaching spaces. It also includes teacher tip sheets, tools for self-assessment and observations, and a classroom management implementation guide for school leaders.

Presently, it does not provide specific resources for teachers to identify student bullying or strategies to effectively respond to it.

### Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Department of Education makes readily available access to professional learning, teaching resources, and information for school staff about preventing and responding to bullying behaviour, including:

- how to identify bullying behaviour
- effective approaches for responding to and reporting different types of bullying, including cyber bullying.

## Resources and materials are available for schools to deliver health and wellbeing-related education

There are a range of international and national resources and materials available to schools to promote respectful and positive behaviours in schools. Schools may choose to use them as complete programs or make use of different components to reflect the needs of their students and community. We have summarised some of the key ones here, but there are others schools can access.

### Respectful relationship materials

Respectful relationships education is foundational to the establishment of positive school cultures and relationships amongst students. It includes the explicit teaching about what is bullying and the impacts of bullying.

#### The Respect Program

The Respect Program is aligned to the Australian Curriculum. It provides teachers with age-appropriate teaching and learning resources to support students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to build and maintain healthy, positive relationships. Resources are made available to support respectful relationships education for schools, parents, and students including fact sheets, teaching materials, and links to external agencies and services.

#### Learning resources

The department's website includes age-appropriate classroom resources (such as lesson plans and animations) developed to support schools to teach students about cyber safety, with content about cyber bullying, and supported by links to existing external information and professional development.



## Positive Behaviour for Learning Framework

Proactive approaches to building the social and emotional competencies of students can help them learn appropriate ways to respond to bullying behaviours. The department has adopted the *Positive Behaviour for Learning Framework*, which is available for schools to use as part of their curriculum. The framework promotes teaching clear expectations, reinforcing expected behaviours, and using data to monitor effectiveness. It is a well-established and proven approach that focuses on addressing behaviours that could hinder students from focusing on learning.

The Positive Behaviour for Learning Framework is not a whole school anti-bullying program in itself, but provides a framework to support anti-bullying initiatives by effective use of data, ongoing and embedded professional development and coaching for staff, and systems to support adult implementation. Research studies have demonstrated that bullying behaviour can decrease through effective implementation.

In 2023, the department reported that approximately 48 per cent of state schools had fully implemented the framework and were using it to support teachers in creating positive and safe learning environments. The department does not monitor what other frameworks or materials other state schools are using. Four of the schools we visited had fully implemented the framework. The other school was still using the materials to promote positive behaviours.

## The department supports its schools with student wellbeing services

Queensland schools are allocated a variety of student support services, including guidance officers, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, chaplains, counsellors, nurses, and school-based police officers. In most cases, these staff allocations are based on the number of students enrolled. They can provide a range of support services to students for a range of wellbeing-related issues, including intensive one-on-one support or small group activities. Schools also have access to telehealth services where in-person is not available.

In 2021, the government allocated \$106.7 million for the Student Wellbeing Package, with funding to employ wellbeing professionals to provide mental health support to all state school students. The additional wellbeing professionals complement the department's existing support structures, contributing to its whole-school approach to supporting students' wellbeing and mental health. It does not have a specific focus on supporting students affected by bullying, however students requesting support with the effects of bullying would be prioritised according to school policies.

All the support staff at the 5 schools we visited and the peak body for student counsellors (the Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association) commented on the increasing need for support due to the number of students requesting support because of bullying.

The Student Wellbeing Package has enabled regions and schools to provide additional wellbeing support to students. As of September 2024, 635 wellbeing professionals had been employed across the state.

## More guidance for schools to address underlying drivers of bullying behaviour

The student codes of conduct (discussed in Chapter 4) include guidance to staff about how to support bullied students and the disciplinary consequences for students bullying. They do not provide guidance to staff on how to refer students to the new wellbeing professionals. The additional guidance officers, counsellors, and child psychologists can support students affected by bullying. There are now opportunities to update the department's proforma for the student codes of conduct and provide greater guidance to staff on how to connect students who have been subjected to bullying to the appropriate professional.

The department could also provide greater guidance about how to support students who are displaying bullying behaviour, with evidence-based interventions available that can address the underlying drivers of these behaviours. At present, the department's policies focus on the sanctions available to principals, but provide limited advice about how to support those students displaying persistent bullying behaviour.

Themes from research conducted by child mental health experts support more intensive intervention from a mental health professional to address repeated bullying behaviours (dependent of the bully's level of aggression). Current research shows that these approaches can be more effective than sanctions.

## The department leads and coordinates national anti-bullying initiatives

The department has led the Australian Schools Anti-Bullying Collective since it began in 1999. The collective's role is to provide centralised services to Australian schools to counter bullying, harassment, and violence. The collective is responsible for the *Bullying. No Way!* initiative and the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

### Bullying. No Way!

The *Bullying. No Way!* initiative raises awareness about what bullying is and how to prevent it. The website hosts a range of fact sheets and video clips about bullying for schools and communities. These are useful resources for schools, students, and parents/carers, but they do not cover bullying in the depth and detail needed by teachers and school staff.



#### Bullying. No Way! website

The website hosts a range of resources for schools, students, and parents/carers about bullying, including:

- clear definitions of bullying and types of bullying
- information on understanding, responding to, preventing, and teaching about bullying
- classroom materials, fact sheets, and professional learning resources
- updates on anti-bullying campaigns
- tips for families on collaborating with schools when reporting an incident
- national legislation and policies regarding bullying, harassment, discrimination, and violence
- links and contact details for non-school support services.

### National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence

In 2011, the collective established the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence to raise awareness and promote action. It is an annual event, with schools nationwide participating. From 2024, the event was extended to an awareness week, known as Bullying No Way: National Week of Action.

In 2023, a total of 6,418 schools participated in the national day of action, with almost all Queensland's state schools participating. Queensland accounted for approximately 19.6 per cent of participating schools.

Hosting and participating in awareness raising about bullying is an important initiative. The department could do more to understand if the increased awareness has an impact on reducing bullying and if students are satisfied that schools have the necessary supports to address bullying. While there is an evaluation survey conducted annually, the number of Queensland and state school participants is relatively low and may not be suitable to form conclusions.

