



Parents and carers

What comes next? Navigating the period after you've reported

Once you have reported bullying or other harmful behaviours to a school, it can feel like the hardest part is over. However, for many parents and carers, what happens next can feel just as uncertain.

This checklist helps you with what to do, what to ask and what to expect from the school. Work through it at your own pace. Not everything will apply to every situation.

For each checklist item, select the option that feels most accurate for you and your child or young person at this time.

Phase 1: Immediately after reporting

Immediately after reporting			
	Done	In progress	Still to do
I have confirmed with the school managing the response what will happen next and when I will be updated. I have noted the date I made contact and the name of the person I engaged with.			
I have followed up any verbal contact with a written record, such as an email. Refer to 'Working with schools early on' for an email template.			
I know that schools are expected to make reasonable efforts to initiate a response within two school days ¹ of becoming aware of bullying and other harmful behaviours. Further time may be required to address the situation fully.			
I have asked what support will be provided to my child throughout this process.			

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Tip

Focus on finding solutions when you talk with the school. Working together tends to get the best results for your child.

Phase 2: During the response process

During the response process			
	Done	In progress	Still to do
I am keeping notes of all contact with the school, including dates, who I spoke to and what was discussed.			
I am checking in regularly with my child about how they are feeling and how things are going at school.			
I am monitoring my child's wellbeing for signs that the situation is improving, staying the same or worsening.			
I am taking care of my own emotional needs and seeking support where needed.			
If a 'restorative process' has been proposed (a process after harm has been caused that focuses on acknowledging what has happened and understanding and addressing the cause and impact, and the steps needed to move forward), I have asked my child: • whether they understand what this would involve • whether they feel comfortable with it and want to go ahead with the process, and • to think about what they want and need to ensure their wellbeing and how I can help support that.			



Tip

For more information about this phase, see the connected resources listed at the end of this checklist and guide.

Phase 3: Reviewing and moving forward

Reviewing and moving forward			
	Done	In progress	Still to do
I have followed up with the school on the outcome of the response process and what ongoing monitoring will look like.			
I have asked the school what steps are in place to prevent further harm.			
I have talked with my child about whether they feel the situation has been resolved and how they are feeling about it.			
I have considered whether my child may benefit from professional support and, if so, have explored what is available, such as speaking to our family doctor, counsellor or psychologist. For further support information, see the organisations listed at the end of this resource.			
I have reflected on what I need as a parent or carer to move forward and accessed support options if needed. For further support information, see the organisations listed at the end of this resource.			

Next steps

If the school considers the situation closed, but you or your child does not feel it is resolved, you can follow up in writing and take further steps. The next part of this resource provides more information on what a restorative process can look like (a process after harm has been caused that focuses on acknowledging what has happened and understanding and addressing the cause and impact, and the steps needed to move forward), and what to do if you feel that further changes are needed.

Recovery also involves rebuilding confidence, friendships and school engagement. Keep creating low-pressure opportunities for your child to reconnect with activities, people and school life.

Understanding approaches to repairing harm and taking further steps when you need to

If the school has proposed an approach to repair harm as part of a restorative process (a process after harm has been caused that focuses on acknowledging what has happened and understanding and addressing the cause and impact, and the steps needed to move forward), this guide explains what that can look like, what to expect and how to support your child or young person through it.

What you will need

Your notes and records from any contact you have already had with the school.

An understanding of how your child is feeling right now and whether they feel ready to take further steps.

The name and contact details of the person at the school managing the response.

Step 1: Understand what restorative practice is and what it is not

Restorative practice is a structured process that brings together the people involved in a harmful situation to talk about what happened, the impact it had, and what needs to happen to move forward. It is based on the idea that repairing relationships and helping everyone feel safe again works better than punishment alone.

Restorative practice is not a forced apology or a way of minimising what happened. It is not appropriate in every situation. It requires genuine willingness and active and informed consent from both parties and should never be imposed on the child or young person who was harmed.

Note

The approach to restorative practice described here reflects one cultural model. For culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and First Nations families, repair, taking responsibility for actions and healing may be understood and practised differently. For example, through community or cultural processes. Ask the school what culturally appropriate support is available.



Step 2: Know when restorative practice is most likely to work

Research suggests restorative practice is most effective when the child who caused harm genuinely takes responsibility for their behaviour and its impact. The child who was harmed also needs to feel safe and genuinely wants to participate. Both children should be prepared and have support before, during and after the process.

If your child does not feel ready or does not want to participate, that is a valid response and should be respected.

Tip

Follow your child's lead on their involvement. Pressure to participate too early can do more harm than good.



Step 3: Ask the school the right questions

You can ask these questions before agreeing to a restorative process.

- ◉ Is participation voluntary for both children?
- ◉ Who will facilitate the process?
- ◉ What preparation will my child receive beforehand?
- ◉ How will both children be supported during and after the process?
- ◉ What happens if an agreement is not reached?

Tip

Ask these questions in writing so you have a record of the answers.



Step 4: Supporting your child (not managing the process for them)

Your role is to support your child through this, not to manage it on their behalf. Regularly check how they are feeling. Allow time for them to tell you how they are feeling without pressure to reach an outcome quickly. What happens if an agreement is not reached?

