



Australian Government

Department of Education, Science and Training

Implementation Manual

for

THE NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS
FRAMEWORK

For use by schools in association with systemic or infrastructure support

Australian Government Department of Education,
Science and Training 2003

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Foreword

Bullying, harassment, violence, child abuse and neglect are issues that are, rightly, of great concern to school communities and school authorities across the nation. The extent to which we protect the vulnerable transition from childhood to adulthood in a safe school environment is a critical measure of a caring society.

All children have the right to live their lives free of the threat or the reality of violence. The impact on children and young people of repeated victimisation can be devastating in the short term, and have lifelong consequences. Increasingly, the Australian community is voicing its collective concern that bullying and abuse, in all its forms, are unacceptable aspects of human relationships.

The Australian Government has joined forces with State and Territory government and non-government school authorities to produce the *National Safe Schools Framework*. The *Framework* provides an approach to safeguarding the physical and emotional wellbeing of students in a cohesive, nationally consistent manner. It includes an agreed set of guiding principles for promoting safe school environments and suggests strategies schools may utilise.

It is an outstanding collaborative achievement that highlights how seriously governments across Australia view the problems of bullying, violence and abuse.

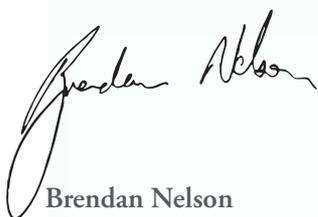
While many schools already have policies in place in this area, the coordinated approach offered by the *Framework* will significantly assist schools to refine and enhance those programmes.

To support schools in reviewing their current policies and practices and developing new approaches where necessary, the Australian Government has funded the development of this *Framework Implementation Manual* for schools and related resources for school systems.

The *Framework Implementation Manual* provides a guide to a process for assessing the current status of policies, programmes and procedures, and some resources schools may find useful in considering their next steps.

A key function of the manual is to encourage schools serving geographically, culturally and socio-economically diverse communities to develop policies and practices around bullying and child protection which are informed by deep knowledge of their communities and which respond explicitly to local contexts.

I encourage schools and their communities to use this resource to reflect on their existing practices, plan for improvement, and create safer, more supportive learning environments.



Brendan Nelson
Minister for Education, Science and Training

November 2003

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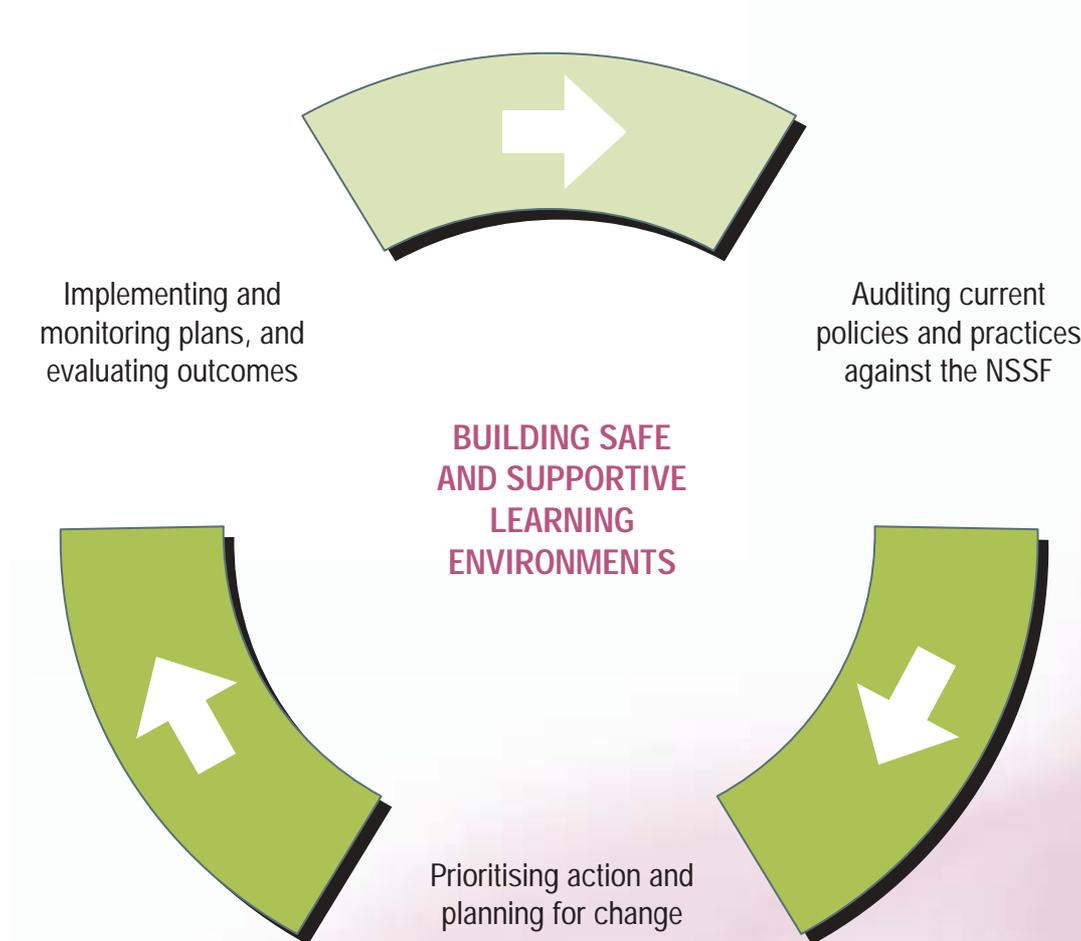
Introduction

In July 2002, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) agreed to the development of a national framework for ensuring safe and supportive learning environments. The *National Safe Schools Framework* was endorsed by MCEETYA in July 2003. Educational jurisdictions will report on strategies and initiatives to provide safe and supportive learning environments through the annual National Report on Schooling in Australia.

The *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF) recognises that significant advances have been made across the country in relation to **safe and supportive learning environments**, and

that many schools now demonstrate excellent practice. However, as our understanding of the impact on students of bullying, harassment, violence and child abuse and neglect grows and changes, we need to keep our responses to these issues under review. The NSSF will assist schools and the broader educational community to monitor the effectiveness of current strategies as new understandings are developed.

