



Department of
Education

Shaping the future

Standing together against violence

Minister's statement on how
families can help keep schools safe



From the Minister

Students, teachers and staff members have a right to feel safe at school. We need to ensure our schools are a safe learning environment – free from the threat of violence.

Violence is a complicated issue and there are many factors involved – but bringing this into our public schools is unacceptable. The overwhelming majority of students and families show care and respect for peers and school staff, however, we are serious about protecting the needs of our school communities from any form of violence from both students and family members.

In the same way parents are our children's most influential role models at home, so too are they seminal role models when it comes to showing kids how they should behave at school. The behaviour of students is strongly influenced by the way adults conduct themselves.

This is why we are asking school communities to lead by example and focus on building respectful relationships with staff, to demonstrate to their own children the type of positive engagement they expect them to have with their teachers.

Parents and staff working hand in hand is the most effective way of preventing bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence in our schools. To keep our public schools safe, parents and staff are encouraged to connect and respect the vital part each play in ensuring our places of learning are supportive and empowering.

To assist, a guide has been created to make it clear about what is expected when parents and school staff engage. It provides practical ways in which parents, carers and visitors to schools can contribute to creating a better culture, improved communication and greater collaboration. It's about strengthening these important partnerships and sharing the responsibility of caring for our children.



In response to emerging social issues, this updated action plan builds on previous State Government initiatives. It outlines procedures if schools need to escalate matters, with targeted use of suspensions and exclusions to support students to make good choices.

A new initiative to broaden this approach is the launch of a Connect and Respect support team available to principals and school managers offering advice and wraparound services. It will explore strategies and provide resources to address and resolve concerns.

Trusting and transparent relationships between schools and families is key to preventing school violence. These strengthen student foundations – at home and at school – increasing overall wellbeing, resilience and positive behaviour.

Fundamentally, our schools are a reflection of our local communities. We all share a personal responsibility of how to behave in the community and we equally need to demonstrate the same level of respect and caring in our schools.

Our Government is committed to providing quality education to all students – help us work together, in the best interest of our kids, to keep our schools safe places for learning.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Buti". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA
Minister for Education

Actions

Our implementation of these updated actions will demonstrate the principles of fairness, inclusion and respect.

Action 1

Principals to suspend students who attack other students, start fights or share and promote violence

- Automatic suspension for students who attack other students or instigate fights.
- Automatic suspension for students who choose to film or share fight content or promote violence.
- Principals to develop a behaviour plan with families for the student's return to school.

Action 2

Principals to automatically move to exclude any student who physically attacks school staff

- After a physical attack, principals will immediately start an exclusion process.
- 'Exclusion' means the student is removed from a particular school permanently or for a specified period of time.
- Exclusion orders can only be made by the Director General.
- An exclusion order can be made to direct the student to attend an alternative school or education program.

Action 3

Alternative learning settings for the most violent students

- Every student has the right to an education – however some need intensive behaviour support.
- Alternative learning settings provide programs for students to continue their learning.
- These programs have been expanded to all education regions and support positive behaviour change in violent students.

Action 4

Clear advice for principals, teachers and education assistants on authority and responsibility to take action

- New protocols and guidelines to help support safer schools.
- Clear expectations to ensure respectful engagement with schools.
- This includes protocols to help build respectful school cultures, and productive collaboration and communication.

Action 5

Provide training and support for school staff

- Provide a range of training options to support schools to increase pro-social behaviour and reduce coercive behaviours.
- Support schools to implement the Quality Teaching Strategy.
- Targeted support for schools with high incidence of violence and aggression.

Action 6

Enhance 'good standing' requirements

- Expand loss of 'good standing' to include students who share or promote violence.
- Every public school to review its 'good standing' requirements.
- Students who lose 'good standing' for violent behaviour will have privileges removed – such as being banned from school social activities.
- 'Good standing' can be re-instated after the student has demonstrated positive behavioural change, as decided by the principal.

Action 7

Support programs for parents with clear expectations

- Internationally-recognised Triple P – Positive Parenting Program offered free to all Western Australian parents.
- Clear expectations for parents to engage respectfully with schools.

Action 8

Ensure schools are ready to respond to incidents of intruders or external risk

- Provide advice through the Incident Support Unit to support schools to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a range of incidents.
- Establish protocols with police to deal with incidents of extreme violence.
- Provide training and targeted support for principals.

