



Information sheet:

Creating a safe and caring school environment that deters bullying

This information sheet combines best practice advice from a number of New Zealand and international sources into a single checklist of those elements we believe are most important in creating a safe and caring school environment.

Whole-school approaches to bullying behaviour are most effective when they:

- are intensive
- include parent training and meetings
- include firm responses
- improve playground supervision

Alter events that preceded and follow behaviour and this can reduce the incidents of bullying.

- Set clear expectations of desired behaviours.
- Remind students of those expectations to increase the probability of success.
- Pre-correct behaviour before it occurs.
- Recognise and reward students who demonstrate behaviours you want to see.
- Teach staff and students how to respond to bullying behaviours – stop/walk/talk.
- Get the physical school environment right and make sure school grounds and buildings are well monitored.

Systems for identifying bullying

	School self-reviews and surveys are regularly undertaken.
	There is a confidential reporting system that works effectively.
	Locations where bullying often happens are mapped and targeted for regular attendance and surveillance.

Policies, systems and processes

	There is a clear, strongly articulated vision of a safe and violence-free school community and people know how to contribute to make this vision happen.
	All school staff are given specific instruction on effective procedures for responding to reports of problem behaviour and working with students towards solutions.
	Policies and procedures are applied consistently throughout the whole school.
	Staff are given training and professional development in identifying and responding to bullying, building positive classroom environments, and conflict resolution.
	There is a sign in and sign out system, clear entry points into the school, and visitors all wear identification badges.

Clearly defined and communicated expectations

	A small number (three to five) of positively and clearly stated expectations or rules are defined and communicated to the students, staff, and the community.
	Students, staff, parents, whānau, and the community have been involved in developing these expectations.
	Behaviour expectations are clear, positive, and visible around the school.
	Behaviour expectations are directly taught and when students have difficulty with a particular expectation, it is immediately re-taught.
	Students, staff, and community members make a written or verbal commitment to follow the behaviour expectations.
	Students can state the behaviour expectations.
	Teachers notice and praise desired behaviours.

Active monitoring and supervision

	Adults are highly visible across the whole school and move around often.
	'Hot spots' are identified and actively supervised or altered to deter bullying behaviours.
	Staff interact with children in the playground and positively reinforce the behaviours they want to see and positively correct those they don't want to see.
	Toilets, corridors, and stairwells are actively monitored.

A culture of 'safe telling'

	Students are encouraged to disclose abuse, violence, and bullying.
	A confidential reporting system facilitates disclosure.
	Two-way communication between home and school is encouraged (schools act on parents' complaints about bullying and report incidents to parents of the children involved).
	When victims or witnesses of violence or bullying do speak up, they know they will be listened to.
	Teachers take seriously all incidents reported to them and respond appropriately.
	Peer mediation programmes support the safe telling culture of the school.
	Incidents are reported to outside agencies, for example, Police, Child, Youth and Family, when the need arises.

Responding to bullying behaviours

	Responses to bullying behaviours are consistent throughout the school.
	Firm consequences are in place and are clearly understood by students and staff. (These could include serious talks with bullies, restorative practice, sending bullies to the principal, making them stay close to the teacher during break times, withdrawing privileges.)

Working with the bully, the victim and bystanders

	Potential victims are taught negotiation skills.
	Potential observers are taught refusal skills.
	Leadership skills are taught to students who may use bullying behaviour as an inappropriate way of being a leader (note, they may have well developed social skills).
	Special interventions are identified for those at risk of bullying behaviour to teach them non-violent methods of expressing feelings and resolving conflict and also to increase their understanding of the effects of bullying behaviour.
	Special interventions are identified for victims to build their self-confidence, rebuild their sense of security, and establish a feeling of being accepted or liked.

In the classroom

	Students enjoy warm, caring, positive relationships with their teachers.
	Students are directly taught the expectations required of them.
	Teachers provide firm, clear, consistent responses to unwanted behaviours.
	The curriculum programme provides opportunities for learners to engage in tasks that enhance their self-awareness, interpersonal and social awareness, self-regulation and management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
	The classroom programme supports social relationships through shared activities, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and acknowledging the accomplishments and cultures of all learners.
	Teachers discuss the topic of bullying openly in class.

Community connections

	The school provides a welcome environment for parents, family, and whānau.
	Students feel connected to school through their relationships, and activities they find worthwhile and important.
	The knowledge and perspectives of all parents are well respected, highly valued, and fully integrated into the school's approach to behaviour.
	Parents and whānau are educated about bullying behaviours and appropriate responses through educational presentations and regular teacher-parent meetings.
	Families and friends of bullies support them but refuse to condone their actions.
	School staff are visible in the local Māori community/at local Māori community events.
	The school actively engages in respectful working relationships with Māori learners, parents and whānau, hapū, iwi, and the Māori community.
	The school shows integrity, sincerity, and respect towards Māori beliefs, language, and culture.

The physical space and school buildings

	The school's entrance is clearly visible and welcoming.
	The school grounds and buildings are kept clean and clear of rubbish and debris.
	School buildings, toilets, and lockers are free from graffiti.
	There is good lighting at school entrances and in car parks, corridors, classrooms, toilets, stairwells, building recesses.
	There is good surveillance (either camera or natural) of entrances, play areas, bike racks, toilets, corridors, car parks, storage areas, prefabricated buildings.
	There is a two-way communication system between the main office and all classrooms, including prefabricated buildings.

Effective leadership

	School leadership models a collaborative and caring approach.
	Principals practise collaborative styles of working, which set a school tone that facilitates the development of a whole-school anti-bullying philosophy.
	School leaders facilitate the changing of the school's culture.

Tip

Look at what you can do to make your classroom or centre a stimulating, supportive, and well-managed learning space where positive behaviour can thrive.

- Build caring relationships with children and young people. Respect what each one brings to the class or centre (from home, their culture, and peers). Allow the experiences of the child or young person to be recognised in the classroom or centre.
- Have high expectations of all children and young people (be sure they are achievable).
- He moana pupuke ka ekengia e te waka – a choppy sea can be navigated. Have belief and faith that children and young people can grow and learn new strategies and behaviour.
- Be flexible, adjust the programme, and use a range of learning strategies.
- Use a range of interactions – instruction, monitoring, coaching, recognition, feedback, feed-forward, and individual and group interactions.
- Anticipate issues, plan, and improvise.

Some of the sources used to inform this checklist are listed below and will be useful for more details.

Responsive Schools, by Dr Janis Carrol-Lynd on behalf of the New Zealand Commissioner for Children. This is a comprehensive resource on bullying and approaches to bullying. Includes New Zealand case studies and lesson plans. Locate this report in the Bullying section of the Reports and publications page on the New Zealand Commissioner for Children website.

Wellbeing@School, by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. A comprehensive literature review of what is known in New Zealand and internationally about how to promote a safe and caring school environment that addresses bullying behaviours. You can find the Wellbeing at School: Building a safe and caring school climate that deters bullying booklet on the NZCER Publications page. You can also find shorter, topic-based research briefs on the Wellbeing@School website.

Managing emergencies and traumatic incidents – the resources. Produced by the Ministry of Education, pages 33-52 have even more detailed checklists for violence prevention. You can find the Managing emergencies and traumatic incidents guidelines on the Ministry's main website. The resources also refer to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design which describes natural surveillance techniques – visit the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design website for more detail.

The Bullying Prevention Manual, part of the US Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support framework, which has been adopted in New Zealand. You can find the manual on the PBIS website.