bullyingfreenz

Tackling Bullying
A guide for Boards of Trustees

A successful bullying prevention approach is ongoing:
there are no quick fixes. It takes a focused and sustained
effort from everyone to stop bullying behaviour.

Contents

i Bullying Facts

We now know that:

Bullying **IS**	learned behaviour and it can be unlearned.
Bullying is **NOT**	harmless or inevitable.
Bullying **SPREADS**	if encouraged or tolerated.
Bullying **INVOLVES**	initiators, targets and bystanders.
Bullying **CAN BE**	effectively stopped or entirely prevented.

Introduction

Bullying is a significant issue for children and young people in New Zealand. It is not a simple problem with a quick, easy answer. There is no single programme or formula that can be universally applied to deal with bullying behaviour. Therefore schools need to design an approach that works for them.

Many schools already have well-developed, comprehensive approaches to bullying prevention and building positive school environments; and some schools are still developing their approaches.

It's important to remember that bullying prevention is a shared responsibility, not just the sole responsibility of schools. It needs everyone – boards of trustees, school staff, students, parents, whānau and communities – to work together to prevent bullying behaviour.

The answer to bullying is not located in a specific programme or organisation, but in the commitment to deal with bullying through a multi-layered approach, which is consistently applied and constantly evaluated. Current evidence points to a combination of key components, rather than a specific single programme, as most likely to prevent and reduce bullying.

Boards and school staff play a central role in providing leadership and direction in reducing bullying behaviour. This guide will help you to build on existing good practices already in place in your school, and help to identify actions that could work for your school or be adapted to suit your needs.

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Bullying contributes to children and young people feeling sad and unsafe, and its negative impacts include low self-esteem, social isolation, sadness, depression and anxiety.

Childhood bullying is not just part of growing up, but a key risk factor for physical and mental health, educational achievement and social relationships. Its negative effects are not temporary. A recent 50-year longitudinal study reported that the effects of bullying were still visible nearly four decades later, with health, social and economic consequences lasting well into adulthood.

(Klomek, A.B., Sourander, A. & Elonheimo, H. (2015). Bullying by peers in childhood and effects on psychopathology, suicidality and criminality in adulthood. *Lancet Psychiatry, 2*: 930–941.)

Who we are

The cross-sector Bullying Prevention Advisory Group (BPAG) is a collaboration of 18 organisations, with representatives from across the education, health, justice and social sectors, as well as internet safety and human rights advocacy groups.

BPAG members strongly believe that bullying behaviour of any kind is unacceptable and they are committed to making sure combined action is taken to reduce bullying in New Zealand schools.

For a range of information, resources and tools to prevent bullying in your school, visit:

www.bullyingfree.nz

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Legal responsibilities

EDUCATION ACT 1989

1. A board's primary objective in governing the school is to ensure that every student at the school is able to attain his or her highest possible standard in educational achievement.

2. To meet the primary objective, the board must —
(a) ensure that the school —

(i) is a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff; and

(ii) is inclusive of and caters for students with differing needs; and

(b) have particular regard to any statement of National Education and Learning Priorities issued under section 1A; and

(c) comply with its obligations under sections 60A (in relation to curriculum statements and national performance measures), 61 (in relation to teaching and learning programmes), and 62 (in relation to monitoring of student performance); and

(d) if the school is a member of a community of learning that has a community of learning agreement under section 72, comply with its obligations under that agreement as a member of that community; and

(e) comply with all of its other obligations under this or any other Act.

ERO's current review documentation on the prevention of bullying includes:

- The **Board Assurance Statement** (*Page 24, ERO Guidelines for Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklists*): defines bullying and provides information on the types of bullying behaviour.

- The **Self-Audit Checklist for the Board of Trustees** (*Section 3 – Health, Safety and Welfare, Question No. 24*) asks does the board meet the requirements under NAG5:

  - Through the principal and teaching staff, currently provide anti-bullying programmes for students?; and

  - Do these anti-bullying programmes include a focus on (i) racist bullying; (ii) bullying of students with special needs; (iii) homophobic bullying; (iv) sexual harassment?

- Checklist prompts have questions focusing on the:

  - Emotional safety of students:
    - clear documentation
    - reporting incidents and serious harm
    - procedures for preventing bullying
    - appropriate anonymous surveys (parents, students) analysed and used
    - support for students.

  - Wellbeing and inclusion
    - the board/principal asked if the school uses (or is aware of) the NZCER surveys to monitor wellbeing and inclusion.

ERO's online School Trustees Booklet – *Helping you ask the right questions*

This booklet focuses on student achievement and wellbeing, and the role the board plays in these two areas.
http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/school-trustees-booklet-helping-you-ask-the-right-questions/

Within the component on student wellbeing, sections are dedicated to answering the following questions:
  - Why is student wellbeing important?
  - What part do trustees play in ensuring student wellbeing?
  - How can we improve student wellbeing at our school?
  - What sort of information should the board receive about bullying?

In every ERO review, school boards and principals are asked about the steps in place to ensure students are safe and the strategies schools implement to provide a safe physical and emotional environment. ERO's focus includes physical, verbal and social bullying, including cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying.