The *Implementation Manual* for the *National Safe Schools Framework* has been designed to support schools in reviewing their current policies and practices and developing new approaches where necessary – ideally as an ongoing cycle of activity.



THE NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK APPROACH

Vision Statement teased out in Guiding Principles which underpin Key Elements of Good Practice

Vision statement

The vision statement of the *National Safe Schools Framework* is:

All Australian schools are safe and supportive environments.

Guiding principles

The implications of the vision statement are teased out in the eleven Guiding Principles for the provision of a safe and supportive school environment.

Australian schools:

1. affirm the right of all school community members to feel safe at school.
2. promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity.
3. implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school environment.
4. recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive school environment.
5. develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole school community.
6. ensure that roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community

in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated.

7. recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive school environment.
8. have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships.
9. focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention.
10. regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvements.
11. take action to protect children from all forms of child abuse and neglect.

Key elements of good practice

The Guiding Principles are intended to underpin school-community work around the six key elements:

1. School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare.
2. Establishment of agreed policies, programmes and procedures.

3. Provision of education and training to school staff, students and parents.
4. Managing incidents of abuse and victimisation.
5. Providing support for students.
6. Working closely with parents.

For further discussion, see Appendix 1
What's in the National Safe Schools Framework?

This *Implementation Manual* refers to several appendices. These are available at www.dest.gov.au/schools/Publications/2004/NSSF/Appendices-combined-original.pdf

The National Safe Schools Framework materials

There are three components of the materials:

1. The *National Safe Schools Framework* – for use by all stakeholders.

2. The *Implementation Manual* – for use by school communities.
3. The *Resource Pack* – for use by jurisdictional officers supporting schools with implementation.

Is the National Safe Schools Framework related to other Australian Government or MCEETYA initiatives?

The *National Safe Schools Framework*, at www.curriculum.edu.au/mctyapdf/natsafeschools.pdf, has clear linkages with:

- ☞ *The Bullying. No way!* website (www.bullyingnoway.com.au/).
- ☞ *The MindMatters programme* (online.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/index.htm).

HOW IS THE NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK RELATED TO STATE OR TERRITORY LEGISLATION, POLICY, AND PROGRAMS?

NAME OF EMPLOYING AUTHORITY
Ethos and philosophy
Legislation which frames responses to bullying, harassment, violence and child protection
Relevant policies
Existing systemic or school programs
Available resources

THE ISSUES

The major issues canvassed in the *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF) are:

- ☒ bullying;
- ☒ harassment;
- ☒ violence; and
- ☒ child protection.

For further discussion, see Appendix 2

Bullying, harassment, violence and child protection

Feeling safe, supported and respected at school is both the fundamental right of all students and fundamental to effective learning. It is widely acknowledged that for many young people, schools are among the safest places in the community. However, it is also true that some students are victims of bullying, harassment and violence at school, and that some students are subjected to abuse and neglect at home.

Schools have serious responsibilities in regard to all these issues, not only because they impact negatively on students' capacity to learn, but also because teachers and school administrations stand in a special relationship (in loco parentis) to the young people in their care. In addition, all school staff are citizens whose responsibilities as citizens function in their professional lives as well as in their private lives. For significant numbers of children and young people at risk, schools are the most likely place for them to find responsible adults who will advocate for their wellbeing.

Much effective work has been done to increase the level of safety for and support of a diverse range of students in Australian schools. However, our knowledge and understanding of bullying, harassment and violence in schools – what happens, why it happens, how it affects young people, and what we can do about it – continues to grow as new research becomes available. The community has high expectations that schools will continue to be both vigilant

and proactive in ensuring that the most supportive learning environments possible are made available to all children and young people.

The most effective way to build strong support for such initiatives in the school community is to ensure that the process of developing and implementing strategies to increase school safety engages as wide a cross section of stakeholders as possible.

For further discussion, see Appendix 3

Fostering and sustaining change in schools

To that end, the purpose of this section of the *Implementation Manual* is to support the development of shared understandings of the NSSF across the school community.

For further discussion, see Appendix 4

A whole school approach

Professional development materials are provided in Appendices 5-12, at www.dest.gov.au/schools/Publications/2004/NSSF/Appendices-combined-original.pdf. These can be used with teachers, parents and other members of the school community; some may be suitable to adapt for working with students.

Currently there are a range of definitions of the key terms found in the *Framework* in use. It is clear that, especially in relation to the terms 'bullying', 'harassment' and 'violence', there is considerable overlap in meaning.

It may be useful to begin by agreeing on working definitions in discussions with staff, parents and students. Suggested definitions are included in the professional development materials (see below).

For support in examining the National Safe Schools Framework with school communities, see Appendices 5-12

Professional Development Materials

USING THE IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL

The *Implementation Manual* is designed to inform discussion between stakeholders within school communities, and between schools and support staff from systems and education authorities.

It is critical that the Implementation Manual be read in conjunction with the National Safe Schools Framework.

The heart of the *Implementation Manual* is the process for auditing current activity within school communities against the *National Safe Schools Framework*. The audit process is intended to assist school communities to determine whether there is a need to refine current practices, or re-focus attention and energy on emerging situations. Some schools already have sophisticated policies and procedures in place. Other schools may still be developing a comprehensive whole-school approach.

However, the audit process should not be seen as an end in itself. It is a critical part, but nonetheless only a part, of the broader action planning and implementation processes many schools are already engaged in.

One of the key understandings to emerge in recent years is the need for schools to develop strategies and programmes which respond specifically to the circumstances of the local community. For these reasons, the manual is **not a prescriptive recipe** for developing safe and supportive learning environments. Rather it provides a guide to a **process** for assessing the current status of policies, programmes and procedures, and some **resources** schools may find useful in considering their next steps.

All the audit tools provided are intended as examples only, not as prescriptive tools.

Schools are encouraged to use the audit tools as they see fit.