## The department supports schools with serious cyber incidents

The department's Cybersafety and Reputation Management team supports schools with resources, advice, and assistance in managing more complex student cyber-related incidents (including cyber bullying). It works closely with:

- schools to investigate, gather, and retain evidence safely and legally
- social media platform providers to remove offensive online content.



The department's approach to supporting schools has been recognised nationally. In 2017, the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* recommended that other jurisdictions consider adopting the model used by the department.

The team has developed cyber safety resources for schools, including age-specific courses, incident guides, and tips for promoting positive online behaviour. The guides cover how to navigate cyber bullying incidents and report content on social media platforms. These resources support schools in responding to cyber-related incidents and provide guidance on how to get additional assistance from other entities such as the Queensland Police Service and the federal eSafety Commissioner.

The team supported schools across the state with 894 cyber-related incidents in the 2022–23 financial year. Schools need this extra help as social media platforms' complex policies, high volume of requests, and legal obligations can make it difficult for schools to get inappropriate content removed. Figure 5A provides a case study that illustrates how a school escalated a cyber bullying incident to the Cybersafety and Reputation Management team for resolution.

### **Figure 5A** **Case study – Cybersafety and Reputation Management team**

#### **Student cyber bullying incident on a social media platform**

##### **Background**

A student started to receive harassing messages from an anonymous social media account. The student felt uncomfortable and physically unsafe and told their parents about the incident.

##### **School response**

The parents helped their child report the incident to the school principal. Following discussions involving the principal, student, and parents, the school submitted a request for assistance to the department's Cybersafety and Reputation Management team. The school suspected the anonymous account was set up by other students.

##### **Cybersafety and Reputation Management team's actions**

The Cybersafety and Reputation Management team provided the principal with eSafety resources and ongoing guidance to manage the incident at the school. The team provided links to reporting tools and gave options for reporting the matter to the police due to safety concerns. Additionally, the team reported the account through the department's Online Safety Enforcement tool and requested the removal of the account.

##### **Outcome**

The team was able to get the social media platform to remove the account in just over a week.

*Source: Department of Education Cybersafety and Reputation Management team.*

# Appendices

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# A. Entity responses

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As mandated in Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to:

- Minister for Education and the Arts
- Department of Education.

We also provided a copy of the report to the following entities and gave them the option of providing a response:

- Premier
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

This appendix contains the responses we received.

The heads of these entities are responsible for the accuracy, fairness, and balance of their comments.



# Comments received from Minister for Education and the Arts



Minister for Education and the Arts

1 William Street Brisbane 4000  
PO Box 15033 City East  
Queensland 4002 Australia  
Telephone +61 7 3719 7270  
Email: [education@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:education@ministerial.qld.gov.au)  
[arts@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:arts@ministerial.qld.gov.au)

09 DEC 2024

Ms Rachel Vagg  
Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office  
Email: [gao@gao.qld.gov.au](mailto:gao@gao.qld.gov.au)

Dear Ms Vagg *Rachel,*

Thank you for your email dated 22 November 2024 regarding the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) draft report, Protecting Students from Bullying (the report), and providing the opportunity to respond.

As confirmed by the report, bullying is a significant issue for the Queensland community and a key concern for parents given bullying can have lifelong impacts for children and young people. Identifying and responding to bullying is becoming increasingly complex for schools and parents given the increase in social media use by young people and the changing nature of student behaviour in our schools.

The Crisafulli Government has identified responding to bullying as a key commitment and your advice will inform our response. It is clear that schools cannot do this work alone and new integrated community approaches to bullying—particularly when it occurs online—are needed, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. The role of parents and their capacity to take the steps needed to protect their child online must be paramount in our response.

I refer you to the response to the report from Ms Sharon Schimming, Acting Director-General, Department of Education, for more detailed information.

Thank you again for writing to me. If you require further information or assistance, please contact

Yours sincerely

**JOHN-PAUL LANGBROEK MP**  
Minister for Education and the Arts

Ref: 24/1038694; M320

Your Ref: PRJ04189



## Comments received from the Acting Director-General, Department of Education



Office of the  
Director-General

Department of  
Education

07 DEC 2024

Ms Rachel Vagg  
Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office  
Email: [qao@qao.qld.gov.au](mailto:qao@qao.qld.gov.au)

Dear Ms Vagg

Thank you for your email dated 22 November 2024 seeking a formal response to recommendations from the proposed Queensland Audit Office report, *Protecting students from bullying*. The Department of Education welcomes the report and notes the recommendations.

The department agrees or agrees in-principle with the recommendations contained in the report as detailed in the enclosed response.

As the report notes, schools play an important role in the lives of students and preventing and responding to bullying. Bullying is a widespread social phenomenon occurring across many environments with potentially significant long-term impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Cyberbullying is of particular concern for the whole community, particularly parents, who must be supported to take action to protect their children's mental health and wellbeing from the impact of social media.

The research evidence confirms, effectively preventing and responding to bullying requires an integrated community focused response to raise awareness, lift capacity of families and services to respond and support every child, young person and parent to access the support they need.

The department has implemented a range of strategies and initiatives aimed at preventing bullying and providing robust support for those affected. The report reflects the continuing efforts of the department and schools.

Each day, Queensland state schools go above and beyond to provide safe and disciplined schools. I am cognisant of managing teacher workload and reducing red tape so schools can focus on teaching and learning. The department is committed to working with schools and the community to prioritise the protection, safety, health and wellbeing of all students and staff as the report's recommendations are addressed.

If you would like further information or assistance, please contact

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Schimming'.