According to ERO, schools that actively create inclusive, respectful environments experience less bullying than schools that simply respond to bullying incidents (http://www.ero.govt.nz/footer-upper/news/bullying-free-nz-week/).

What is bullying?

Bullying can happen anywhere, at any time, and can be verbal, physical or social. It can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious or hidden.

A shared agreement of what bullying is and its impact is the starting point for effectively preventing and responding to bullying in your school.
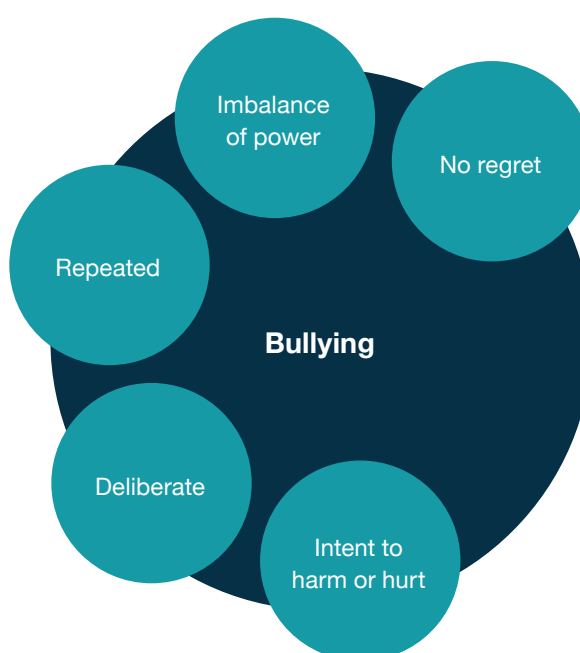
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Bullying is **deliberate** – harming another person intentionally.

Bullying involves a **power imbalance** between those who bully and those being bullied.

Bullying is usually not a one-off – the behaviour is **repeated**, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

Bullying is **harmful** – it is not a normal part of growing up.

Conflict and bullying

Regret and effort made to resolve

Power balance

Occasional

Conflict

Accidental

Unintended harm

Imbalance of power

No regret

Repeated

Bullying

Deliberate

Intent to harm or hurt

What is *not* bullying?

Making sure everyone in your school uses the same definition of bullying behaviour is important. Sometimes things that are called bullying are not really bullying at all. These other behaviours may be just as serious as bullying, but may need to be sorted out in a different way.

Sometimes there might be a fight or argument between students. If it happens once, it is not bullying even though it can be upsetting. It is also not bullying if someone sometimes fights with a friend and they can sort it out.

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A fight or disagreement between people of equal power or status isn't bullying.

One-off acts of unkindness are not bullying.

Not liking someone or a single act of social rejection isn't bullying.

Isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence are not bullying.

Why does bullying happen?

Any student, through no fault of their own, may be a target of bullying.

Students are bullied for lots of reasons. It can be caused by differences in race, sexuality, religion, disabilities and abilities, weight, height, or anything that creates a difference between one child and another. Bullying often comes from a belief that it's okay to act that way.

While bullying can happen to any student, it is known that some are more likely than others to be bullied. Vulnerable groups include students with disabilities or special educational needs, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) students and those perceived to be LGBTI, and students of a culture, race or religion that differs from the main culture, race or religion at the school.

Those who persistently bully often do so in order to dominate others and improve their own social status. They may not see anything wrong with bullying. Sometimes students who bully have problems and are unhappy. They may be trying to make up for a lack of attention, power or love in their own lives. By bullying, they try to get these in their lives. They often don't understand how much hurt and anxiety they cause.

Student bullying is often linked to the school's culture and environment. This includes how openly difference and diversity are discussed and how much value the school places on respect for diversity and inclusion. In a school which promotes inclusion and respectful behaviour on a daily basis, bullying is much less likely to happen.

Although bullying happens in most schools at some time, bullying does not occur with all children and young people all the time. In general, students who have developed good social and emotional skills, have positive friends and who have supportive environments at home, at school and in the community are unlikely to take part in bullying behaviour.

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Bullying behaviour can be related to:

Prejudice	Fitting in
Bullying sometimes involves students commenting on and judging other students' personal attributes and how they are different. These negative comments can relate to: - appearance and weight - ability or disability - gender, sex and sexuality - culture, race and religion - socio-economic status. This type of bullying is linked to prejudices that students learn from their family group and their wider social community about the value of diversity in a community.	There are social norms within groups of students and also the whole school. The school's norms are modelled by the school staff and other adults in the broader community, including parents. Students who 'stand out' as different from the norms within their peer group are more likely to be bullied. Students can use bullying as a way to enforce group norms about how to appear and behave. Student group norms and views about which students are of 'greater' social standing come from society's values about power and social status. This process happens as children and young people absorb and copy the norms, values and prejudices of their school and their wider community.

There are lots of reasons students may bully.

- Unhappy or angry and take it out on others.

- Being bullied themselves.

- Want attention or think it will make them popular.

- Trying to fit in with a group.

- Problems at home.

- Don't respect people who are different from them.

- Think it's funny.

- Copy what they have seen others do before.