For a more detailed discussion, see Appendix 13

Implications of the National Safe Schools Framework for schools

The manual contains three core components:

1. The issues surrounding bullying, harassment, violence and child protection.
2. Assessing safety and support in the school environment.
3. Where to from here – planning, implementing and monitoring strategies for improvement.

It also refers to a range of appendices dealing with the following issues (available at www.dest.gov.au/schools/Publications/2004/NSSF/Appendices-combined-original.pdf):

1. What's in the *National Safe Schools Framework*?
2. Bullying, harassment, violence and child protection.
3. Fostering and sustaining change in schools.
4. A whole school approach.
5. Professional Development (PD) Materials.
6. PD materials – The National Safe Schools Framework Approach.
7. PD materials – Defining terms: bullying, harassment, violence and child protection.
8. PD materials – Current jurisdictional arrangements (child protection).
9. PD materials – Current jurisdictional arrangements (bullying, harassment and violence).
10. PD materials – Action Research.
11. PD materials – Case studies of good practice in preventing bullying, harassment and violence.
12. PD materials – Evidence based reform in education.
13. Implications of the NSSF for schools.
14. Action planning.
15. Additional resources.

Assessing safety and support in the school environment

WHY CONDUCT A SCHOOL AUDIT?

The school audit is at the heart of the approach to enhancing safe and supportive learning environments as recommended by the NSSF.

The purpose is both to identify the areas in which the school is already working well and achieving success, as well as to highlight priorities for future action. The audit may also help members of the school community to see where overlap occurs in policies and programmes and where opportunities exist for streamlining and coordinating existing processes and programmes.

One of the challenges in responding effectively to bullying, harassment, violence and child maltreatment arises from a fundamental characteristic of these behaviours – they are largely hidden activities, performed either in the company of accomplices or without witnesses at all. Perpetrators commonly use threats of all kinds to discourage victims from reporting the attacks. At other times they rely on the humiliation and embarrassment associated with talking about the abuse to keep victims silent.

It is sometimes difficult, especially in the busy daily life of schools, to determine whether certain behaviours are victimisation, or whether they are merely roughhousing and teasing in which all parties are cheerfully and freely engaged.

When bullying/harassment is racist, sexist and/or homophobic in nature, it may be extremely difficult for some observers to detect or name, especially if they have had little training or experience in dealing with these issues. Often victims will not disclose the real nature of what is going on even when they are directly questioned.

The secrecy surrounding child abuse is well known. Victims are often extremely fearful of seeking assistance because of the ways in which they have been threatened by perpetrators, and because they may not expect to have their word believed over that of an adult.

Testing our adult and professional perceptions about our school environment against those of children and parents can be very revealing. Conducting an audit can give us unexpected information and insights, even in schools where things are going well and the majority of students do feel safe and well supported. The use of anonymous surveying often allows people to talk about issues they otherwise would not.

Good practices can only be built on clear understandings. Developing an audit process should help school communities answer two critical questions:

- CE *What do we need to know about what's happening in our school community to make a safer and more supportive environment for all our students?*
- CE *How well are our current programmes meeting the needs of all students in our school?*

Sensitively managed, an audit process should provide a solid base for future planning, and help to orientate all members of the school community involved to a common purpose.

HOW SHOULD WE MANAGE THE PROCESS?

The process will need to be coordinated; it may be advisable to establish a coordinating committee comprised of staff, parent, community and student representatives if possible, to oversee the audit and to identify common issues emerging from different aspects of the process.

The audit process should begin with an examination of policies, programmes and practices currently in place, using the *National Safe Schools Framework* as a guide to good practice.

The key question is “*To what extent do our current policies, programmes and practices align with the National Safe Schools Framework?*”

The most compelling reason for reviewing existing programmes and practices before starting to collect new information is that often the real issues the school needs to focus on will be found in the **gaps** between what is being done and what might be done in the future.

The next step involves assessing whether current practices could be improved to provide an even safer and more supportive learning environment for all students. In reality, this is the commencement of an action planning/action research process.

Many schools will find it useful to start by examining existing evidence and sources of information about bullying, harassment, violence and child protection to establish some baseline data against which the impact of any new strategies can be measured.

A range of data sources will already exist within the school. These may include:

- ☒ Records of behaviour incidents. (Are patterns evident in terms of victims and perpetrators that might point to victimisation on the basis of gender, race, language differences, disability, sexuality, etc?)
- ☒ Attendance records. (Are there patterns of absenteeism that might point to the need to investigate issues impacting on certain students or groups of students?)
- ☒ Case management records.
- ☒ Teacher observations and notes.

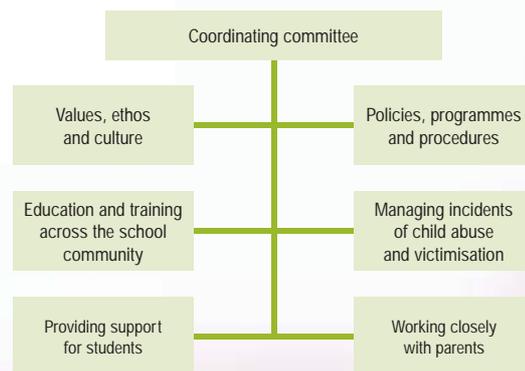
It is important to bear in mind of course that many incidents of bullying, harassment and violence, and child maltreatment will not have been reported.

Some schools may also find it beneficial to collect or update the data they have about the broader community as well as about events within the school itself. Useful data about, for example, the demographics of the local community, may be available from the local council as well from community groups and agencies.

The process of identifying and gathering existing data, conducting the audit and interpreting the information may be best managed in **teams**. This is not only because it reduces the workload on individuals, but also because working in teams builds commitment to the change process, and brings a range of points of view to bear on key issues.

Teams may include not only staff from the school, but also, where appropriate, parents/carers, other community members, and students. It would be invaluable, for example, to have representatives of the diverse language and cultural groups within the school community working on various aspects of the auditing process.