**SHARON SCHIMMING**  
Acting Director-General

Ref: 24/1056473

## Responses to recommendations

SENSITIVE



### Department of Education

#### Protecting students from bullying

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Education:</p> <p>1. clearly documents its approach to bullying. This should include the supports available for state schools to implement evidence-based prevention and response strategies. As part of this it should develop a plan for how it will implement its strategy and monitor its effectiveness.</p>	Agree	Q1 25/26	<p>Subject to Government consideration and consultation with schools and stakeholders, the department will develop an integrated community anti-bullying plan that will include actions to provide clear advice about its approach to preventing and responding to bullying.</p> <p>The plan will align with existing research and better practice and promote integration of health and school responses to bullying. The plan will include advice to the community about how the impact of the strategies will be measured.</p>
<p>2. supports more effective communication of schools' codes of conducts through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>redeveloping the prevention and response to bullying requirements in the State Schools Student Code of Conduct to align with current evidence-based practice and Departmental procedures</li> <li>monitoring schools' documentation of the code of conduct</li> <li>ensuring schools provide sufficient information online to demonstrate the currency of codes of conduct.</li> </ul>	Agree	Q1 25/26	<p>The department will consult with schools and stakeholders on opportunities to streamline existing state school Student Code of Conduct requirements and monitoring of these.</p> <p>The proposed actions by the department will be reported and monitored through the integrated community anti-bullying plan.</p>
<p>3. as part of delivering on its commitment to address recommendations from the <i>Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability</i>, enhances its data collection to include information on students who experience bullying and cyberbullying.</p>	Agree	Q4 25/26	<p>The department notes the QAO's findings in relation to the collection of data about student and parent experience of bullying responses by schools. The department has provided advice to the QAO identifying concerns including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>additional bullying data collection will impact workload and red tape for schools; and</li> </ul>





SENSITIVE



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>4. enhances its approach to monitoring student bullying by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improving its collection and analysis of information on the experiences of parents/carers, students, and staff specific to the management of student bullying</li> <li>• establishing processes for monitoring schools' implementation of bullying policies and when and how a region would intervene to support a school that needs assistance to reduce bullying</li> <li>• evaluating the effectiveness of its policies and resources to support schools to prevent and respond to bullying.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle</p>	<p>Q3 25/26</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• usefulness of additional data rather than better use of the existing large body of research about effective strategies, vulnerable cohorts and patterns of bullying behaviour across school years.</li> </ul> <p>The department will review existing data collections and analysis to identify insights and opportunities to integrate bullying-specific information.</p> <p>The department is committed to effectively responding to bullying and the needs of schools, parents and students. As indicated in the response to recommendation 3, the department will consider how best to integrate data collections on bullying into existing systems.</p> <p>The department will consult with schools and stakeholders about appropriate thresholds and pathways for schools, students and parents to access support.</p> <p>The department will review its existing policies, procedures and resources to align with evidence and identify opportunities to improve responses where a school community is experiencing high-risk student behaviours and critical incidents.</p>

SENSITIVE



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>5. reviews the Parent and Community Engagement Framework to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• up-to-date, contemporary approaches to engaging working parents/carers</li> <li>• specific guidance on engaging with parents/carers on complex policy issues such as bullying.</li> </ul>	Agree	Q3 25/26	The department has commenced reviewing existing frameworks, resources and advice for schools to support engagement with parents and the community. This will include identifying best practice exemplars and resources about bullying. The department does not seek to duplicate existing national high-quality resources such as those provided by the e-Safety Commissioner and will focus on facilitating access by Queensland schools, parents and communities.
<p>6. make readily available access to professional learning, teaching resources and information for school staff about preventing and responding to bullying behaviour, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how to identify bullying behaviour</li> <li>• effective approaches for responding and reporting different types of bullying, including cyberbullying.</li> </ul>	Agree	Q3 25/26	The department will build anti-bullying school staff capability to lift expertise in schools to respond to and identify bullying through targeted professional development opportunities and resources to support students most at risk of bullying.



## B. Audit scope and methods

### Performance engagement

This audit has been performed in accordance with the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*, and the Australian Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements*, issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. This standard establishes mandatory requirements and provides explanatory guidance for undertaking and reporting on performance engagements.

The conclusions in our report provide reasonable assurance about the audited entities' performance against the identified criteria. Our objectives and criteria are set out below.

### Audit objective and criteria

The department is responsible for providing education to a child or young person in ways that:

- provide positive learning experiences
- promote a safe and supportive learning environment
- recognise the student's educational needs.

The objective of the audit was to examine whether the Department of Education's strategies were effective in supporting the protection of students from bullying.

#### Sub-objective 1: Has the Department of Education designed effective anti-bullying policies and strategies?

##### Criteria

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1.1 | The department understands the prevalence and nature of bullying in Queensland   |
| 1.2 | Strategies, policies, and approaches are effectively designed in line with better practice approaches to reducing bullying |

#### Sub-objective 2: Does the Department of Education monitor implementation and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies and policies?

##### Criteria

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 2.1 | The department monitors the implementation of anti-bullying policies and strategies by schools   |
| 2.2 | The department evaluates the effectiveness of its anti-bullying strategies and policies and adjusts where relevant to support continuous improvement and achievement of objectives |

### Scope exclusions and limitations

The audit did not:

- examine school-level implementation of policies or individual case management of bullying incidents
- specifically examine how the department is addressing recommendations from recent inquiries
- examine how the department responds to bullying of teachers
- examine how the department protects students from other cyber-related threats or criminal activities from adults.

## The entity we audited

The entity subject to this audit is the Department of Education. It is responsible for providing safe and supportive learning environments for all students.

## Audit methods and approach

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### Field interviews and site visits

We conducted interviews with a range of stakeholders from across the school education sector, including regional areas of Queensland. This included:

- the Department of Education
- 5 primary, secondary, and Prep to Year 10/12 state schools across the state (out of a total of 1,265 state schools in Queensland)
- members of the parents and citizens associations at the 5 visited schools – 3 accepted our invitation
- peak bodies for
  - primary and secondary principals
  - parents and citizens associations
  - child counsellors and guidance officers
- Queensland Teachers Union
- a student counselling service organisation.

### Document review

We obtained and reviewed relevant documents from the department involved in the audit. This included legislation, strategies, policies, guidelines, performance reports, reviews, and evaluations. We also considered research from other jurisdictions and academia.