- Like to feel tough, strong and in control.

- Want to make themselves feel better when they are feeling bad about themselves or jealous of someone else.

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It's important to promote the message that bullying is an unacceptable behaviour.

Rather than using the terms 'bully' and 'victim' to label students, it's more helpful to identify the inappropriate behaviour and not label the person.

Written information and policies should reflect this by referring to 'students who engage in bullying' or 'students who bully others' and 'students who are bullied' or 'students who are the target of bullying'.

Using labels suggests that bullying is due to something that can't be changed about the students involved. But with the right support, students can change the way they behave.

Unfortunately, labels like 'bully' and 'victim' can stick and make it harder to change. These labels can cause more harm if the student accepts them as part of who they are.

What kinds of bullying are there?

There are three types of bullying behaviour – physical, verbal and social.

PHYSICAL	VERBAL	SOCIAL (Relational)
Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. It includes: - hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, biting - tripping, shoving or intimidating another person - taking or damaging someone's belongings - making mean or rude hand gestures - touching another person when they don't want you to - being made afraid of getting hurt.	Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. It includes: - calling someone names - teasing someone in a hurtful way - making fun of someone - being sarcastic in a hurtful way - making racially offensive comments about someone and their family - rude comments or jokes about someone's religion - hurtful comments about the way someone looks or behaves - mean comments about someone's body - inappropriate sexual comments - taunting - threatening to cause harm.	Social bullying involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. It includes: - ignoring or leaving someone out on purpose - telling other students not to be friends with someone - spreading rumours about someone - destroying relationships - embarrassing someone in public - sharing information or images that will have a harmful effect on the other person - telling lies or nasty stories about someone to make others not like them.

If any of these behaviours occur only once, or are part of a conflict between equals (no matter how inappropriate) they are not bullying.

Bullying is when these things happen (or have the potential to happen) to someone again and again.

Where does bullying happen?

SETTING	VISIBILITY
Bullying can happen **in person** or **online**. Physical, verbal and social bullying can happen **in person**. Verbal and social bullying can happen **online**, as can threats of physical bullying. Online bullying is also called cyber-bullying. Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen at any time and the student's home may not even be a safe place from bullying. While cyber-bullying often takes place at home and after school hours, the impact can also be felt in school. Students are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is difficult to delete permanently.	Bullying can be **easy to see**, or **hidden** from those not directly involved. **Easy to see (overt) bullying** involves physical actions such as punching or kicking, or verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting. **Hidden (covert) bullying** can be very hard for others to see. It can include repeatedly using hand gestures and weird or threatening looks, whispering, excluding or turning one's back on a person, restricting where a person can sit and who they can talk with. Sometimes hidden bullying can be denied by the initiator who will say they are joking or 'just having fun'. Cyber-bullying is often hidden as it can occur on devices and apps that adults do not access. Bullying can sometimes happen between friends. Friendship loyalty and the confusion of an on-again-off-again friendship can make some children and young people reluctant to seek help.

Where does a school's responsibility end?

Bullying often happens out of school grounds, after school hours or online. Bullying 'outside school' can often continue inside school and vice-versa. Young people's relationships are not so neatly defined, and the concept of 'outside school' starts to become irrelevant when young people's interactions are more and more a blend of in school, in their communities, offline and online.

Schools are increasingly involved in incidents where the activities of students at home or in their own time have an impact on the life of the school; for example, creating and posting harmful content on social media using their own Smartphone or computer, whether at school or not. It can affect a student's wellbeing no matter where it happens.

Schools have the responsibility and power to act when it is reasonable to expect that what's occurred could have a negative impact on the school's learning environment. Trying to pinpoint where and when the bullying took place may be less helpful than asking 'what effect is this having on the student/s involved and how will we respond?'

If signs of bullying such as absenteeism or other worrying behaviour are noticed by school staff, or if anyone reports bullying to school staff, it's important to investigate and take action, regardless of where and when it happened.

Roles that students play in bullying

Individual students may take on different roles in bullying, at different times, in different circumstances or with different peers. A student who is bullied in one situation may do the bullying in another, and a student who sees bullying in one context may be bullied in another. Every situation is different.

There are usually three parties to bullying:

- initiators (those doing the bullying),

- targets (those being bullied), and

- bystanders (those who witness the bullying happening or know about someone being bullied).

Bystanders can play a number of roles:

- helping the students who are bullying and actively joining in,

- encouraging or showing approval to the students who are bullying,

- doing nothing or being passive,

- defending or supporting the student who is being bullied by intervening, getting help or comforting them.

Bystanders who take no action or behave in ways that give silent approval (watching, nodding, turning a blind eye) encourage the bullying behaviour to continue.

The actions of a supportive bystander can stop an incident or help a student to recover from it.

Students may not step in because they:

- fear for their own safety (now and later) or position in the group

- think that someone else will help

- think it's none of their business

- are worried about making things worse

- think their actions won't make a difference

- don't know what to do

- think the student being bullied deserved it

- think it's fun to watch.

The Bullying-Free NZ School Framework

Bullying prevention approaches may look different in each school, since they need to align with the values, goals and priorities of each particular school and their community. But, in the end, they all need to achieve the same thing – students attending schools that have positive environments to support them to reach their full potential.