It is suggested that a useful way to **organise audit teams** may be **around the six key elements** of the *National Safe Schools Framework*:



Time is always an issue. While it is not advisable to allow the auditing/data collection phase to run indefinitely, neither should it be so rushed that it is cursory, misses important evidence, or places undue stress on team members, thus risking commitment to the longer process.

One way of approaching the audit, and linking it to ongoing monitoring of the changes the school might decide to make, is to see it as the initial phase of an **action research** process. Many schools are familiar with action research and will have used it as a tool for similar or other purposes in the past. One of the key advantages of using an action research model is its potential to involve a wide array of school community members as researchers, including students themselves.

HOW DO WE GATHER THE INFORMATION WE NEED?

There are many ways of gathering information. It is likely that a great deal of information already exists in the school community, is known and widely discussed and debated. One of the advantages of conducting an audit is that it creates an opportunity for all the relevant sources of information to be brought together and for all stakeholders to access it and discuss it together.

This section provides a number of exemplars of audit tools, and a number of statements that might be included in surveys and checklists, but **none of them are mandatory**.

They have been presented as exemplars and formats to give school communities the opportunity to tailor the tools to their own needs. This may mean adapting language so that it is appropriate for particular age groups, or modifying tools to meet the needs of particular communities.

Exemplars are provided for constructing:

1. Databases.
2. Checklists.
3. Surveys.
4. Focus group interviews.
5. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analyses.

The **database** is the first audit tool included and may be the first task undertaken. An example is given of a database designed to profile the local community.

Checklists might be used by an audit team at the beginning of the audit process. The

business of completing the checklist as a team may generate conversations between team members, and help identify the kinds of evidence that need to be collected. It is to be expected that a range of views might emerge among team members as the checklist is completed. This should be seen as a strength of the process rather than as a weakness, indicating the complexity of the issues under discussion and the need to test/verify opinion and observation with other sources of data.

Conducting **surveys** is a useful way of verifying ideas and understandings, as well as revealing differences of perceptions among groups. The use of anonymous surveying often allows people to talk about issues they otherwise would not.

An audit team might also decide to conduct one or more **focus groups** to explore critical issues in greater depth.

It is recommended that each team conduct a **SWOT analysis** once the audit is completed as a bridge between collecting and considering information and planning for future action.

B The more **diverse** the **range of data gathering tools** you use, the more likely you are to gather the kinds of **rich information** which will give you a broad and detailed picture of what is happening for different groups in the school community.

The issues you may want to focus on might well be indicated by the **differences between majority views, and those of more marginalised or smaller groups**.

A note of caution

The issues which will be the subject of data gathering are highly sensitive. When designing data gathering tools, the uppermost concern should be for the safety and well-being of the respondents. No-one should at any time be forced, coerced or persuaded to take part in any activity, whether it's completing a survey or contributing to a focus group discussion, if they feel uncomfortable about it.

THE KEY QUESTIONS

Key Element 1 – School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare

Outcome

School leadership is committed to a shared vision of a positive and inclusive school. Such commitment includes resourcing and endorsement of policies, programmes and procedures.

Key question 1.1

Is there evidence of commitment on the part of all members of the school community (parents, students, teachers and other members of the school community) to a positive and inclusive school environment demonstrated through:

- CE active, trusting relationships?
- CE shared awareness about the diverse needs and viewpoints of the school community?
- CE democratic decision making and leadership structures such as School Boards/Councils?

Key question 1.2

Are there pastoral care or student welfare systems/student support teams and systems in place that meet the needs of all students? Are there programmes and strategies in place that effectively empower all students to contribute to building and participating in a positive school culture, e.g. peer support systems?

Key question 1.3

Are there positive relationships established between the school, and community agencies and groups with related or complementary functions?

What conclusions can we draw from the data we've gathered? Is other data available in the school or in the community to help us draw a more detailed picture? What does the data reveal about what we are doing well and where we need to make changes?

Key Element 2 – Policies, programmes and procedures

Outcome

Policies, programmes and procedures are developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents, and include a statement of rights and responsibilities of members of the school community, including visitors. They are accessible by all members of the school community, and regularly reviewed, and address issues of risk minimisation.

Key question 2.1

Are there agreed definitions of bullying, harassment and violence or an agreed statement of expected and unacceptable behaviour in relation to bullying, harassment and violence, and a statement of consequences for unacceptable behaviour?

Is there a coordinated whole school plan outlining how child protection issues are to be addressed which:

- CE explicitly aims to eliminate the risk of child abuse by staff/ visitors?
- CE comprehensively screens applicants for employment, student teachers and volunteers before they become involved in school activities, bearing in mind that few child sex offenders have criminal records?
- CE establishes safe procedures for staff who work alone with students?
- CE establishes procedures for the reporting of abuse by staff?

Key question 2.2

Have policies, programmes and procedures been developed, disseminated and promoted across the whole school community in a way that is sensitive to parents, students and community members from diverse backgrounds?

Are they integrated with existing policies and procedures, for example, Behaviour Management, Sexual Harassment and Racial Harassment?

Are periodic evaluations of policies, programmes and procedures undertaken, including auditing the school's policies/strategies; reviewing bullying and safety issues through surveys of staff, students and parents; and analysing evaluation data to inform future planning needs and practice?

Key question 2.3

Are there adequate risk assessment and risk minimisation procedures in place inside and outside the school, such as risk minimisation through appropriate supervision, environmental design and targeted programmes for students at risk (e.g. pro-social skills development)?

Key Element 3 – Provision of education/ training

Outcome

Appropriate education and training is available for all members of the school community to empower students, increase safety and enhance relationship and citizenship skills.

Key question 3.1 - staff

Is adequate training available for all staff in relation to bullying, harassment and violence to develop:

- CE understanding of what is happening in the school, and appropriate information gathering methods?
- CE positive student management?
- CE knowledge and skills relating to addressing bullying and harassment, and identifying and dealing with prejudice and discrimination as related to gender, race, sexuality, disability and other factors?
- CE understanding the effects of bullying and harassment on children and young people?

Is adequate training available for all staff in relation to child protection:

- CE recognising and responding to indicators of child abuse and neglect?
- CE understanding the effects of abuse and

neglect on the development of children and young people?

