

Tools for Schools; developing a bullying prevention and response policy

Introduction

This resource is a practical online tool to support schools to develop and/or revise their bullying prevention and response policies. The intention is to have these resources available online through www.education.govt.nz/bullyingprevention.

Content

This resource covers:

- Steps to developing a bullying prevention policy
- Framework: an outline policy framework
- Writing your policy: an example of a policy
- Sample Action Plan: an example of an action plan
- Example Policies: policies provided from schools.

The tools have been developed by Bullying Prevention Advisory Group (BPAG). The tools, information and templates need to be adapted to reflect your school community and environment.

Bullying behaviour occurs in all schools at one point or another. It is how you plan prevention and respond to it that matters. This can be a standalone policy or part of a behaviour or safe school policy. Your bullying policy should include cyberbullying and be part of your school's wider approach to promoting social wellbeing and positive student interactions. It should clearly state that your school does not accept bullying behaviour.

A safe positive physical and emotional school environment is important for students to feel included. Bullying rates vary between similar schools which suggests that the school culture powerfully affects the prevalence of bullying.

Legal responsibilities

Under National Administration Guideline 5 (NAG 5), each Board of Trustees is required to:

- a) provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students; and
- c) comply in full with any legislation currently in force or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students and employees.

To meet the NAG 5 requirements for a safe physical and emotional environment, your school should have a policy that defines bullying and sets out how your school community will address it.

NAG 5 covers a number of aspects of school life apart from bullying. However, developing and implementing a bullying prevention and response policy will help ensure you are meeting your obligation to provide a safe environment for students.

Legislation and guidelines that schools and Boards of Trustees need to be aware of in relation to bullying include:

- Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992
- Employment Relations Act 2000
- National Education Guidelines
- National Administration Guidelines
- State Sector Act 1988
- Secondary Teachers' And Area School Teachers' Collective Agreements
- Victims' Rights Act 2002
- Education Act 1989
- Crimes Act 1961
- Human Rights Act 1993
- Privacy Act 1993
- Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989
- Films, Videos and Publications Classifications Act 1993.

Proposed new laws concerning the harmful use of digital communications technology have been announced, and are likely to impact on how schools manage such incidents.

Guidelines for the surrender and retention of property and searches Search and retention guidelines have also been issued under section 139AAI of the Education Act 1989. They provide advice about the new legislation relating to searches and retention of property in schools. The guidelines explain the legislation (Sections 139AAA – 139AAI of the Education Act 1989) and the associated Rules.

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Boards/SupportForBoards/SurrenderAndRetentionOfPropertyAndSearches.aspx>

Sample definition of bullying

You may want to use the definition of bullying used in *Bullying prevention and response: A guide for schools* as a starting point for your own discussions:

Bullying is one particular form of aggressive behaviour. It can be covert or overt in nature. Most widely accepted definitions of bullying behaviour are based around the following four characteristics:

- bullying is deliberate
- involves a power imbalance
- has an element of repetition, and
- is harmful.

Cyberbullying

All aspects of bullying prevention and response should be integrated within the context of school safety. Cyberbullying is simple 'digitally-mediated' bullying and should be addressed as you would with any other forms of bullying. Boards of Trustees have responsibility for cybersafety under NAG 5 and establishing and maintaining a 'cybersafe' learning environment. Schools may wish to use the NetSafe information and resources as a guide in this area (see Useful Links).

Useful Links

For more information, please see:

Bullying prevention and response: A guide for schools (www.education.govt.nz/bullyingprevention)

Surrender and retention of property and searches

(www.minedu.govt.nz/Boards/SupportForBoards/SurrenderAndRetentionOfPropertyAndSearches.aspx)

NetSafe

<http://www.cyberbullying.org.nz/teachers/>

NZSTA <http://www.nzsta.org.nz/>

We welcome your feedback and comments at bullying.prevention@minedu.govt.nz.

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Steps to developing a bullying prevention and response policy

See below some suggested steps for developing your bullying prevention and response policy. These are provided as a guide only and are intended to be adapted to suit your school environment.

Step 1: getting ready

- decide to develop/revise your bullying prevention and response policy (this may be a standalone policy or part of an existing school policy)
- get support and commitment from your school community including parents and whānau
- form a bullying prevention working group
- agree what your next steps will be

Step 2: preparing the policy

- be informed about bullying in your school community
- collect information about bullying behaviour in your school
- draft the policy
- seek feedback from the school community including parents and whānau
- make improvements to the policy
- decide on your priority actions for the following year
- finalise the action plan
- have the policy and implementation plan endorsed by your school community i.e board of trustees, staff, students, parents and whānau

Step 3: implementing the policy

- raise awareness – making sure your whole school community is aware of the policy and their role in it (students, staff, parents and whānau)
- implement your bullying prevention policy

Step 4: monitor how your policy is working

- record information about bullying behaviour
- monitor implementation
- review annually

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Sample bullying prevention and response policy

This sample policy can be used to develop your own bullying prevention and response policy. This has been provided as sample only and should be adapted to suit your school environment.