The Bullying-Free NZ School Framework lists the nine core components required for an effective school-based bullying prevention and response approach.

Research shows that multi-component, whole-school initiatives involving the whole school community are more likely to reduce bullying behaviour than single-component programmes, such as those involving only classroom curriculum activities.

Whole school vision

Effective & supportive **policies & procedures**

Universal **approach/curriculum** to promote social & emotional learning and support resilience

A positive **school climate & culture** that promotes respect & values diversity

Enabling **student leadership, agency & voice**

Strong leadership that supports & champions efforts to promote bullying prevention & wellbeing

Staff **PLD** to support student wellbeing

Targeted support & early response

Data – identifying need, guiding decision-making & monitoring results

Working with **parents, carers, whānau & the wider community**

What works?

It's a simple question – what works to prevent bullying? Unfortunately the answer is complicated. It depends on what you want to achieve, for which students, and in what context.

There is no single universal bullying prevention approach.

No one approach will meet the needs of every school and every situation. What works in one school may not work in another for different reasons. It's a matter of matching approaches to your school's students, circumstances and needs. Many schools combine a number of approaches. Only your school community can determine the most appropriate approach or combination of approaches.

What doesn't work?

Knowing what doesn't work is just as important. There are many views on how to deal with bullying that have been shown not to work. These include:

- zero tolerance and disciplinary measures (i.e. school suspensions and expulsions)

- unfair and inconsistent use of discipline

- punishment without support

- expecting students to solve bullying problems by themselves

- advising students to avoid social media as a way of avoiding cyber-bullying

- providing one-off activities (i.e. one-shot assemblies or a short motivational speech)

- pulling a few bits and pieces from a programme, or small, piecemeal and uncoordinated approaches

- dealing with individual students who are bullying or being bullied – everyone needs to be involved in bullying prevention.
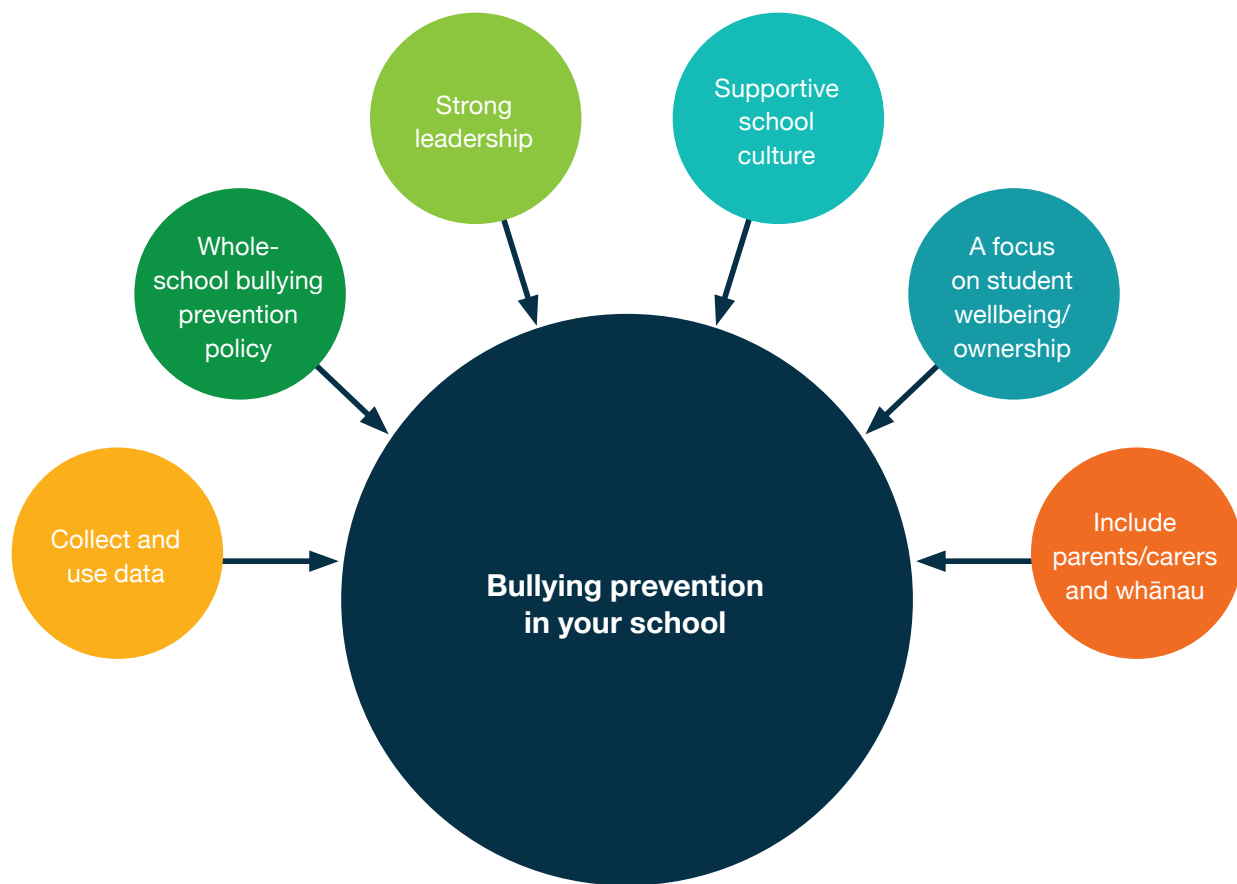
What does research tell us?