- CE complying with agreed policies and procedures related to child protection?
- CE keeping themselves safe?
- CE personal safety/child protection curricula?

Is relevant additional training conducted for staff with specific roles in child protection to:

- CE provide support to students who are the subject of concerns about abuse or neglect?
- CE fulfil agreed responsibilities?

Is residential care training (e.g. *Duty of Care: A certificate course in residential care* developed by Dr Tim Hawkes, available at www.tarsa.edu.au/duty_of_care.pdf) conducted for all boarding school staff?

Key question 3.2 – students

Is there a comprehensive, realistic, developmentally appropriate personal safety component within the curriculum that enables students to:

- CE recognise and report abuse?
- CE understand power in relationships and create positive, healthy sexual and social relationships?
- CE develop protective strategies, including help-seeking behaviours?

Is there age-appropriate curriculum content and pedagogy relating to bullying, harassment and violence, that enables students to learn:

- CE skills for forming and maintaining positive, non-coercive relationships including differentiating between assertiveness and aggression?
- CE methods of conflict resolution?
- CE how bystanders can discourage bullying and harassment?
- CE the development of cooperativeness, empathy and respect?
- CE how to identify and address prejudice and discrimination, for example, as they relate to gender, race, sexuality, disability and other factors?

Key question 3.3 – parents and carers

Have parents been able to develop an increased knowledge of strategies, options and ideas through:

- CE engagement in whole school planning processes?
- CE parent information sessions (e.g., on bullying, child protection, supporting children)?
- CE access to community based resources and information on developing effective relationships and behaviour in children?

Key Element 4 – Managing incidents of abuse/victimisation

Outcome

Cases of abuse/victimisation are identified and reported.

Key question 4.1

In relation to bullying, harassment and violence, does the school:

- CE explicitly encourage all members of the school community to take a proactive stand against bullying, harassment and violence?
- CE involve students and staff in identifying where bullying, harassment and violence occurs?
- CE have in place procedures to encourage early identification of incidents?
- CE work proactively against bullying, harassment and violence?
- CE create opportunities for students to share concerns?
- CE encourage students to seek immediate help when bullying, harassment or violence is witnessed or experienced?
- CE encourage parents to identify and report bullying, harassment and violence issues that have been observed or discussed by students to staff?

Key question 4.2

In relation to child protection, is the school actively implementing the requirements of child abuse reporting legislation, as appropriate; identifying the indicators of all forms of child abuse and neglect; developing teachers' empathic listening skills; and implementing support and monitoring strategies, both immediate and long-term?

Key question 4.3

Are steps and outcomes for managing incidents clearly documented in order to facilitate evaluation and justify possible modification in approaches?

In responding to individual cases of bullying, harassment, violence or abuse:

- CE are strategies effectively matched to the incident?
- CE do strategies include parental education and involvement in their planning and implementation?
- CE do strategies involve other agencies/ services as appropriate (e.g. police) in the implementation of individual case management systems through collaborative planning?

Is the support of relevant specialists enlisted, including support for staff dealing with child abuse cases?

Key Element 5 – Providing support for students

Outcome

Effective support is provided to victims of bullying, harassment, violence and child maltreatment.

Key question 5

Is support provided for students involved in bullying, harassment and violence and who have experienced abuse or neglect that:

- CE focuses on restoring the wellbeing of students who have been affected by abuse or victimisation, through the provision of adequate social support and counselling?

- CE maintains their connectedness to schooling, including facilitating reintegration into the school of those involved in harmful behaviour (e.g. through restorative justice practices)?
- CE provides opportunities for individual students to develop more socially appropriate behaviour and coping skills, as relevant?

Key Element 6 – Working closely with parents

Outcome

Parents participate in key aspects of the school's programme to provide a safe and supportive learning environment in ways which enable them to reinforce safety concepts and strategies at home.

Key question 6

Does the school work closely with parents to prevent bullying, harassment and violence by:

- CE informing and consulting with them on relevant issues, especially when their children become involved in incidents, either as perpetrators, victims or both?
- CE providing parent information sessions, workshops and joint child-parent homework – enabling parents to reinforce safety concepts and strategies at home?
- CE emphasising increasing students' confidence and more open child-parent relationships?

The audit tools

The audit tools provided here are **exemplars only**. It is intended that all schools would develop tools which are highly specific to their local circumstances.

There may be items included in some of the examples which would not be acceptable to some Independent schools, or which would be inconsistent with their religious or cultural ethos. The right of Independent schools to operate in ways consistent with their belief systems is acknowledged in legislation.

Schools are not required to address all of the sample statements in the exemplars.

DATABASE

A database is simply any organised collection of information. Information may be organised:

- ☒ in a table of contents.
- ☒ in alphabetical order.
- ☒ in numerical order.
- ☒ using an index.
- ☒ around subject categories.

It may be useful in relation to the *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF) to develop a database to:

- ☒ identify the kinds of curricula and extra-curricula programmes in the school that address bullying, harassment, violence and child protection.
- ☒ record the support agencies and programmes available to assist the school to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment, violence and child maltreatment.
- ☒ profile the local community and to map community resources. An example of such a database is provided opposite.

Example: Who is our community?

This tool is to be used to help identify the community context of the individual school by mapping the cultural and community assets that exist in the school and community. It asks for contact details of people within a range of community and government-based organisations and services, as well as individuals. It is essential to establish contact and communication and/or to strengthen existing lines of communication with these groups, in order to work in a holistic way to address bullying, harassment, violence and child maltreatment.

The database can be completed by all the staff in small groups or the core group, and will provide the background information that is needed to proceed.