### Data analysis

We analysed data from the Department of Education covering the period 2013 to 2023. This included incident reports from the department's student management database, OneSchool. The department's changes to the categories and new definitions for recoding behaviour incidents in OneSchool (in 2023) limited our analysis of trends in bullying. The key change to the way incidents were categorised was splitting the old category of 'bullying and harassment' into 2 separate categories. Comparing trends from 2013–22 to 2023 was not possible.

We validated our data methods and analysis progressively with the department.

### Subject matter experts

We engaged and sought advice from a university professor and researcher with extensive published research in the field of student bullying. They offered advice and validated facts and concepts related to specific aspects of the audit.



## C. Jurisdictional comparison

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This appendix details some of the approaches undertaken by other similar jurisdictions in aspects of bullying management.

### Key elements of selected jurisdictional approaches

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#### New Zealand

##### Overarching system-wide strategy

New Zealand's overarching strategy to improve attendance and engagement includes a specific focus on bullying. The first of the 4 priorities in the strategy is to ensure places of learning are safe; inclusive; and free from racism, discrimination, and bullying. The Ministry of Education supports schools to focus on reducing bullying through a dedicated anti-bullying framework.

*The Bullying Free NZ School Framework* supports schools to take a holistic approach. The detailed guidelines enable schools to visualise and map their progress as they address bullying. It allows them to clearly map out the steps they have taken and what more they need to do.

The framework recognises that school staff may not have the required training to manage bullying. Because of this, it offers 10 workshops that schools can use to increase staff knowledge of bullying. The materials cover what bullying is, its different forms, and how teachers can prevent it.

##### Anti-bullying resources and guidance

The New Zealand framework provides schools with detailed resources on how to develop and implement an effective anti-bullying approach. These resources include:

- roadmaps for tracking school progress
- guiding documents and templates for anti-bullying policies
- a bullying assessment matrix.

The roadmaps guide schools in the process of building robust and informed policies. They enable schools to see what stage of the procedure they are at, and what more needs to be done. This allows them to react to bullying rapidly and directly.

The framework also contains a bullying assessment matrix. This is a small questionnaire that school staff can fill out to help assess the severity, impact, and frequency of bullying incidents. It serves as a guide for schools in selecting an appropriate response to specific incidents.

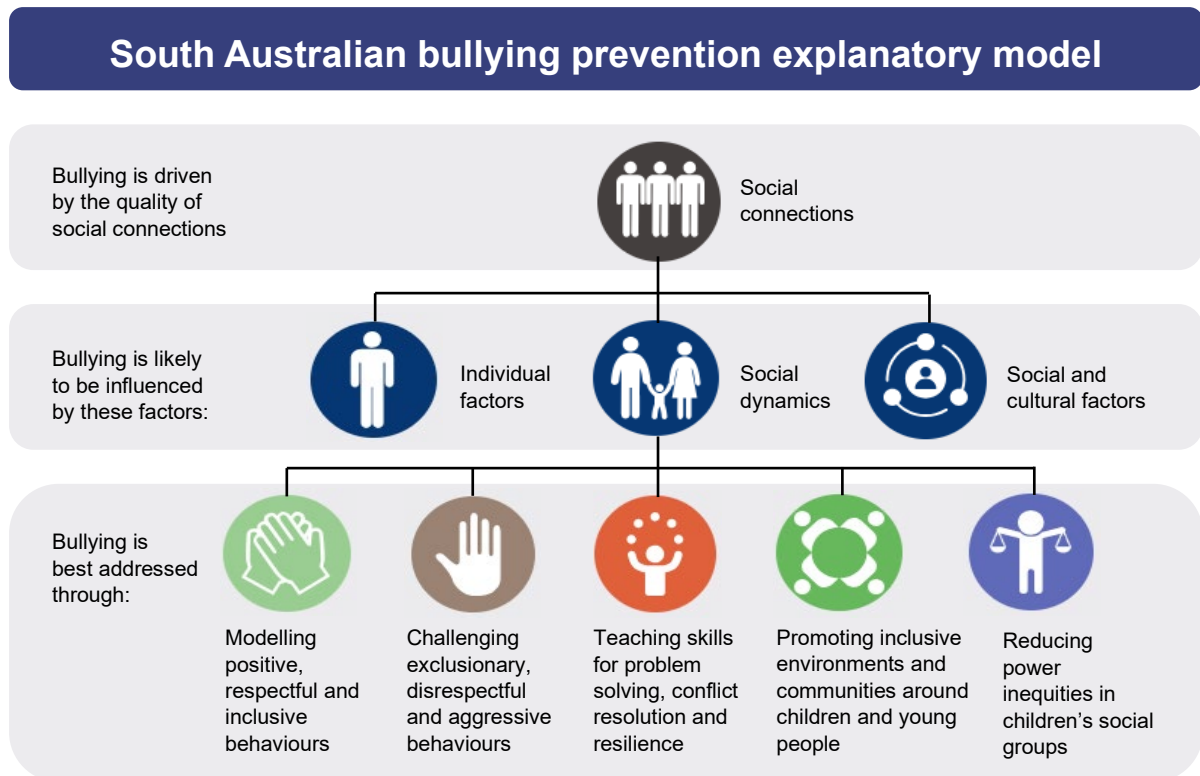
#### South Australia

##### Overarching system-wide strategy

South Australia has a stand-alone strategy called *Connected – A Community Approach to Bullying Prevention Within the School Gates and Beyond* to reduce student bullying. It aims to strengthen the social connections between a child or young person and their community. The strategy gives South Australian schools 5 consistent actions to deal with bullying, as described in Figure C1.



**Figure C1**  
**South Australian prevention of bullying strategy**



*Source: South Australian Department of Education, Connected – A Community Approach to Bullying Prevention Within the School Gates and Beyond.*

This approach helps to create coordinated and consistent responses across government and non-government organisations.

## Measuring bullying in schools

South Australia conducts a wellbeing and engagement survey, which asks students about their experiences both inside and outside of school. The South Australian Department for Education publishes statewide results and sends individualised reports to participating schools, but it does not identify individual students. The survey covers students' emotional wellbeing, engagement with school and learning, and health and wellbeing out of school. In 2023, 105,159 students (60 per cent) from 525 schools participated in the survey.

