



Australian Government



Parents and carers

Working with schools early on

If your child or young person, or any other child, is in immediate danger, call **Triple Zero (000)**

When you are worried about bullying or other harmful behaviours, contacting your child's or young person's school takes courage. It is an important step. The school process can feel confusing and overwhelming at a time like this. It is normal to be unsure where to start or what to expect.

Strong partnerships, clear communication, patience and consistent advocacy make a real difference. This guide gives you a clear starting point.

What you will need

- Any information your child has shared with you about what has been happening.
- Access to the school's website or contact details.
- A place to keep a record of communicating with the school. For example, a notebook or online document.
- Time and a private space to make your first contact.

Note

Some of the guidance applies to all age groups. Where guidance is specific to primary or secondary school, this is labelled.



'It's so important to have friends to rant to when you've been hurt or bullied, but that's not the same as having an authority figure who can really give you the support you need.'

– YOUNG PERSON, 16, PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Step 1: Gather what you know

Before contacting the school, bring together everything you know in one place. Note down:

- ⦿ what your child has told you
- ⦿ when incidents occurred, or the period over which they have been happening
- ⦿ where incidents occurred
- ⦿ whether your child has already spoken to anyone at school
- ⦿ whether the behaviour happened in person, online or both
- ⦿ any supporting evidence, such as screenshots or messages (only save key details such as usernames, links or messages – do not save or share sexual images of a child)
- ⦿ any details about discriminatory or identity-based language or behaviour that may be relevant.

Step 2: Know your child's rights and the school's obligations

Schools should have policies and processes to prevent and respond to bullying and other harmful behaviours. These should be available to the school community online or on request. Reading them before you contact the school can help you understand what to expect and how to advocate for your child.

The National Framework¹ for Addressing Bullying in Australian Schools states that schools are expected to make reasonable efforts to begin responding to bullying and other harmful behaviours within two school days¹ of becoming aware of the issue.

¹ State, territory and non-government education sectors will reflect the expectations of the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian schools in their policies and procedures by Term 1 2027. This includes making reasonable efforts to initiate a response to bullying and harmful behaviour within two school days, recognising that further time may be required to fully address the issue. By Term 1 2027, all schools will also publish or link to policies and procedures that align with the National Framework (or equivalent contemporary jurisdiction specific Frameworks) and their local policies and school context.

Tip

Writing down and organising everything you know before you contact the school will help you communicate clearly and calmly.



Note

For more information about the nature of the harmful behaviours and appropriate pathways for response before contacting the school, see the connected resources listed at the end of this guide.



The initial action focuses on early safety and support planning, and communication. Further time may be required to fully address the situation. Knowing this can help you follow up if you are concerned about delays or a lack of progress.

Tip

You do not have to do this alone, especially if language or access make it harder. Ask the school if a community liaison officer, interpreter or advocacy support person is available. Many schools, especially those serving First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, have staff with specific support roles to help.



Step 3: Identify the right person to contact

Starting at the right level helps the process run smoothly and is more likely to lead to a positive outcome.

Step 4: Pause before making contact

It is normal to feel frustrated, upset or angry for your child. These are natural responses. Before you call or email, take a moment to calm your emotions or think about what you want the school to know. This will help you communicate clearly and get a better response from the school.

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

If your child is in primary school:

The classroom teacher is usually the best first point of contact. They know your child and have the most direct oversight of what happens in and around the classroom.

If your young person is in secondary school:

The year level coordinator, form teacher or a wellbeing staff member is usually the best starting point. They are experienced with situations like this and have clear processes to follow.

Begin at this level before going higher. Going straight to school leadership can make the conversation more formal than it may need to be. Start at a lower level first, then take further steps if needed.

'Parents should approach it more like reassurance and understanding – "I understand how you feel, that's valid" – instead of trying to fix everything immediately.'

– YOUNG PERSON, 16,
PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL
YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Step 5: Make contact and state clearly what you are reporting

When you speak to or email the school, state clearly that you are reporting bullying or other harmful behaviours. Be factual and specific, and use the information you gathered in Step 1. Ask what information the school needs from you. Use the email template in this resource to follow up in writing after any verbal contact, so there is a record of what was discussed.



Tip

Verbal conversations are easy to lose track of on both sides. Even a brief summary email after a conversation creates a clear record of communication if you need to refer back to it later.

Note

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.



Step 6: Ask specific questions about next steps and processes

Before ending your first contact with the school (whether in person or by email), make sure you understand what happens next.

Tip

Keep a record of all the communication you have with the school from here, including who you spoke to, dates and what was discussed. If the situation escalates or a complaint becomes necessary, this record is important.