'In school' community

- 1 Who on the school staff (teachers and support staff) are interested in and committed to addressing issues of bullying, harassment, violence and child protection?
 - 2 Who on the school staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?
 - 3 Who on the school staff identify as coming from a non-English-speaking background?
 - 4 How many students are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander? (include numbers and percentages)
 - 5 What diverse cultural, religious and linguistic groups do our students belong to? (include numbers and percentages)
 - 6 What cultural and/or religious groups within our community contribute to our school's teaching and learning, and how do they do this?
 - 7 What cultures/religions contribute to our school's ethos and environment and how do they do this?
 - 8 What cultures are involved in our school's partnerships and services, and in what way?
 - 9 What local community groups do school staff belong to?
 - 10 What local community groups do our students belong to?
-

'Out of school' community

- 11 Are there any other cultures, apart from those above, that contribute to our school's teaching and learning (and how)?
 - 12 What local, state and/or federal government services are available that actively promote social and emotional wellbeing? (include contact details)
 - 13 What other services are available that actively promote social and emotional wellbeing? (include contact details)
 - 14 What organisations specifically deal with the concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and what programmes do they offer? (include contact details)
 - 15 Who do these contacts identify as being important individuals within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (eg Elders)?
 - 16 What organisations specifically deal with issues of diverse gender people and what programmes do they offer? (include contact details)
 - 17 What organisations specifically deal with people with disabilities and what programmes do they offer? (include contact details)
 - 18 What organisations deal with people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and what programmes do they offer? (include contact details)
 - 19 Who do these contacts identify as being important individuals within their communities?
 - 20 Who are ex-students who may have something to contribute? (include contact details)
 - 21 Who are other key people or groups in the community who would contribute to promoting student wellbeing? (include contact details)
-

Adapted from CommunityMatters: Working with Diversity for Wellbeing, © Commonwealth of Australia 2001

CHECKLIST

The aim of a checklist is to draw attention to issues which the audit team considers central to promoting good practice in critical areas. No checklist can be exhaustive, but the very process of constructing a checklist prompts debate, discussion and reflection on the key elements of the issue at hand.

A checklist provides a series of statements which describe what are believed to be the broad parameters of the issue. Often it is the process of constructing the checklist as a team

that is the most creative and useful aspect of the process, allowing the perspectives and knowledge of various team members to be brought into play.

Once the checklist has been compiled, it may be completed by any number of respondents. An audit team may use a checklist as an internal device to indicate other kinds of data which need to be gathered. It may be used to gather the views of a broader range of stakeholders to identify areas where there is convergence and/or divergence of opinion.

Example: Policies, programmes and procedures checklist

Statement	Yes	No	Needs review
Are there agreed definitions of bullying, harassment and violence in the school, or an agreed statement of expected and unacceptable behaviour in relation to bullying, harassment and violence?			
Is there an agreed procedure for dealing with instances of bullying, harassment and violence, and a clear statement of consequences for unacceptable behaviour?			
Are the definitions, procedures and consequences widely understood and supported by teachers, students and parents?			
Are the procedures and consequences applied fairly and consistently?			
In dealing with instances of violence, is care taken to ensure that the trigger for the violence is identified (e.g. possible harassment on a variety of grounds) and that all parties are treated fairly?			
Is there a coordinated whole school plan outlining how child protection issues are to be addressed?			
Is the plan widely understood and supported by staff, parents, and key community stakeholders?			
Are there procedures in place which explicitly aim to eliminate the risk of child abuse by staff/ visitors?			
Are all applicants for employment, student teachers and volunteers comprehensively screened before they become involved in school activities (remembering that few child sex offenders have criminal records)?			
Have safe procedures been set up for staff who work alone with students?			
Are there clear and well understood procedures for the reporting of abuse by staff?			

Policies, programmes and procedures

Reflecting on your responses to the statements above, priorities for action could include:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Sample statements for use in checklists

School ethos and culture checklist

- CE There is a broad support for and celebration of language, racial, religious and cultural diversity among school staff.
- CE There is a broad support for and celebration of language, racial, religious and cultural diversity among parents and other community members.
- CE There is a broad support for and celebration of language, racial, religious and cultural diversity among students.
- CE The school community actively promotes the benefits of religious and cultural diversity, and observes or celebrates events and occasions of significance to the diverse religious and cultural groups within the school community.
- CE There is a broad support for diverse gender identities among school staff.
- CE There is a broad support for diverse gender identities among parents and other community members.
- CE There is a broad support for diverse gender identities among students.
- CE There are opportunities within the life of the school for the achievements and interests of students with diverse gender identities to be acknowledged and celebrated.
- CE There is a broad support for and understanding of diverse sexualities among school staff.
- CE There is a broad support for and understanding of diverse sexualities among parents and other community members.
- CE There is a broad support for and understanding of diverse sexualities among students.
- CE The school community actively promotes acceptance of diverse sexualities, and observes or celebrates significant events and occasions.
- CE There is a broad support for and understanding of people with disabilities and illnesses, including mental illnesses, among school staff.
- CE There is a broad support for and understanding of people with disabilities and illnesses, including mental illnesses, among parents and other community members.
- CE There is a broad support for and understanding of people with disabilities and illnesses, including mental illnesses, among students.
- CE The capacities, talents and skills of people with disabilities and illnesses, including mental illnesses, are celebrated by the school community.
- CE There is no evidence of individuals or groups within the school being excluded on the basis of race, culture, gender identity, sexuality, ability, disability or illness, including mental illness.
- CE A respect for and celebration of diversity is evident in the physical appearance of the school and in its daily operations (in, for example, visual representations of diversity around the school, the inclusiveness of school uniforms or dress standards, the variety of foods available in the school canteen, equal opportunity to observe diverse cultural and religious practices, the variety of extra-curricula options available, etc.).
- CE Opportunities are created and used to build understanding, respect and relationships of trust between diverse groups within the school community.
- CE There is evidence that diverse groups within the school community are fairly represented on decision making and leadership structures such as School Boards/Councils.
- CE There is evidence that diverse groups within the school community are fairly represented on decision making and leadership structures such as Student Councils and other student bodies.