The survey has a chapter focused on bullying. The South Australian Department for Education deepened its understanding of bullying by surveying:

- the total number of students who reported they were bullied every week, every month, or very rarely
- whether or not the frequency of reported bullying is decreasing over time
- how rates of the types of bullying (physical, verbal, social, and cyber) compare
- whether or not there are differences in the levels of bullying reported across year levels
- to what extent the frequency of bullying aligns to students' broader emotional wellbeing
- how many students report resiliency to being bullied.



## New South Wales

### Support for professional development

The New South Wales Department of Education has a whole-school approach to bullying. It notes that a key element of successful anti-bullying interventions is to provide support and professional development to teachers on maintaining a positive school climate.

To achieve this, it offers a course for educators on anti-bullying interventions in schools and how to apply them. It also offers a course on improving classroom management by applying educational theory and practices, and another focused on understanding student wellbeing.

The New South Wales Department of Education offers these courses alongside other resources that support teachers. For example, it hosts conferences and workshops about its anti-bullying strategy. It also has a suite of anti-bullying resources on its website. This includes:

- educational posters and videos
- lessons and activities about bullying
- strategies teachers can use in the classroom to address bullying.

The New South Wales Department of Education has manuals to help guide teachers on how to effectively use these resources.

### Examples of successful strategies

The New South Wales *Anti-bullying interventions in schools – what works?* report identifies evidence-based approaches to bullying. It provides examples of different strategies that can be used to address bullying and in what contexts they were successful. It also notes what strategies may require professional learning before use. These examples show schools what successful initiatives look like and in what situations they may be applicable. This is useful in informing targeted approaches in different local contexts.





# D. Student bullying data

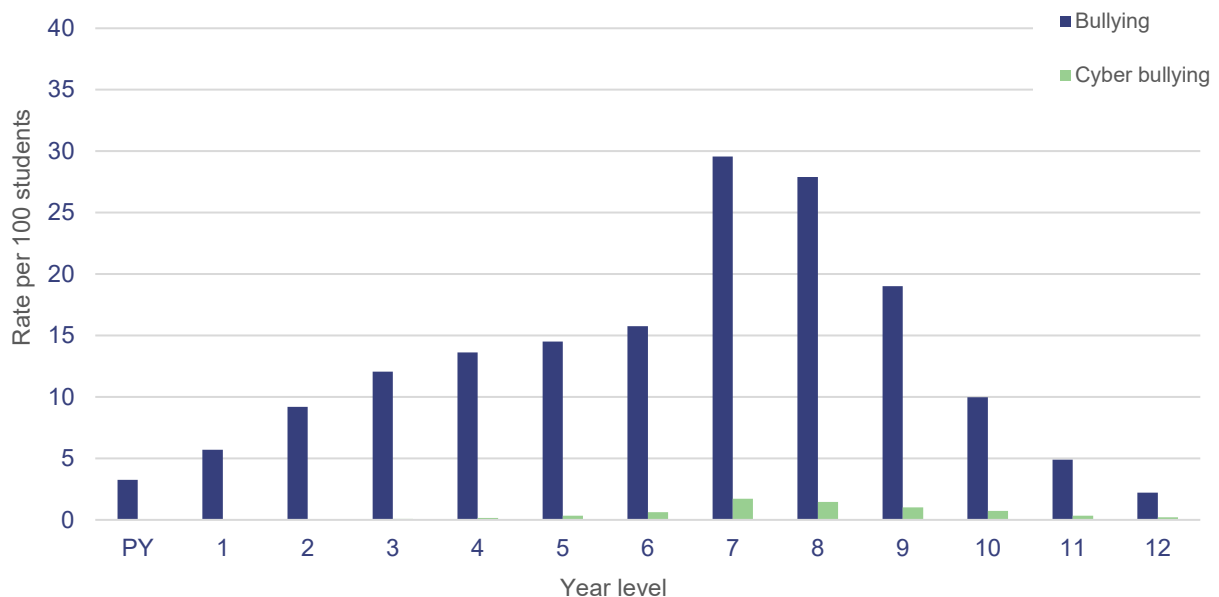
This appendix presents data on the extent and nature of bullying in Queensland, as identified in the Department of Education's (the department's) 2023 OneSchool student bullying data. We analysed the data to identify patterns in student bullying.

## Bullying data from 2023

The prevalence of reported bullying and cyber bullying incidents by year level in 2023 is shown in Figure D1. Bullying peaks in Year 7 (12,675 incidents), with 29.5 students out of 100 displaying bullying behaviour and 1.7 students out of 100 displaying cyber bullying behaviour. This makes up 16.6 per cent of all reported bullying incidents. The department's OneSchool system does not have a specific category for cyber bullying incidents (see [Appendix E](#) for a listing of the behaviour categories).

To identify incidents with a high likelihood of involving cyber bullying, we scanned the free-text field staff complete when recording an incident.