Research, both in New Zealand and overseas, identifies the following combination of actions as most likely to prevent and reduce bullying.

1. A universal whole-school approach over a long duration that takes a multi-component approach rather than focusing on one single component.

2. A whole-school detailed policy that addresses bullying behaviour.

3. The promotion of a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and student wellbeing.

4. Effective methods of behaviour management that are consistently applied and are non-punitive.

5. Encouragement and skill development for all students (especially bystanders) to respond effectively to bullying behaviour and support students who are bullied.

6. An increased awareness of bullying in the school community through student-owned plans and activities.

What can your school do?

Strong leadership

Supportive school culture

Whole-school bullying prevention policy

A focus on student wellbeing/ownership

Collect and use data

Bullying prevention in your school

Include parents/carers and whānau

What do we need?

A whole-school approach

A whole-school approach brings everyone together – the board, school staff, students, parents and whānau, and the broader community – to work on creating a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Raising awareness and having a shared understanding of what bullying is gives everyone the knowledge to take positive action to prevent bullying and respond effectively when it does occur.

When everyone works together for a safe, inclusive and accepting school, children and young people receive consistent messages and responses about bullying and positive relationships. Supporting a whole-school approach comes from the top and boards have an important role in championing this approach and making sure everyone can get involved.

Implementing a whole-school approach takes time.

Important points for a whole-school approach:

- How your school defines a whole-school approach matters. While many schools believe they already have whole-school practices, it's easy to make assumptions about what school community members need, consider input only from certain members or view some individual opinions as representative of everyone in the community.

- Sustaining relationships is a must. Your school population changes every year. Consider what you are putting in place to involve new members of your school community.

? QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

1. Do we have an agreed definition of bullying that is clearly understood by our school community?

2. Do we maintain a safe physical and emotional environment in our school? How do we know?

3. What priority, as a school, do we place on promoting the wellbeing of our students?

4. Do we have a good understanding of why all students need to be included in our school's approach to bullying?

5. Are we working in partnership with parents/carers, other schools and community partners to promote safe communities?

6. Is there anything we would like to change about the way our school prevents and addresses bullying? If so, how would we go about making these changes?

7. Have we made sure our bullying prevention and response policy can be easily accessed by the whole school community?

8. Do students receive information about what they can do to prevent bullying and what to do if bullying is occurring?

9. Do families and whānau receive information about their role in preventing bullying and what to do if bullying is occurring?

✔ CHECKLIST

	Yes	No	Unsure
1. The board, school staff, students, parents and whānau, and the broader community have a shared understanding of what bullying is.	○	○	○
2. We are committed to a whole-school approach to ensure a positive, safe and inclusive school environment that includes all staff and students.	○	○	○
3. Our school promotes a clear, well-defined, agreed understanding that bullying is not acceptable behaviour.	○	○	○
4. Our school recognises that bullying behaviour can be reduced in the school environment and acknowledges it is everyone's responsibility.	○	○	○
5. We enable and encourage all members of our school community (staff, students, families) to actively participate in planning and decision making about school action to reduce bullying.	○	○	○
6. Bullying prevention and response is linked to existing priorities in our school.	○	○	○
7. Any 'disruptions' occurring inside and outside the school environment that will influence the success of our school's actions to reduce bullying are acknowledged and ways to overcome these are discussed.	○	○	○

NOTES

What do we need?

Leadership

Leadership is critical. The most effective schools have the support of their senior leadership team and at least one senior staff member coordinating their bullying prevention efforts. The principal should create and empower a leadership team that focuses on all aspects of school safety, including bullying, and school climate.

The Board has a critical role in setting the vision and expectations for a climate that supports a whole-school approach and collective responsibility for bullying prevention. Decisions that a school's leadership team makes (or doesn't make) can have a considerable impact on a school's subsequent bullying prevention efforts.

Leadership of a safe and supportive school is characterised by:

- strong commitment and management
- communication of a clear and sustainable vision
- access to resources
- designated staff with responsibilities
- actions that translate the commitment into practice
- a cycle of regular review.

QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

1. Do we all share the same understanding of bullying? How do we know?
2. How can we demonstrate that this is a priority and support our school community to coordinate bullying prevention efforts?
3. As leaders, do we model the behaviours we want to see?

CHECKLIST

	Yes	No	Unsure
1. We recognise that leadership, which is committed to a shared vision through policy and practice, is essential for establishing a safe and supportive school environment.	○	○	○
2. The whole school community understands the role they play and the actions they can take in preventing and responding to bullying.	○	○	○
3. All staff, students and families know what to do if someone has a concern about bullying.	○	○	○
4. Our students are encouraged and given support to be positive leaders and role models in their school community (e.g. by speaking up about issues such as bullying).	○	○	○
5. Parents/carers have confidence our school will take any complaint about bullying seriously, investigate/resolve as necessary and will deal with the bullying in a way that protects their child.	○	○	○

NOTES

What do we need?