Action 9

Continue a community conversation about violence in schools and online

- A consistent message for parents to set clear expectations of behaviour.
- Delivery and implementation of 'Connect and Respect' resources.
- Clear approach to manage adult behaviour that impacts learning.

Action 10

Give young people a voice and let them identify actions they believe could address violence in the community

- Harness the views and ideas of the WA Student Council.
- Continue focus groups with students to share their views on violence.
- Support young people to recommend solutions.



Connect and Respect Expectations

Our schools are committed to providing quality education to all students in a safe, inclusive and caring learning environment. We value working together with parents and families as critical partners in student learning outcomes.

Schools draw on the diversity and strengths of local communities to create opportunities to work collaboratively and set directions for students. Building mutually respectful relationships with each local community is fundamental to this.

A school community contains a wide variety of individuals and groups who strive to work together to educate students to become confident, well-educated young people; prepared to lead happy, successful lives and make contributions to local and global communities.

School staff will engage with families to understand the interests, personalities and needs of their children. All students need access to a quality education within safe and secure learning environments, and with the right supports to progress and achieve.

There may be times during your child's schooling when additional support is needed, or issues arise. Your school will support you and your child to productively resolve these issues and we encourage you to raise concerns as early as possible.

Shared and respectful expectations and values will enable us to work together in the best interests of our children.

All students need access to a quality education within safe and secure learning environments.

What parents and carers can expect from our schools

Communication between you and your school is an important part of your child's education. School communities thrive on open communication wherein staff, students, parents and carers have opportunities to share good news, discuss issues and maintain an open dialogue.

Schools are made up of hard-working and dedicated professionals who will listen, care and respond to your concerns and work with you to resolve complaints. We have found over time even the most challenging of circumstances can be worked through. You can expect some of the following from your school:

- regular communication through school approved channels
- reports on your child's progress and achievement
- celebration of your child's achievements
- notification of any serious single issue or ongoing issues concerning your child
- scheduled opportunities to meet with the classroom teacher
- other opportunities to meet with the teacher, by appointment
- updates about important developments in your child's class
- notifications or invitations to school events
- opportunities to provide respectful and productive feedback.

What parents and carers should not expect from our schools

Our staff have families and personal lives too, and like all professionals, work at their best when they have a quality work-life balance. Parents and carers should not expect:

- school staff to return calls after work hours
- emails to be answered in the evenings or weekends
- access to teachers' private phone numbers or emails
- staff to meet with parents and carers, without an appointment, during a school day
- to be allowed on a school site if you have harassed or been aggressive towards school staff.

You should contact your child's school if:

- you have concerns about your child's academic or social progress
- medical issues arise or diagnosis changes
- there are changes in family circumstances
- there are safety issues or changes in behaviour at home
- social issues arise that could impact the safety and welfare of students at the school
- you want to make or reschedule an appointment.

Communication that interferes with teaching and learning

- speaking to staff disrespectfully or aggressively, especially in front of your child or other students
- expecting to meet with staff during the school day without an appointment
- visiting the classroom during the teacher's preparation time before school
- using social media platforms inappropriately and disrespectfully
- malicious or judgmental gossip
- By everyone playing a part in providing safe, positive learning environments and opportunities for our students, we enable them to be the best they can be.

Communication methods

Electronic communication, such as email, is appropriate for short, non-urgent and positive forms of communication. It is not appropriate for more complex or emotional situations. In these cases, parents should request a face-to-face meeting so that issues can be given the time and attention they deserve. If in doubt, speak to your school.

Concerns and complaints

Contact your school as early as possible if you have concerns. If you are not sure who to speak to, you can start with your child's teacher. For some matters, it may be appropriate to talk directly to your child's year coordinator, school administration staff or principal.

If you have approached your child's school but haven't been able to resolve the issue, refer to our complaints process to explore your options [education.wa.edu.au/complaints](https://www.education.wa.edu.au/complaints).

Shared and respectful expectations and values will enable us to work together in the best interests of our children.




Connect and Respect Engagement

Expectations that promote learning, wellbeing and safety in all public schools in Western Australia.

Together we make a difference. We welcome parents and other members of our diverse community into schools across Western Australia. Student learning is strengthened when school staff, parents and carers are actively and positively involved in their education.

