



SCHOOL POLICY:	PROVIDING SAFE SCHOOLS P-12
PUBLISHED:	2007
IDENTIFIER:	SSP200704
LEGISLATION:	<i>Education Act 2004</i> <i>Children and Young People Act 1999</i> <i>Privacy Act 1988</i>

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 ACT public schools and colleges will promote and seek to provide a supportive learning environment in which all students can expect to feel safe.
- 1.2 The Department will:
- provide specific policies on:
 - *Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools*
 - *Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence in ACT Public Schools*
 - *Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools*
 - *Suspension, Exclusion and Transfers in ACT Public Schools.*
 - develop and promote systemic strategies to support schools in the development of programs to meet the individual needs of students
 - provide system wide opportunities to promote evidence-based leading safe schools practice and celebrate student success and achievement
 - provide advice, support and professional learning opportunities to schools to facilitate a safe and supportive school environment
 - monitor the implementation in ACT public schools of the *Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools, Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence in ACT Public Schools, Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools* and the *Suspension, Exclusion or Transfer in ACT Public Schools.*
- 1.3 ACT public schools and colleges will:
- develop school procedures, in consultation with students, parents and carers, which aim to promote a safe and supportive learning environment and that incorporate the requirement of the policies cited in 1.2 above
 - make the procedures available to all students, parents and carers
 - review procedures on a regular basis as part of school planning and improvement processes
 - consistently demonstrate fairness and equity in managing and supporting students in line with the implementation strategies of the *National Safe Schools Framework*
 - include opportunities in the school curriculum for students to develop positive interpersonal skills and regard for others.
- 1.4 Schools must report instances of bullying, harassment, violence, racism and sexual harassment that pose an immediate threat to the safety of students and staff as critical incidents. This report must be made to the Director Schools immediately by telephone and in writing within 24 hours.

Providing Safe Schools P-12

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- 1.5 All incidents of non-accidental physical injury and/or sexual abuse of children and young people must be reported in accordance with the *Children and Young People Act 1999*. For mandatory reporting phone: 1300 556 729 (general public line) or 1300 556 728 (Mandated Persons Line).
- 1.6 All departmental officers are required to meet their obligations and responsibilities under the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cwth)*. The Act protects individuals' rights in relation to the collection, use, storage and disclosure of personal information held by government agencies.

2. Rationale

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for all ACT public schools to assist in the development of procedures in the areas of:

- student management and well-being, suspension, transfer and exclusion
- bullying, harassment and violence
- racial harassment
- sexual harassment.

3. Definitions

3.1 **Schools:**

All ACT public education services from Preschool to Year 12.

3.2 **Parent/s:**

Includes carer/s.

3.3 **Workplace:**

The legal definition of 'workplace' includes any work activity, a work-organised social activity and work that you might have to do outside the physical boundaries of your worksite.

3.4 **Racism:**

Any belief, attitude, behaviour or practice that reflects an assumption, stated or implied, of superiority of one cultural group over another. It is expressed through prejudice or discrimination and may take various forms, including verbal, physical, social, psychological and electronic. It can be overt or covert and directed against individuals or groups. Racism can also be institutionalised into policies, practices and structures.

3.5 **Bullying:**

A product of social dynamics which can be defined as the repeated negative actions by individuals or groups against a target individual or group, which involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can take different forms – verbal, physical, social, cyber or psychological. Actions can be observable or hidden.

3.6 **Harassment:**

Negative behaviour intended to annoy or trouble another individual, which may be based on obvious differences such as gender, race, religious or cultural beliefs, physical difference, sexual orientation, ability or disability and socio-economic status. It may be a one-off incident between individuals or groups or may continue over time.

3.7 **Violence:**

Incidents where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened, physically assaulted or where property is deliberately damaged by another person. It is an extreme use of force often resulting in injury or destruction. Violence does not necessarily involve an imbalance of power.

3.8 **Conflict:**

A disagreement where the needs of one or both parties are not being met. It does not necessarily involve an abuse of power, even if parties do not have perceived equal power. If handled well, conflict is seen as an opportunity for personal growth.

3.9 **Sexual harassment:**

Any unwanted or uninvited sexual behaviour that is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating or humiliating. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship. It includes behaviour which creates a sexually hostile or intimidating environment, such as unwelcome touching, staring or leering, suggestive comments or jokes, sexually explicit pictures, unwelcome requests for sex or intrusive questions about your private life. (*Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Website: Frequently Asked Questions.* <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/faqs/general.html#9>)

3.10 **Critical Incident:**

An incident, or series of incidents, which result in:

- significant disruption to the school's normal procedures
- a school being locked down, evacuated or requiring closure
- police notification and involvement in the school
- significant threat to the safety of students and/or staff.

4. Procedures

4.1 Principals will:

- develop a whole school approach and commitment to the provision of a safe and supportive environment
- foster positive practices that contribute to a sense of well-being and safety for staff and students
- ensure that the teaching and modelling of positive social skills are embedded across the school
- identify a male and a female staff member to be the Anti Sexual Harassment Contact Officers for Students and/or Anti Racism Contact Officer/s for Students as required under the *Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools Policy* and the *Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools Policy*.
- facilitate professional development for staff to enhance skills in providing a safe and supportive environment
- ensure that any resolution of problems reflects appropriate legislative requirements
- promote effective communication and liaison with families
- report annually on each of the key elements of the *National Safe Schools Framework*
- report instances of bullying, harassment, violence, racism and sexual harassment which pose an immediate threat to the safety of students and staff as critical incidents to the relevant Director Schools immediately by telephone and in writing within 24 hours
- ensure staff are aware of and implement this policy and related policies and documents

- ensure that staff are aware of their obligations and rights so that the risk to health and safety is minimised.

4.2 Teaching staff will:

- familiarise themselves with this policy, the *National Safe Schools Framework* and related policies and documents listed on page 4 below
- provide and support effective classroom practice that promote a safe learning environment
- utilise student management protocols to address issues of student behaviour
- have professional and respectful collaborative working relationships with students and parents and other agencies.

4.3 Physical restraint must not be used as punishment or for enforcing compliance. It should only be employed after other less intrusive approaches have been attempted and must only be employed for the minimum time necessary.

4.4 Teachers may use physical restraint when acting to prevent students injuring themselves or to prevent students injuring other students. This should be a last resort. The force used should be no greater than reasonably necessary and should be for the minimum time required to achieve its aim.

4.5 If a teacher has serious personal safety concerns, it is reasonable in the circumstances to decline to intervene and to call for assistance.

4.6 The safety of all students is important. It may at times be necessary to re-locate groups of students away from a dangerous incident.

4.7 In some cases students under the age of 18 have requested that their parents not be provided with personal information. In such cases schools should refer to the *Information Privacy Principles* under the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cwth)* <http://www.privacy.gov.au>.

Policy Owner:	Director, Student Services
Related Policies	<i>Suspension, Exclusion or Transfer in ACT Public Schools</i> <i>Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence in ACT Public Schools</i> <i>Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools</i> <i>Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools</i>
Related Documents:	National Safe Schools Framework Protocols for Student Management The Inclusivity Challenge Unwelcome Visitors to Schools Handbook 2005
