Social Problem Solving

Approaches that work well address incidents of bullying through social problem solving. Social problem solving involves students, parents and whānau working with school staff to create solutions (for example, promoting opportunities for students to be involved in decisions about the management of digital technology at the school). This is likely to result in fewer stand-downs and expulsions from school, which in the long-term will achieve better outcomes for vulnerable young people. Such approaches also take the view that supports and strategies need to be in place for both the targets and the initiators of bullying.

Several programmes and approaches for preventing and responding to bullying are available in New Zealand. Effective bullying prevention approaches and programmes involve the following elements:

- commitment to a whole-school approach
- a focus on developing healthy social behaviours and strategies (rather than only addressing bullying behaviours)
- provision for planning and regular monitoring and evaluation of outcomes a long-term sustainable approach
- professional development for all staff.

For bullying prevention programmes to be effective and sustainable schools need to have:

- an ongoing commitment to, and focus on, fostering a positive, inclusive and respectful school environment that values diversity
- good data systems to collect relevant information efficient progress monitoring tools
- skilled and competent staff
- ongoing and embedded professional learning and development for all staff
- formal coaching and coordination support systems to sustain meaningful outcomes
- accurate implementation
- effective community connections
- engaging learning opportunities.

Safe telling

As well as developing the ability of students to manage social situations and relate well to one another, schools need to actively promote a culture of 'safe telling'. A safe telling culture encourages all students to report bullying behaviour (whether they are the target, the initiator, or a bystander of bullying). A safe telling culture also provides students with acknowledgement that they have done the right thing whenever they report bullying.