The rationale or purpose section explains “why” the policy is being written.

It will include an agreed statement and confirmation of your school community’s expectations about creating a safe, positive environment and the principles underpinning your policy including legal requirements (NAG 5).

The Policy Statement is a brief statement of “what” the policy is intended to achieve. That is, the aim(s) of your policy.

Your school’s agreed definition of bullying . This should include examples of types of bullying behaviours, how the definition has been developed eg, consulting with staff, parents and whānau and students.

The Bullying Prevention section is to outline “how” the policy (eg, what steps) will prevent bullying behaviour. It will include prevention focussed activities and interventions.

Policy Name: Bullying Prevention and Response Policy

Policy Date: _____

Rationale or Purpose

The _____ board of trustees seek to take all reasonable steps to develop high standards of behaviour in order to fulfil the charter expectation and the requirements of NAG 5. The board of trustees seeks to foster and develop a safe, positive physical and emotional school environment that creates a climate of trust where students, staff, parents and whānau share the responsibility for making _____ school a respectful and inclusive environment.

Policy Statement

We are committed to ensuring that our school provides an environment free from bullying behaviours. All members of our school community – board of trustees, school leaders, teachers, staff, students and parents and whānau should have an understanding of what bullying is; and know what to do when bullying does occur.

Definition

Bullying behaviour is not an individual action. Our school community agrees that:

- Bullying is deliberate
- Bullying involves a power imbalance
- Bullying has an element of repetition
- Bullying is harmful.

Bullying behaviours can be physical, verbal, or social g. All these forms of bullying can take place in the physical world or digitally.

Bullying is not an individual action. It involves three parties; initiators (those doing the bullying), targets (those being bullied) and often will involve bystanders (those who witness the bullying).

Bullying Prevention

We recognise that real change happens when students, staff, parents, whānau and other members of the community share responsibility for making our school a respectful and inclusive environment. We will:

- Regularly survey our school community through Wellbeing@School and Kia Kaha student or our own survey (i.e. perhaps using survey monkey)
- Identify areas for improvement through the survey findings and develop a bullying prevention action plan
- Regularly promote our expectations and successes in preventing bullying (i.e. in assemblies, newsletters and facebook, reports to the board of trustees)
- hold termly professional learning and development on our understanding of bullying prevention and response (staff meetings, parent meetings, student council)
- Establish our Bullying Prevention Group to take responsibility for bullying (to include staff, parents and whānau and students)

The Bullying Response section is to outline "how" you will respond (eg, what steps you will take) when bullying behaviour has occurred or has been reported. It will include actions and interventions to follow up with initiators, targets and bystanders following an incident.

The Raising Awareness section outlines how you will communicate the policy to ensure it is widely known about and readily accessible to all staff, students, parents, family and whānau. and the community.

The Evaluation and Review section. You should review your policy on a regular basis. This may be bi-yearly, annually or as legislation or regulations change.

- Utilising a range of activities including curriculum based programmes designed to develop the ability for students to relate to each other (Kia Kaha, peer mediation, social problem solving solutions, role playing)
- Promote digital citizenship throughout ICT and promoting safe use of technology (through our ICT Use Agreements)
- Support the student-led peer to peer initiative.

The above are suggestions only.

Bullying Response, for when bullying occurs

We recognise the importance of consistently responding to all incidents of bullying that have been reported in our school and ensuring that planned interventions are used to respond to these incidents and support all involved. We will support anyone who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour.

- All reported incidents of bullying will be taken seriously and followed up as appropriate
- An appropriate adult will support the affected students by:
 - reassuring that they have done the right thing in reporting the incident
 - using the assessment matrix, record a description of what happened and assess the level of severity
 - using the quick reference guide, responding to bullying incidents to activate the response and action needed
- We will involve parents and whānau as early as possible and as appropriate
- All more serious incidents will be escalated to senior management and we will seek advice and involvement from outside agencies
- Provide appropriate support for targets, bystanders and initiators of bullying behaviour.
- We will regularly monitor all incidents of bullying and identify patterns of behaviour.

Raising Awareness

We recognise the importance of good communication between home and school to promote consistent messages and to ensure that any reported bullying can be recognised and responded to effectively. We will regularly raise the awareness of our school communities approach to bullying and celebrate our effectiveness of promoting a positive school culture through parent evenings, assemblies, class based activities, displays.

Our correspondence with our wider school community will include reports to BoT, school newsletters, publish information (including the policy) on the school's website, we will make the policy available in multiple formats (in print, on the web and in school notices and newsletters) and ensure it is translated into other languages as necessary.

Evaluation and Review

We will review and revise this policy annually to ensure that the school's bullying prevention practices are recognised and celebrated. This will include an annual meeting to monitor, review and modify the policy and action plan (to reflect changes with the school, survey findings, incident reviews). We will track and **monitor of all bullying related incidents and regularly report this to school community.** We will regularly gather data from the school community (eg Wellbeing@School and Kia Kaha student surveys) and report on the effectiveness of this policy and _____ school community's commitment to bullying prevention and response.