Managing incidents of abuse/ victimisation checklist

- CE The school works proactively against bullying, harassment and violence and explicitly encourages all members of the school community to take a proactive stand against violence.
- CE The school involves students and staff in identifying where and on what basis bullying, harassment or violence occurs.
- CE The school has procedures in place to encourage early identification of incidents.
- CE The school creates opportunities for students to share their concerns in safe ways.
- CE The school encourages students to seek immediate help when bullying, harassment or violence is witnessed or experienced.
- CE The school encourages parents to identify and report bullying, harassment or violence issues that have been observed or discussed by students.
- CE The school is actively implementing the requirements of child abuse reporting legislation.
- CE The school is ensuring that all members of staff are able to identify the indicators of all forms of child abuse and neglect.
- CE The school is ensuring that all teachers are developing the empathetic listening skills necessary to work with students who have been abused or neglected.
- CE The school is implementing support and monitoring strategies for students who have been abused or neglected, both immediate and long-term.
- CE Steps for managing incidents are clearly documented in order to facilitate evaluation and justify possible modification in approaches.
- CE Community agencies and services are involved in the management of individual cases.

- CE The support of relevant specialists is enlisted, including support for staff dealing with child abuse cases.

SURVEY

Surveys can be effective ways to gather information quickly and efficiently, if they are well constructed.

You'll need to make key decisions about:

- CE goals and objectives;
- CE constructing the survey instrument; and
- CE survey logistics.

Establishing goals and objectives

- CE The most important part of survey design is clarifying survey intent and scope. This is where your knowledge is essential. Surveys are decision-making tools. They have little value if you are not clear on the decisions your survey will support. Complete the following statements:
 - CE We want to do a survey because...
 - CE We intend to use the information by...
 - CE The information gathered will enable us to decide...
- CE Surveys are communication tools. It is important to understand who will use the survey results and how. Complete the following statements:
 - CE The users of survey results include ...
 - CE The group(s) I will provide with information include ...
 - CE They want the information in order to ...
- CE Identify the specific information that is needed – i.e. double-check – develop specific questions that need to be answered. Complete the following statements:
 - CE The information we **really** need is ...
 - CE We need this information because ...
 - CE Our **top-priority** information needs are ...

Constructing the survey instrument

- CE Who has the information you need? It is important to understand who your sample represents in order to draw appropriate conclusions from the data.
- CE Is our school community made up of many groups, or are all members of our community fairly similar?
- CE Who decides whether or not to use our school?
- CE Select an appropriate survey type.

Written surveys are the most commonly used survey type. A written survey allows people more time to respond, but there is no opportunity to clarify answers. It is therefore very important for questions to be ordered properly and for clear directions to be given. Other types are mail and telephone surveys, and one-on-one and focus group interviews.

- CE What format will get the information we need at the lowest cost and effort, and within the time frame we need?
- CE Design the survey questions.
Survey results will be meaningless unless you ask the right questions.
- CE How is this question relevant to the purpose of the survey?
- CE Is the question clearly worded?
- CE Will the question be easily understood?

Survey Logistics

- CE Determine sample size and selection.
- CE How many completed surveys do we need?
- CE How many people must be contacted in order to get the required number of completed surveys?
- CE How will we reach them?
Large samples are not necessary for many surveys. A sample of 40 to 50 respondents is often quite adequate.

Pre-testing the survey

Before distributing a survey, it's a good idea to pretest the survey. It will help you:

- CE Determine whether your instructions are understood.
- CE Identify questions that may be misunderstood or that are poorly worded.
- CE Determine whether rating scales are understood.
- CE Determine how long it takes to complete the survey.
- CE Determine how interested people are in completing the survey.

Adapted from: *Designing Customer Surveys That Work*

www.qualitydigest.com/oct96/surveys.html

Example: Life at School / Student Survey

This survey asks you to think about a number of statements dealing with the kinds of supports the school provides for students.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS SHEET but please:

1. complete the details about yourself below (“About me”); and
2. tick the box next to the statement that you think is closest to what you believe.

About me

I am a (girl/boy)

I am aged

I am in Year

I am an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (yes/no)

The language we usually speak at home is

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There is an adult at school that I can talk to about any concerns at all.				
If I need help, there are friends or other students I can talk to at school.				
If I need help, there are teachers or other adults I can talk to at school.				
If I had a serious problem, I know a teacher I like and trust who would listen to me.				
I would go to see the Guidance Officer or Welfare Teacher if I had a serious problem.				
I have learned things at school that help me feel more confident about standing up for myself and others.				
I am encouraged at school to understand and treat all people fairly.				
There are programmes at school to help us feel safer.				
There are programmes at school to help make the school a friendlier and happier place.				
There are some places at school where I don't feel safe or comfortable.				
I have been bullied by other students at this school.				
Some students at this school are physically violent to me or to other students.				
Some students at this school make racist remarks about others.				
Some students at this school harass other students because of the way they look or act.				
I have bullied or harassed other students at school.				
I feel I am always treated with respect and understanding by teachers at this school.				
I am concerned that some students I know at this school are not treated well at home.				
There are teachers or other adults at school that I would talk to if I was worried that someone was not being treated well at home.				

Student welfare and support is an important issue. Is there anything you'd like to add to your answers?

Sample statements for use in surveys

Parent/Carer Survey – School ethos and culture

- CE My children enjoy school and have good relationships with teachers and other adults at school.
- CE My children have friends at school and get on well with other students.
- CE If my children are bullied or harassed at school, there are teachers or other adults to support them.
- CE My children would be happy to see the Guidance Officer or Welfare Teacher if they had a serious problem.
- CE My children have learned things at school that help them feel more confident about standing up for themselves and others.
- CE The school encourages all students to understand and respect all people and treat them fairly.
- CE There are effective and appropriate programmes at school to help students understand child abuse issues and the rights of all children to safety and care.
- CE There are effective and appropriate programmes at school for students to resolve conflicts without violence.
- CE There are some places at school where my children don't feel safe or comfortable.
- CE My children have been bullied or harassed by other students at this school.
- CE Some students at this school are physically violent to my children or to others.
- CE Some students at this school make racist remarks about others.
- CE Some students at this school harass other students because of the way they look or act.
- CE I feel I am always treated with respect and understanding by teachers at this school.

- CE I believe that teachers at this school have a strong concern for the welfare and well-being of all students.
- CE I feel comfortable talking to the Principal or other members of staff about any concerns for students' safety and wellbeing.