**Figure D1**  
Recorded bullying and estimated cyber bullying incident rate, by year level – 2023



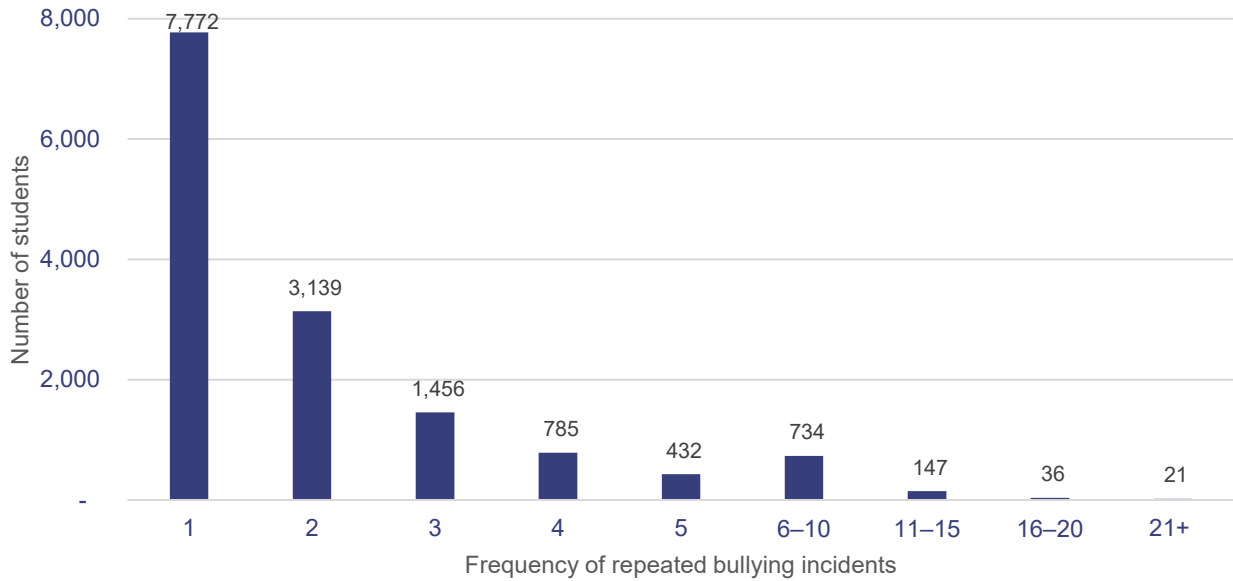
Notes: Numbers are counts of incidents – not students. Students are counted more than once if they are involved in multiple incidents. PY stands for Preparatory Year.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.

Figure D2 shows the number of students who had repeated bullying behaviour incidents recorded against them in 2023. While 53.5 per cent only had one repeated incident, 17 students had over 21 incidents, with one having 79. Data is not available on students subject to bullying, so this analysis has not been included.



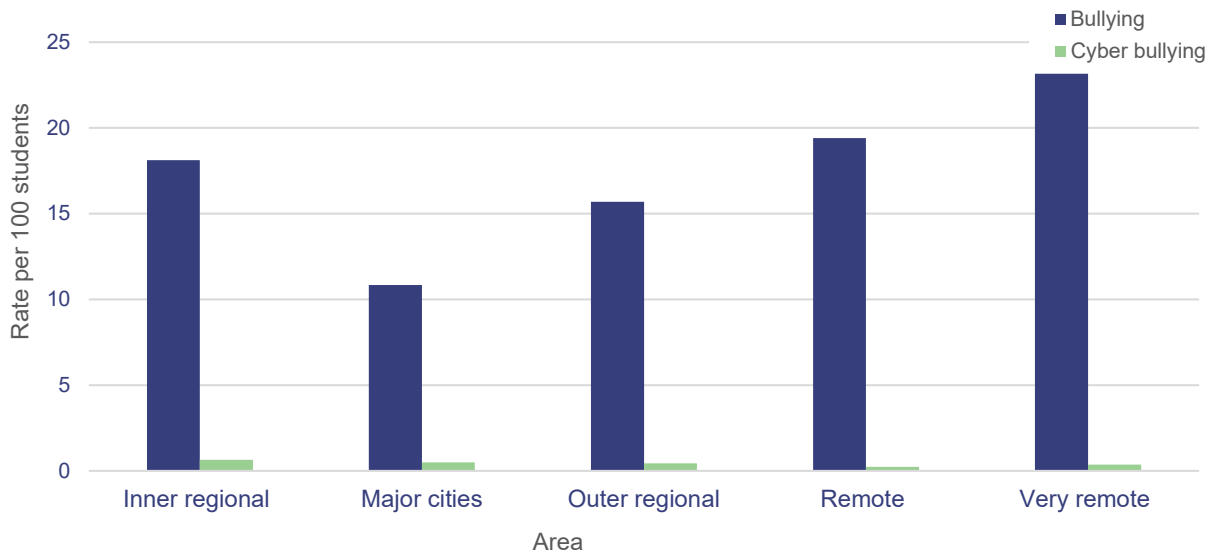
**Figure D2**  
**Recorded repeated bullying behaviour – 2023**



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.

The rates of bullying and cyber bullying incidents across different geographical areas are shown in Figure D3. We categorised areas into the 5 classes of remoteness in accordance with the Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness Structure. Major cities account for 52 per cent of bullying incidents and 63 per cent of cyber bullying incidents. Very remote areas only make up 2 per cent of bullying incidents and one per cent of cyber bullying incidents. However, as a rate per 100 students, very remote regions have the highest bullying rate, at 23 per 100 students. Inner regional areas have the highest cyber bullying rate, at 0.6 per 100 students. As cyber bullying is not a separate code, the rate needs to be treated with caution as it is based on an analysis of the text describing the bullying incidents.

**Figure D3**  
**Recorded bullying and cyber bullying incident rate, by area – 2023**



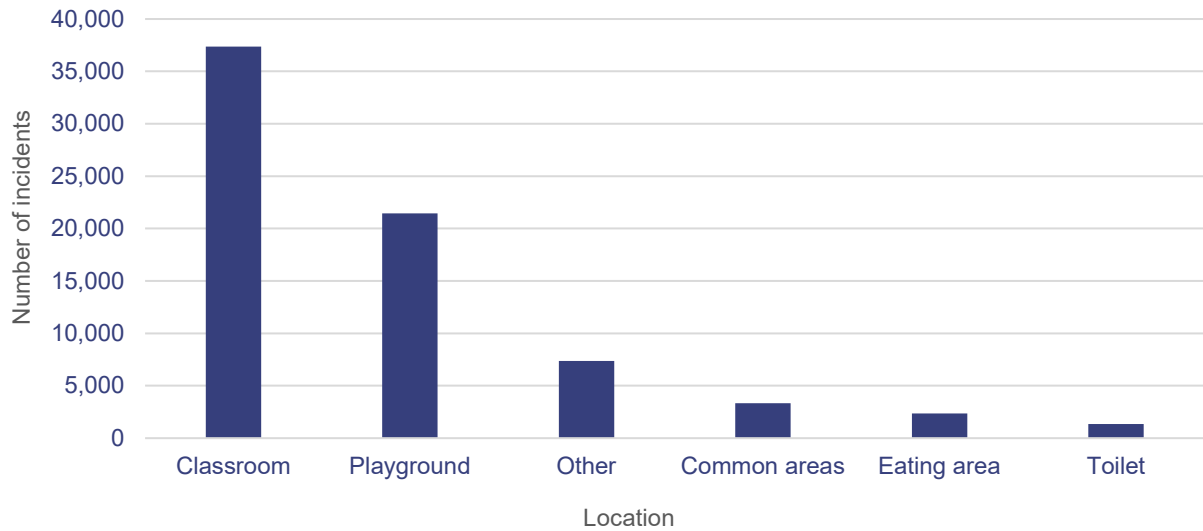
Notes: Numbers are counts of incidents – not students. Students are counted more than once if they are involved in multiple incidents. Inner regional includes centres such as Bundaberg, Gladstone, Rockhampton, and Toowoomba. Major cities includes Brisbane, Gold Coast, Ipswich, and Maroochydore. Outer regional includes centres such as Emerald, Townsville, Mackay, Roma, and Cairns. Remote includes centres such as Cooktown, Mount Isa, St George, and Palm Island. Very remote includes centres such as Birdsville, Burketown, Charleville, Croydon, Winton, and Thargomindah.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.