A positive school environment where all students are accepted

School climate means the learning environment and relationships within a school community.

A positive school climate is a crucial component in preventing bullying behaviour. This is when all members of the school community feel safe, included and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions.

A supportive school culture:

- provides safety

- values difference

- encourages open communication

- supports a sense of connectedness within the school

- protects students from the risks of bullying.

A school's culture is shaped by the school community, including its leaders, educators, students, parents and whānau. Encouraging positive values such as respect, trust and fairness are the foundation stones which ultimately drive the vision of what the school community wants to achieve. Promoting connections to school for students, staff and families, in an environment where they feel emotionally and physically safe, is part of a positive school culture.

Central to a positive school culture is respectful relationships across the entire school community. This includes relationships amongst peers (e.g. student to student, teacher to teacher, between board members) and relationships between groups (e.g. teachers and students, parents and teachers, etc). A key factor is an ethos that bullying is not tolerated, with action taken to actively prevent or respond immediately and effectively if it does occur.

No single solution can guarantee a positive school climate. Success requires an ongoing, comprehensive and collaborative effort on the part of everyone involved.

Involving the whole school community is important.

- Bullying behaviour can either be accepted by the community, or it can be understood by the community as not acceptable and not appropriate.

- Each person in the school community has an important role to play.

- School leaders play a significant role in championing a safe and supportive environment across the whole school.

- Students are the key players in their school's efforts to respond to bullying and can provide critical leadership for new initiatives to create positive learning environments for everyone.

- Parents and whānau contribute to bullying prevention efforts by supporting their children and participating in school activities and approaches.

- The wider community can play an important role in strengthening the school's bullying prevention messages.

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QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

1. Does the school have strong values which promote messages of inclusion and respect?

2. Are there regular opportunities to promote inclusion and respect for diversity, as well as send bullying prevention messages?

3. Do we actively provide systematic opportunities for developing our students' social and emotional skills to reduce bullying?

4. Do we regularly consult with our students to find out what is happening in relation to bullying and whether our preventative strategies and responses are working, as well as gathering their ideas for new methods to tackle bullying?

5. How are parents and whānau included in opportunities to promote a positive school community and support the school's bullying prevention efforts?

6. Have unsafe areas of the school, where bullying is more likely to happen, been identified? Have steps been taken to make these areas safer?

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CHECKLIST

	Yes	No	Unsure
1. We have an agreed statement confirming our school community's expectations about creating a safe, positive environment.	○	○	○
2. Positive social values such as respect, trust, fairness and celebration of diversity are promoted across our school community.	○	○	○
3. All students, staff members and parents feel – and are – safe, included and accepted.	○	○	○
4. Difference is actively and visibly celebrated and welcomed across the whole school.	○	○	○
5. Our school has a process for recognising groups of students or individuals who may be more at risk of bullying (e.g. students with previous experiences of bullying, LGBTI students, students with a disability).	○	○	○
6. We promote a positive school culture where bullying is not tolerated and cannot flourish.	○	○	○

NOTES

What do we need?

Policy and procedures

Your school should have a policy that defines bullying and sets out how your school community will address it. This might be part of a broader policy, for example a positive behaviour or safe school policy, or it may be a specific bullying prevention policy.

Your school's policy should clearly explain what bullying is, so the whole school community has a shared understanding of bullying behaviour. It should clearly state that the school does not accept bullying.

Establishing clear policy and practice is the first step in managing bullying within a school.

Schools with clear and consistent policy and procedures send a strong message to the whole school community about their beliefs and actions to support a safe and supportive school environment.

However, having a bullying prevention and response policy alone will not reduce bullying.

To be effective, policies need to be:

- developed with the involvement of students, staff and families

- promoted to the whole school community

- implemented consistently

- monitored regularly.

Approached in this way, a proactive policy provides a framework for the prevention, early response and management of bullying behaviour.

A well-developed school policy, which includes clear procedures and sets out everyone's role, will ensure your school is ready to respond effectively to any incidents of bullying behaviour.

It's important that the whole school community has a clear understanding of the goals and content of your bullying prevention and response policy.

The policy should state that:

1. Your school recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on students.

2. Your school is fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

   - A positive school culture and environment which:
     - welcomes difference and diversity, and is based on inclusion;
     - encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment;
     - promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

   - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

   - Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour.

   - Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of your bullying prevention policy.

Make sure the policy is regularly highlighted and promoted on a school-wide basis, with particular attention being given to incoming students and their parents. Information on bullying should be provided in student-friendly, age-appropriate formats and should be displayed around the school.

? QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

1. Does our bullying prevention policy clearly identify what bullying is and what bullying is not?

2. Is everyone in our school community aware of the school policy and procedures that address bullying?

3. Is the current policy to address bullying effective? Why or why not?

4. What tools have we considered using to assess the success of our policies (e.g. ERO wellbeing for success indicators)?