If your child is in primary school:

They may not have the language to tell you how they feel about participating. Watch for signs through their behaviour as much as what they say. Keep questions about how they are feeling low-pressure and concrete. Try: 'How are you feeling about going back to school tomorrow?' rather than asking them to think about the process itself. Your child knowing they have your support matters more than having the right words.

If your young person is in secondary school:

Try not to manage the process for them, even when it is hard to watch them as they work through it. Include them in decisions about each step and participation, rather than making those decisions on their behalf. They are more likely to participate in a restorative process if it feels like their choice.

Try: 'I want to make sure you feel ready before anything happens. What would help you feel more prepared? How can I support you?'

What if nothing is changing?



Tip

Remember to always stay solution-focused and respectful when engaging with school staff, and in line with any relevant communication or behaviour policies of your child's school.

Step 1: Following up in writing

Schools might not always respond as quickly or as clearly as you need. If you have not heard back from the school after reporting bullying or other harmful behaviours within two school days¹, follow up in writing. Note the date of your first contact and mention that the school is expected to make reasonable efforts to initiate a response within two school days¹ of becoming aware of the situation. Initial action is around early safety and support planning, and communication. Keep your tone factual and calm.

Example

'I understand that all schools will reflect the expectations of the National Framework¹ for Addressing Bullying in Australian Schools in their policies and procedures by Term 1 2027, and that this includes the expectation to initiate a response within two school days¹ of becoming aware of bullying and other harmful behaviours occurring. I would appreciate an update on what steps have been taken and what I can expect next'

Step 2: Request a meeting with school leadership

If you are not satisfied with the school's response after your written follow-up, ask to meet with a person in school leadership, such as the head of school/campus, deputy/assistant principals or principal.

Bring your notes and records. State clearly what has happened, what response you received and what you are asking for.

Tip

A face-to-face or phone meeting can sometimes be more effective than email at this stage, but follow up in writing after the meeting.



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Step 3: Escalate to the governing body or department of education

If you are not satisfied with the school's response, you can raise the issue, discuss options or make a complaint with your state or territory education department, the relevant Catholic education authority, or your state or national independent school body.

Step 4: Access specialist support where relevant

If you haven't already, you might wish to seek specific support and advice where relevant.

Schools and principals can also play a critical role and are often required to report and manage these types of incidents through official student protection protocols. Requirements may differ between schools and jurisdictions. Contact your school to confirm what applies in your situation.

If you have raised a serious child safety concern with a teacher, principal, school counsellor or other professional, you may ask what steps have been taken to address the concern and whether the matter has been referred to the appropriate authorities.

For further information or support, see the organisations listed at the end of this resource.

What if it does not go to plan?

Things do not always improve in a predictable way. Schools may be slow to respond, communication may be poor, or you may feel like you are not being heard. Even if this is your experience, it does not mean you should stop. Keep records of everything. Seek support for yourself and your child. You do not have to work through this process alone.



Report illegal and harmful online content or online abuse to the platform or service first, then report it to **eSafety** at esafety.gov.au/report.

If your child has experienced bullying for discriminatory reasons, such as on the basis of their race, gender or disability, you may be able to make a complaint to the **Australian Human Rights Commission** at humanrights.gov.au.



Tip

You have the right to expect a response. If you are not getting one, keep informed and engaged in the process. The children and young people involved deserve to feel safe and reassured, and so do you.

'Asking for help isn't the hardest part... trusting that something will actually change after you do is.'

– YOUNG PERSON, 16,
PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL
YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Connected resources

- ◉ Helping your child develop responsibility and independence
- ◉ Working with schools early on
- ◉ Something does not feel right: Early signs of harm
- ◉ My child has caused harm
- ◉ My child/a child I know has been harmed

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

For children and young people

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au. Free, confidential counselling for bullying and other harmful behaviours, school issues, online harm and wellbeing, available 24/7.

headspace/ehespace: 1800 650 890 or headspace.org.au. Mental health, wellbeing and early intervention support, available 9 am–1 am daily.

For parents and carers

Parenting support lines

ACT: 02 6287 3833

New South Wales: 1300 1300 52

Queensland and Northern Territory: 1300 30 1300 or parentline.com.au

South Australia: 1300 364 100

Tasmania: 1300 808 178

Victoria: 13 22 89

Western Australia: 08 9368 9368

For all ages

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au. Mental health support for stress, anxiety and overwhelm, available 24/7.

Dolly's Dream Bullying Support Line:

13 36 55 (13 DOLLY) or dollysdream.org.au. Free, confidential bullying support for children, young people, young adults, parents and carers, available 24/7.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au. Crisis support and counselling if things feel overwhelming, available 24/7.

13YARN: 13 92 76. Culturally safe 24/7 support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers.

QLife (LGBTIQA+ young people):

1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au. Free, anonymous peer support and referral service, available 3 pm–9 pm daily.

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 or 1800respect.org.au. Available for free 24/7 to support people impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence.

eSafety Commissioner:

esafety.gov.au. Report cyberbullying, get advice, and request content removal support.

Australian Human Rights Commission:

humanrights.gov.au. Support for cases involving discriminatory harm. Reports can be made via the website or by emailing infoservice@humanrights.gov.au.

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