A breakdown of recorded bullying incidents by location in 2023 is in Figure D4. The data highlights that classrooms (49 per cent) and playgrounds (28 per cent) are the most frequent locations of reported bullying incidents. This is likely because classrooms are where students spend most of their time and have the most teacher supervision.

**Figure D4**  
**Recorded bullying incident, by location – 2023**

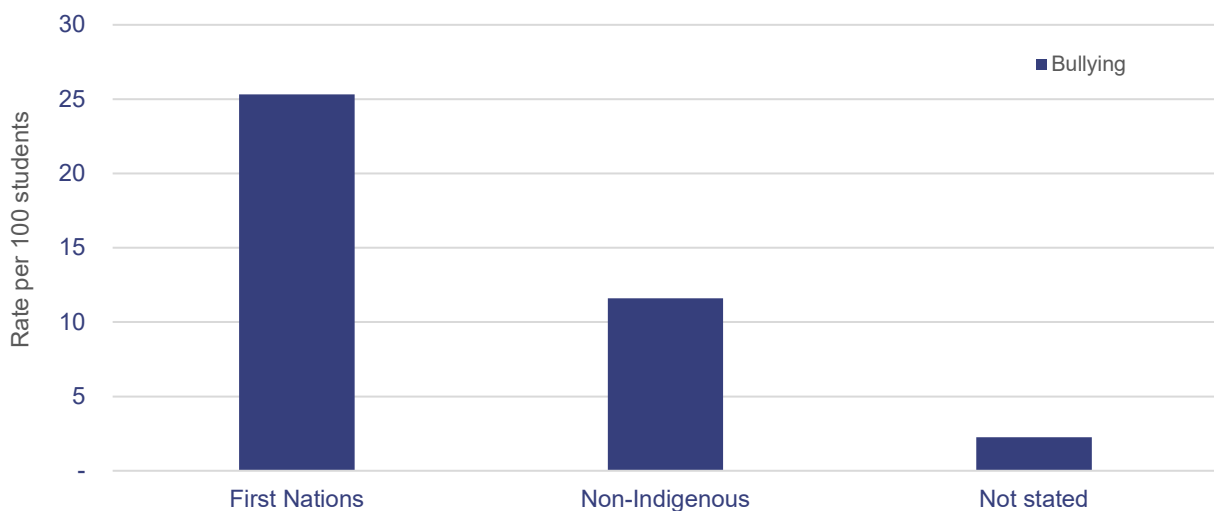


Notes: Numbers are counts of incidents – not students. Students are counted more than once if they are involved in multiple incidents. Location data is based on freeform text entered by school user. Locations have been grouped based on word search and may be subject to interpretation. 'Other' includes out-of-school activities, transportation (to and from school), sports-related, excursions, after school, car park, before school, and bike racks categories.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.

The recorded bullying incident rate among First Nations students is shown in Figure D5. The data indicates that First Nations students are twice as likely to be involved in bullying incidents per 100 students compared to their non-Indigenous peers.

**Figure D5**  
**Reported incidents of bullying, by First Nations status – 2023**



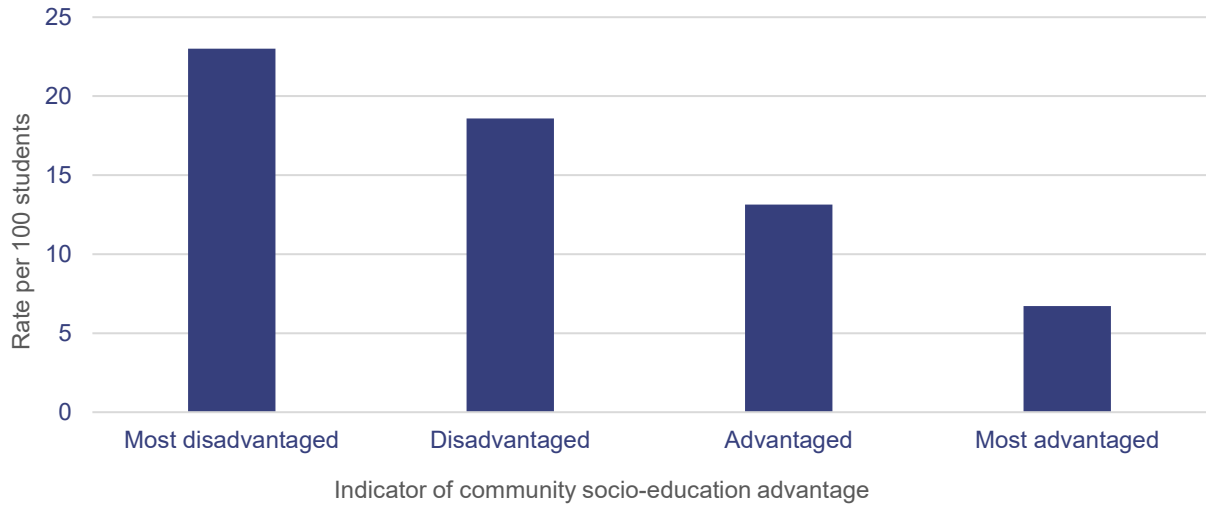
Note: Numbers are counts of incidents – not students. Students are counted more than once if they are involved in multiple incidents.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.