5. Do our policies explicitly include cyber-bullying?

6. Are we following the most up-to-date advice (e.g. from Netsafe) and keeping pace with changes in digital technology and social media?

7. How have we consulted with students about our bullying prevention policy?

8. How widely have we consulted and communicated with parents/carers and the community?

✔ CHECKLIST

	Yes	No	Unsure
1. We have a clear bullying prevention and response policy, developed in collaboration with staff, students, parents/carers and whānau which addresses all forms of bullying (including cyber-bullying).	○	○	○
2. All students and their parents/carers understand how to report incidents of bullying.			
3. Our school staff participate in professional development to help them recognise the early signs of bullying and respond effectively.	○	○	○
4. There are clearly defined processes for staff to respond to incidents of bullying.	○	○	○
5. Our bullying prevention policy is reviewed regularly and our students participate in the process.	○	○	○
6. Our bullying prevention policy extends beyond the school gates and into the local community, including transport to and from school and other settings.	○	○	○

NOTES

What do we need?

Data

You need a clear picture of the nature and extent of any bullying issues in your school so you can plan an appropriate response. You also need information that can show if your bullying prevention approaches are meeting your school's identified needs and are effective.

Students and school staff share the same environment, but they have very different experiences. For students, bullying in schools is prominent – it's loud and clear. Staff though may only see and hear a very small percentage of the bullying that is happening. These separate experiences can create a 'blind spot' where bullying can flourish; recognised by students, but hidden from staff.

If your school community doesn't see or hear the problem of bullying, it's hard for it to believe that bullying is an issue.

James Dillon[1] compares bullying in schools to high blood pressure. High blood pressure is called the 'silent killer' because it often has no warning signs or symptoms and many people do not know they have it. Unfortunately for many, the first sign could be a fatal heart attack.

Similarly, schools can appear okay and run smoothly, yet still have a serious problem with bullying. The long-term psychological and emotional harm caused by bullying can go undetected by the school.

Like a blood pressure check, determining the real level of bullying in a school is a positive preventative step. Knowing the true picture allows corrective steps to be taken. As with high blood pressure, bullying requires 'numbers' to reveal the extent of the problem. Schools need a way to get data that will tell the real story about bullying. They cannot rely on how things look or feel on the surface.

Important reasons for schools to collect data on bullying behaviour.

- Often students do not want to report bullying and are reluctant to talk to adults. Students fear not being believed or that adults will not deal with their concerns in an appropriate or thoughtful way. Different understandings of what constitutes bullying may also contribute to a failure to report. This means that many students remain isolated, with potentially significant negative impacts on their wellbeing. It also clearly affects data sources. A lack of sufficiently reliable reporting could potentially misinform recommendations for practice because they are based on only the experiences of those who are willing to report bullying.

- Accurate data can make the bullying that students experience or witness visible and real to school staff. It is an essential tool for gaining staff commitment to improving the school environment and student learning.

- Data informs schools about the types of responses that are effective in reducing and preventing bullying, thereby enabling the school to direct resources where they will make a positive difference.

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1   Dillon, J. (2012). *No place for bullying: Leadership for schools that care for every student.* CA, USA: Corwin.

The Wellbeing@School survey tools have been developed by the New Zealand Council for Education Research.

The surveys are specifically designed to help schools identify how different aspects of school life contribute to a safe and caring climate that deters bullying. The tools include one section which explores student and teacher perceptions about the extent of aggressive and bullying behaviour at their school.

Because they are anonymous, Wellbeing@School surveys give students and staff a safe way of sharing how they genuinely feel about their school.

There are three Wellbeing@School surveys / tools:

- The **School Self-Review Tool (SSRT)** helps leaders and educators to review their current school practices, identify areas of strength, and work out what else could be done to promote a safe and caring climate that deters bullying. The SSRT has two components:

  1. A School Self Review Tool of which one copy is completed by a review team, and

  2. A Teacher Survey which is completed by individual teaching staff.

- The **Student Survey** asks students questions about their views of school and the strategies they and their school already use to promote caring and safe behaviours. The survey also collects data on students' experiences of different types of behaviours. There are two student surveys – Primary (Years 5–8) and Intermediate / Secondary (Years 7–13).

QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

1. Do we have a reliable way of measuring bullying in our school?

2. Do we keep a record of bullying incidents, according to our agreed definition, and analyse it for patterns – students, places, groups?

3. Do we regularly canvass our students' views on the extent and nature of bullying? Do we make sure they know how to express worries and anxieties about bullying?