We all share a responsibility for providing a safe, supportive and productive environment, free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence.

Parents and carers and other visitors to schools support safety by ensuring communication and conduct at school and school activities is respectful. Every student, staff member, parent or carer has the right to feel safe and be safe at our schools.

Respectful engagement	It is expected that parents and carers and/or visitors to our schools will:	Parents and carers and/or visitors to our schools demonstrate this by:
<p>Culture</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise every student is important to us • contribute to a respectful school culture • promote and model good behaviour • work together with staff to resolve issues or concerns • respect the right of staff to disconnect from work outside of school hours • share responsibility in creating safe and secure learning environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respecting the diversity of our schools and the right to an education for every child • always communicating respectfully about our schools and our staff • not engaging in malicious or judgmental gossip in person, in writing, or on social media; about our students, staff and school community members • raising concerns early with a staff member, the principal or the Department of Education directly • understanding sometimes compromises are necessary, to find an acceptable solution to concerns raised • understanding that obstacles, barriers and disappointments are part of the growth journey • supporting children and young people to work through difficulties and build resilience
<p>Communication</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be mutually respectful • act as positive role models • actively help to solve concerns • use the school's communication channels and processes to address concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appreciating that school staff may not be available to respond immediately • knowing that staff will respond to appropriate communication when they are able • requesting a meeting to discuss any concerns about your child's education – allowing staff time to prepare and appreciating their time may be limited • not using offensive, insulting and derogatory language; and inappropriate conduct • being kind when interacting with others
<p>Collaboration</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with the school to provide a safe and productive learning environment • ensure your child attends school ready to learn • know and support the school's Student Good Standing Policy • schedule meetings at an agreed time, for an agreed purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining professional relationships that are open, honest and respectful • taking responsibility for your child arriving and leaving school safely on time every day • supporting your child to understand and follow the Student Good Standing requirements • scheduling an appointment to meet with the teacher or principal

Connect and Respect Escalation

Every student, staff member and parent or carer has the right to feel safe and be safe in our schools.

We all share a responsibility for providing a safe, supportive and productive environment, free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence. The School Education Act 1999 (the Act) and School Education Regulations 2000 (the Regulations) empower the principal to deal with persons disrupting school premises.

If the behaviour of a parent, carer or visitor is inappropriate, aggressive or violent, the principal can direct the individual to leave the school premises for a specified period of time, as outlined in [Visitors and Intruders on Public School Premises Policy](#).

You can contact the Connect and Respect support line by email connectandrespect@education.wa.edu.au or on 1800 224 888 for assistance in the escalation process.

The following situations may occur if inappropriate or violent behaviour is exhibited by an individual:

Escalation of inappropriate communication

If an individual communicates verbally, in writing or online (including social media) using harassment, threatening, abusive or insulting language, and the principal is satisfied that the person would likely cause harm, apprehension, fear or damage, then the principal may issue a Prohibition Order.

Step 1

Warning - Letter to individual

- Cease behaviour.

Step 2

Continued Behaviour - Issue Prohibition Order

- Issue a Prohibition Order for up to 60 days and include conditions with regards to accepted communication.
- Mediation between the school and individual, coordinated by the Parent Liaison Office.

Step 3

Behaviour continues - Breach of notice

- Breach of Prohibition Order, contact Legal Services to commence prosecution.

Escalation of threats or violence on school sites

If an individual is physically abusive, and the principal is satisfied that the person would likely cause physical harm to, or apprehension or fear in, another person when that other person is on the school premises; or would cause damage to property on the school premises, then the principal may issue a Prohibition Order.

Step 1

Violent individual on school premises

- If there is perceived imminent risk, call police.
- Order the parent to leave the school premises immediately (s.120 Act) for 24 hours and keep a written record of the order.
- If breached, contact Legal Services to commence prosecution.

Step 2

Mediated re-entry

- Coordinated by the Parent Liaison Office.

Step 3

If after Step 1 and 2, further threats or violence have occurred

- Call police.
- Issue a Prohibition Order for up to 60 days. If breached, contact Legal Services to commence prosecution.
- Explore possibility of applying for Violence Restraining Order or Misconduct Restraining Order.
- Consider whether you would like to pursue criminal offences for police prosecution where school staff have been subjected to various forms of abuse including intimidation, harassment and threats.