In Figure D6, the bullying incident rate by Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is shown. ICSEA is a scale developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority that shows the level of educational advantage students have in a school, and schools use it as a comparison tool. We analysed the bullying incident rates of schools based on their index from most disadvantaged to most advantaged. The data shows students from schools with disadvantaged backgrounds are 3 times more likely to be involved in bullying incidents, with a higher rate per 100 students compared to their advantaged peers.

**Figure D6**  
**Recorded bullying incident rate, by schools' Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage – 2023**



Note: Numbers are counts of incidents – not students. Students are counted more than once if they are involved in multiple incidents.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education data.



# E. Codes for recording behaviour incidents

The department requires incidents related to school disciplinary absences to be categorised based on the reason for the suspension or exclusion. Staff use the categories to classify all incidents they record, not just those that result in a disciplinary absence. The department updated the categories in 2023. Figure E1 lists the current categories and definitions provided to staff.

**Figure E1**  
**Reason description categories for behaviour incidents**

Problem behaviour	Definition
Abusive language	Student delivers verbal messages that include swearing, name calling, or use of words in an inappropriate way.
Academic misconduct	Student inappropriately and falsely demonstrates their learning. It includes cheating, collusion, contract cheating, copying work, disclosing/receiving assessment information, fabricating, impersonation, examination misconduct, plagiarism.
Bomb threat/false alarm	Student delivers a message of possible explosive materials being on campus, near campus, and/or pending explosion.
Bullying	Student engages in deliberate verbal, physical, and/or social behaviour intended to cause ongoing physical, social and/or psychological harm. Bullying can occur in person, or online (cyber bullying). Bullying may be obvious or hidden.
Defiance	Student refuses to follow directions given by school staff.
Disrespect	Student intentionally delivers socially rude or dismissive messages to adults or students.
Disruption	Student engages in behaviour causing an interruption in a class or school activity or event. Disruption includes sustained loud talk, yelling, or screaming; noise with materials; and/or sustained out-of-seat behaviour.
Dress code	Student wears clothing that is not within the dress code guidelines defined by the school.
Falsifying documents	Student intentionally creates, changes, or modifies a document with the intention of misleading. It includes signing a person's name without that person's permission.
Fighting	Student is involved in mutual participation in an incident involving physical violence.
Harassment	Student engages in the delivery of harmful messages in any format related to gender identity, ethnicity, sex, race, religion, disability, physical features, or other identity characteristics.
Physical aggression	Student intentionally engages in actions involving physical contact with others where injury may occur (for example, hitting, slapping, punching, hitting with an object, kicking, hair pulling, scratching, etc.). This includes premeditated acts or incitement of others to undertake physical aggression. Physical aggression may be directed towards peers, adults, visitors, or animals; or flora or fauna.

Problem behaviour	Definition
Property damage	Student participates in an activity that results in destruction, damage, or disfigurement of property.
Property misuse causing risk to others	Student engages in misuse of property which may cause a risk of injury or ill-health to others. Behaviour involving throwing objects or using objects in an unsafe manner causing injury.
Refusal to participate in the educational program of the school	Student refuses to take part in activities or learning that are requested or expected as part of the educational program at the school.
Substance misconduct involving illegal substances	Student is in possession of, has supplied, or is using illegal drugs/substances/imitations, or implements.
Substance misconduct involving tobacco and other legal substances	Student is in possession of, has supplied, or is using tobacco, alcohol, other prohibited substances, or implements.
Technology violation	Student engages in inappropriate (as defined by school) use of mobile phone, drone, smartwatch, camera, computer, or other communication device. This includes fraudulent or illegal activity such as attempting to hack, use of key loggers, or impersonating staff or other students.
Theft	Student is involved by being in possession of, having passed on, or being responsible for removing school or someone else's property.
Truancy (out of school)	Student is absent from school (morning, afternoon, or entire school day) without permission or appropriate reason (for example, an unauthorised absence).
Truancy (out of class)	Student is present at school, but is absent for one or more scheduled classes without permission or appropriate reason (for example, an unauthorised absence).
Use/possession of combustibles	Student is/was in possession of substances/objects readily capable of causing bodily harm and/or property damage (for example, matches, lighters, firecrackers, petrol, lighter fluid, aerosols).
Use/possession of weapons	Student is in possession of knives and guns (real or look-alike), or other objects readily capable of causing bodily harm.
Other – charge-related suspension	Principal is reasonably satisfied that the student has been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• charged with a serious offence</li> <li>• charged with an offence other than a serious offence, and that the nature of the offence precludes the student's attendance on the basis that they pose an unacceptable risk to other students or staff.</li> </ul>

Source: Department of Education.



## F. Research on effective approaches to reducing student bullying

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Bullying is a long-standing issue across all of society. Given its impact on students and the roles that schools play, it has been the subject of a substantial body of research examining ways that schools can respond to and reduce bullying. We engaged subject matter experts from a Queensland university to review the existing global research and confirm proven approaches to reducing bullying.

Current research identifies that effective approaches to reduce student bullying:

- take a holistic, whole-school approach which
  - establishes school-wide anti-bullying policies
  - focuses on preventing bullying in key environments including the classroom and playground
  - promotes a culture of reporting bullying
  - partners with parents/carers
- use responsive anti-bullying approaches, including
  - direct sanctions (such as suspensions and expulsions)
  - restorative practice (such as counselling and education)
- deliver educational content that supports
  - rigorous implementation of a holistic school approach to prevent and respond to bullying
  - students to develop social and emotional competencies
  - students to learn appropriate ways to respond to bullying
- provide support and professional development to teachers and other school staff on how best to maintain a positive school climate
- ensure systematic program implementation, monitoring, and evaluation
- work with the broader community to address the complexity of bullying.







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