'Speaking up can feel like the end of the problem, but often it's just the beginning of what comes next. What happens after decides whether someone feels safe to speak again.'

– YOUNG PERSON, 15, PROJECT
ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH
COLLECTIVE

Questions worth asking:

- ◉ Who will be responsible for managing the situation from here?
- ◉ What does the process look like?
- ◉ What timeframes can I expect?
- ◉ How and when will I be kept informed?
- ◉ What support will be available for my child during this time?

If the timeframes are unclear, you can mention that the National Framework¹ for Addressing Bullying in Australian Schools states that schools are expected to make reasonable efforts to begin responding to bullying or other harmful behaviours within two school days¹ of becoming aware of the issue, including initial safety and support planning, and communication.

Further time may be required to fully address the situation. Knowing this can help you follow up if you are concerned about delays or a lack of progress.

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What if it does not go to plan?

Schools might not always respond as quickly or as clearly as you need. If you have not heard back within two school days¹, follow up in writing. Note the date of your first contact and mention that the school is expected to initiate a response within two school days¹ of becoming aware of bullying and other harmful behaviours.

If you are still not getting a response, ask to meet with a person in school leadership, such as the head of school/campus, deputy/assistant principals or principal.

Note

Due to privacy requirements, the school may not be able to share specific details about other students or the actions taken in relation to them.



- 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 and national independent schools association.
- 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.
- 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.
- For advice on harm involving discrimination, including identity-based targeting, contact the **Australian Human Rights Commission** at humanrights.gov.au.

Summary

- ◉ Gather what you know before contacting the school.
- ◉ Familiarise yourself with the school's anti-bullying policy and the two-day¹ initial response expectation from the National Framework¹ for Addressing Bullying in Australian Schools.
- ◉ Identify the right person to contact first.
- ◉ If your child is in primary school, this might be their classroom teacher.
- ◉ If your young person is in secondary school, this might be their year level coordinator, form teacher or a wellbeing staff member.
- ◉ Pause before making contact so you are clear about what you want the school to know.
- ◉ State clearly what you are reporting and ask what information is needed.
- ◉ Ask specific questions about who will be managing the next steps, the process, the timeframe, how you will be informed and how your child will be supported.
- ◉ Keep a record of all the communication you have with the school from this point forward.

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Contacting your child's school in writing

You can use this template to write to your child's school after reporting bullying or other harmful behaviours – even if it has been done verbally or as your first point of contact. Adapt the highlighted sections to reflect your own situation. Keep a copy for your records.

Email template

Subject line: Concern regarding *[your child's name] – [year level/class]*

Email body: Dear *[name of teacher, coordinator or staff member]*,

I am writing regarding a concern about my *[son/daughter/child/young person]*, *[child's name]*, who is in *[year level/class]*.

I am *[your name]*, and I am *[child's name]'s [parent/carer/guardian]*. My preferred contact details are *[phone number and/or email address]*.

I want to report *[bullying/harmful behaviours/an ongoing situation]* that *[child's name]* has shared with me. I would like this to be treated with discretion and confidentiality where possible, including how information is shared with other students or families.

What has been happening: *[Describe the situation in factual, specific terms. Include: what has been happening, when it began or the period over which it has occurred, where it has taken place (at school, online, or both), who has been involved, without identifying other students by name if you are not comfortable doing so].*

Relevant details: *[Include here if applicable: any discriminatory, identity-based, harmful language or behaviour, any image-based or online harm, such as screenshots or messages (only save key details such as usernames, links or messages – do not save or share sexual images of a child)].*

Who at the school may already be aware: *[List the people at the school who may be aware of the situation if your child has already spoken to them, for example, a teacher, counsellor or another staff member, and when your child spoke to them.]*

My child's main concerns: *[If your child has shared what worries them most, describe this here. For example, fear of retaliation, ongoing exclusion, not being believed and whether they are comfortable with this information being shared. This helps the school understand the impact and what your child needs.]*

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 acknowledgement of this email and an indication of the next steps within that timeframe.

I am happy to speak on the phone or meet in person to discuss this further. Please contact me at *[contact details]*. My preferred time for contact is *[preferred time]*.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

[Your full name]

[Your contact details]

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Note

Keep a copy of this email once you have sent it, including the date it was sent and to whom. If you do not receive a response within two school days¹, follow up in writing and refer to this email by date.

Connected resources

- ◉ Strategies to connect with your child or young person
- ◉ First response guide
- ◉ My child has caused harm
- ◉ My child/a child I know has been harmed
- ◉ What comes next? Navigating the period after you've reported

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

For children and young people

Kids Helpline (national): 1800 55 1800.
Free, confidential counselling for bullying, 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

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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 (LGBTIQ+ 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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