4. How are we collecting information about whether the bullying prevention practices in our school are working?

5. How do we review progress and measure its success?

CHECKLIST

	Yes	No	Unsure
1. The school conducts regular (at least annually) anonymous student and staff surveys to evaluate and inform school action to reduce bullying, and reports the outcomes to the board.	◯	◯	◯
2. Our school records all bullying incidents and this information is used to understand the impact and responses to bullying in our school.	◯	◯	◯
3. We consult students regularly to monitor and determine the types of bullying behaviour and in what school and social contexts bullying (including cyber-bullying) occurs.	◯	◯	◯
4. We have a safe, confidential way for students to report incidents of bullying.	◯	◯	◯

NOTES

What Do We Know About Bullying?
TRUE or FALSE Quiz

1	Boys are much more likely to take part in bullying.	TRUE	FALSE
2	Students who see bullying happening can experience negative impacts.	TRUE	FALSE
3	Students with disabilities are at greater risk of being bullied.	TRUE	FALSE
4	When present, peers usually intervene in bullying incidents.	TRUE	FALSE
5	All students who bully are insecure and have low self-esteem.	TRUE	FALSE
6	Sometimes adults don't stop bullying because they don't see it happen or don't hear about it.	TRUE	FALSE
7	The most effective way of stopping bullying is to punish the offender.	TRUE	FALSE
8	Bullying is just a harmless part of growing up – the effects are minor and short-term.	TRUE	FALSE
9	Students play an important role in reducing and preventing bullying in schools.	TRUE	FALSE
10	Bullying is just a normal part of growing up, you've just got to accept it.	TRUE	FALSE
11	Most students who bully stop this behaviour in adulthood.	TRUE	FALSE
12	The best way to stop someone bullying is to fight back.	TRUE	FALSE

Answers are on the next page. How many did you get right? _____

Answers:

1. False

Both boys and girls take part in bullying behaviour.

Many studies have found that it is more common for boys to be involved in physical bullying. Girls on the other hand are more likely than boys to be involved in social bullying (for example ignoring someone or deliberately keeping someone out of a group). However, for both boys and girls, the most common type of bullying is verbal (teasing in a hurtful way, name-calling, etc).

2. True

Many bystanders to bullying feel anxious and distressed about seeing something they think is wrong. Students can also feel upset about not knowing what to do.

Teaching students strategies for safe and supportive bystander behaviour is the most helpful way to reduce the negative impacts of being afraid and distressed.

3. True

Students with disabilities (including physical, learning, developmental, intellectual, emotional and sensory disabilities) are at greater risk of being bullied.

An emphasis on including all students and valuing diversity are powerful ways to lessen the risk that students with disabilities will experience bullying.

4. False

Research undertaken in Canada shows that when students see bullying happen, they:

- 54% of the time, watch it happen and do nothing
- 25% of the time, step in to stop the bullying
- 21% of the time, join in with the bullying.

Bullying stops in less than 10 seconds, 57% of the time when someone intervenes.

Craig, W. & Pepler, D. (1997). Observations of bullying and victimization in the schoolyard. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 2, 41-60*.

5. False

Some students who bully are popular, socially competent, and have average or above average self-esteem; taking particular pride in their aggressive behaviour and sense of control over the less powerful peers they target.

On the other hand, some students who bully may have poor social skills and are socially anxious or depressed. For them, bullying is a form of boldness or emotional toughness.

6. True

Adults are often not aware of bullying because it can happen in areas with little or no adult supervision, such as toilets, hallways, playgrounds and/or online.

One effective bullying prevention strategy is for adults to be visibly and actively supervising areas where bullying is more likely to occur. The identification by students of areas where they feel less safe will help schools to reduce the potential for bullying behaviour.

7. False

Bullying is a relationship problem that requires relationship solutions; that is, solutions that create safety and social-emotional growth for those who bully, those who are bullied, and those who witness it. In general, punishing the student doing the bullying does not improve the relationships and social factors which allowed the bullying to happen.

Students who bully others often have problems themselves and are generally unhappy in their own lives. These students always need to face the consequences for their actions, but also need support to change their behaviours and to find better ways of getting what they want to feel good about themselves.

8. False

The immediate effect of bullying is to reduce a student's participation, learning and enjoyment of school. Staying away from school to avoid being bullied can lead to additional problems.

Other impacts include physical health complaints and low energy, mental health impacts such as depression and anxiety, and social implications including low self-esteem.

Researchers have also identified negative impacts in adults many years after being bullied - a target can usually recall the initiator's name, appearance and incidents of bullying with crystal-clear accuracy.

9. True

Students are more likely to observe bullying than adults and many students who are bullied do not tell adults. Students therefore play an important role in reducing and preventing bullying, as they are most likely to be present when bullying occurs.

Students can provide support for those bullied and disapproval of bullying by:

- intervening in bullying incidents
- showing support for the student being bullied
- reporting bullying incidents to adults
- not joining in or supporting the bullying behaviour.

10. False

Bullying is not a normal stage that all children and young people pass through, and it is not just something to put up with as 'part of life'. Behaviour that is intended to harm can hamper healthy development. Ignoring bullying, thinking that it is just something that children and young people do, or considering that bullying will be 'character building' can give silent approval for bullying to continue and further traumatise those who are bullied.

11. True

Some students engage in bullying for a short time only and then stop, either because they realise it's wrong or they learn more appropriate behaviour. A small group of students continue to bully others over many years.

Students who persistently bully others have been found to have mental health issues later in life, as well as showing criminal and anti-social behaviour. It is possible something else in a student's personal characteristics, environment or experience contribute to these outcomes. However, several studies suggest that persistent bullying is an important warning sign of ongoing problems.

12. False

Fighting back often makes the bullying worse and increases the risk of serious harm. Sometimes targets of bullying who do this get blamed for the fight, and end up getting into trouble.