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Framework for developing a bullying prevention and response policy

This framework can be used as a guide to develop your own policy for bullying prevention and response.

Section One: Your School's Culture, the Rationale for the Policy and Definition of Bullying

A safe, positive physical and emotional school environment is important for student achievement and wellbeing and enables all students to be included.

Outline your school's expectations, the principles underlying this policy (including NAG 5) and your school's agreed definition of what is and what is not bullying behaviour (including descriptions of the different types of bullying behaviours).

For example:

- Agreed statement and confirm your school community's expectations about creating a safe, positive environment
- Principles underpinning the policy including legal requirements (NAG 5)
- Agreed definition of bullying in your school and how this will be promoted
- Descriptions of types of bullying behaviours.

Section Two: Preventative Approach and Response

We recognise that real change happens when students, staff, parents, whānau and other members of the community share responsibility for making your school a respectful and inclusive environment.

Outline your school's approach and activities in place to prevent and respond to bullying when bullying behaviour occurs. Include strategies for developing and implementing whole school bullying prevention programmes.

For example:

- Regularly surveying your school community and use the information to identify areas for improvement (eg, Wellbeing@School and Kia Kaha student surveys)
- Bullying prevention action plan based on gaps and issues identified as part of the survey findings
- Promotion of your expectations and successes in preventing and responding to bullying
- Professional learning and development to reach a common understanding of recognising and responding to bullying
- Having staff identified and trained to specifically take responsibility for bullying
- Providing appropriate guidance and counselling for students
- Outlining strategies to prevent bullying i.e. curriculum-based programmes, social problem solving solutions, student-led initiatives, parent / whānau involvement, collaborative community providers.

Section Three: Responding When Bullying Occurs

We recognise the importance of consistently responding to all incidents of bullying that have been reported in your school and ensure that planned interventions are used to respond to these incidents.

Outline your school's responses to ensure that support is provided to any student who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behavior have support. We will support the whole school community to recognise and respond appropriately to bullying when it occurs. We will provide clear advice on the roles and responsibilities of students, parents, caregivers and teachers for preventing and responding to bullying behaviour.

For example:

- Responding to the incident (how do we identify and address incidents of different severity? What are your procedures for when bullying occurs?)
- How do we monitor and identify patterns of behaviour?
- What do we do if the behaviour occurs outside of school?
- When and who will provide support and advice (both from within the school community and other agencies)
- How we will work with the targets, bystanders and initiators of bullying behaviour
- Escalating incidents to senior management and other agencies
- Communicating with parents and caregivers about the bullying incident/s and promoting your successes in your safe school culture
- Regularly recognise your efforts in bullying prevention and response and review strategies/initiatives.

Section Four: Communicating the Policy

The school community need to be aware of, and involved in, school bullying policies. We recognise the need for good communication between home and school so that any reported bullying can be recognised and responded to effectively.

Outline how you will ensure the policy is widely advertised and readily accessible to all students, parents, family and whānau, and the community.

For example

- Regular activities to raise the awareness of your school approach to bullying and celebrations of your effectiveness of promoting a positive school culture i.e. parent evenings, assemblies, class-based activities, displays etc...
- Regular communications to the wider school community i.e. reports to board of trustees, school newsletters, publish information (including the policy) on the school's website
- Making the policy available in multiple formats (in print, on the web and in school notices and newsletters)
- Ensure it is concise and written in plain English (and translated into other languages where necessary).

Section Five: Evaluation and Review

We will regularly review and revise this policy to ensure that the school's bullying prevention practices are recognised and celebrated.

Outline how your school will undertake to find out if the policy is working.

For example

- Meet regularly to monitor, review and modify the policy and action plan (to reflect changes with the school, survey findings, incident reviews)
- Celebrating your effectiveness of promoting your school's culture
- Tracking and monitoring of all bullying related incidents and regularly report to school community
- Regularly gather data from the school community (eg, Wellbeing@School and Kia Kaha student surveys)
- Report on the effectiveness of the policy and the school's commitment to bullying prevention and response to the school community
- Seek continued feedback.

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Sample Policies and Action Plans

Bullying Prevention Advisory Group would like to hear from you.

- Are you willing to share your school's bullying prevention policy and action plan?
- What do you think of the guide? Have you used it? Do you want additional copies?
- Are you willing to share your bullying prevention journey?
- What are your thoughts on the direction of BPAG for 2014 and beyond?

We welcome your thoughts, comments and suggestions [via email](#).

A sample policy that was developed by the Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand has been include on pages 36-39 Bullying prevention and response: A guide for schools (www.education.govt.nz/bullyingprevention)

By sharing our ideas, resources and stories we can support each other in reducing bullying across New Zealand.