Community relationships survey

- CE The school is aware of the full range of agencies and support groups in the local area and what they have to offer in working around issues of harassment, bullying, violence and child protection.
- CE The school has a strong collaborative relationship with a wide range of appropriate agencies.
- CE The school welcomes the ideas and advice provided by agencies and attempts to put suggestions into practice.
- CE The school has built strong relationships with agencies and groups which represent the diversity of students (i.e. groups working around issues of poverty, gender, sexuality, culture, disability, etc.).
- CE The school seeks the assistance of appropriate agencies and groups to support students promptly.
- CE The school consults appropriate agencies and groups in developing policy, programmes and procedures in the areas of bullying, harassment, violence and child protection.

SWOT ANALYSIS – STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS

What conclusions can we draw from the data we've gathered? What does the data reveal about what we are doing well and where we need to make changes? Is other data available in the school or in the community to help us draw a more detailed picture? A SWOT analysis helps to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in your current operations and allows us to develop

an overview of the major trend emerging from the data we have gathered.

A SWOT should be self-critical, and as realistic as possible. Several brainstorming sessions are helpful in thinking of good and bad characteristics of your organisation. Get as much input as possible from as diverse a range of stakeholders as you can.

You might ask the following questions.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ What does our school do well (use not only your own observations, but also those of others who have relationships with the school)? ☒ How can we maintain or extend those aspects of what we do? 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ What needs to be improved? ☒ Are some of our policies and practices in contradiction with each other? ☒ What is done poorly or inconsistently? ☒ Are there some things we should stop doing?
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Where are the opportunities to make changes? ☒ Changes in policy that require a response? ☒ Changes in our community – social trends, population shifts, demographics? ☒ What are the resources in our school community we could make use of? ☒ People? ☒ Programmes? ☒ Agencies and services? 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ What are the most significant obstacles that we are confronting? ☒ What are the risks if we don't make changes? ☒ Are there competing demands on our time and resources?

SWOT analysis sheet

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Why conduct focus groups?

Schools may conduct a number of surveys which ask groups of stakeholders to self-assess aspects of their knowledge and skills in relation to bullying, harassment, violence and child protection.

By conducting focus groups with stakeholders, it may be possible to test the degree to which such assessments are accurate. Focus group interviews may also provide additional information about issues related to bullying, harassment, violence and child protection that have not been elicited by surveys.

What is a focus group?

It is a special type of group interview which aims to collect information and a range of views through group discussion of an issue. The essential feature of a focus group interview is that group members are encouraged to interact with each other, with the researcher acting as a moderator.

Key characteristics of focus group interviews

1. A group of people with a stake in the issue being investigated discusses an aspect of that issue.
2. Members of the group listen to each other's point of view, which helps people to reflect, develop new insights and share ideas.
3. Information that may not emerge in individual interviews may emerge in focus groups.
4. Focus groups can help identify other important questions, or aspects of the issue being investigated.
5. The size of the group is important. It needs to be small enough for everyone to have a say, but large enough to provide a variety of viewpoints.

6. Trust must be established between all participants in the process at the beginning of the interview. Participants need time to get to know the researcher and each other before the interview commences.

While it is important that a range of views are expressed in focus groups, it is also critical that the composition of the group does not undermine trust. It may well be advisable to consider using single sex groups in some instances. In other circumstances, people may feel more comfortable talking in particular kinds of groups – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups or other cultural or language groups.

Conducting a focus group

It's important that everyone in the group become involved in the discussion as soon as possible, so that the ice is broken and everyone participates and contributes their ideas.

The researcher facilitates and moderates the group, rather than conducting direct interviews. The researcher should use appropriate verbal and non-verbal signals to ensure that everyone makes a contribution; the researcher should probe for clarification, detail or further information, but should not make judgements on what is being said.

Make sure enough time is available. People don't need to keep talking until they reach agreement about an issue, but leave enough time for depth to emerge in information and ideas. Don't try to structure the interview too much – questions should be broad and open-ended, aimed at stimulating and focusing discussion. The researcher should be an active listener, asking further questions as the discussion unfolds to elicit further information and ideas.

Useful questions

- CE Opening question – make it a question everyone can answer, requiring a factual rather than an 'opinion' response.

- CE Introductory question – this question introduces the topic for discussion and fosters conversation and interaction.
- CE Transition question – this should help the participants see the broader scope of the issue.
- CE Key questions – evaluative questions about the key focus areas of the discussion.
- CE Closing questions – encourage the participants to state their final position on issues e.g. “Is this an adequate summary?” “Have we missed anything?”

Other hints

- CE Use the opening and introductory questions to allow everyone to put on record an initial position on the issue.
- CE In your introductory question, ask participants to take a few minutes to reflect on the issue and to jot down a few ideas to share with the group.
- CE Gently discourage ‘group thinking’.

Analysing the information

Pay attention to the following factors when analysing the information from focus group interviews:

- CE The words used.
- CE Tone of voice.
- CE The context of the statement.
- CE Non-verbals.
- CE The intensity of the statement.
- CE How frequently the view/idea is expressed.
- CE Internal consistency.
- CE The specificity of responses.
- CE Big ideas.

With whom should we conduct focus groups?

It’s possible to conduct effective focus group interviews even with quite young students as well as with a range of adults. Focus groups are a useful tool with a range of stakeholders, especially to test the deeper issues underlying information provided in surveys or checklists.

Information from focus groups needs to be checked against other sources of information and evidence.

Adapted from “Conducting Focus Groups”,
University of Technology, Sydney

www.pru.uts.edu.au/pdfs/fgroups.pdf

INTERPRETING THE DATA

Caution always needs to be exercised in interpreting data. This is another reason for considering the makeup of the audit teams, and the value of bringing a range of points of view to bear on data.

This is especially so in light of Lipman’s research (*Race, Class, and Power in School Restructuring*, 1998) which suggests that some of the ‘taken for granted assumptions about school-based reform’, in terms of its impact on existing dimensions of inequality, should be challenged. Two of the issues Lipman identifies have important implications for the audit and data interpretation processes.

First, in response to the claim that decentralisation brings more participation and local innovation, Lipman notes the potential for teachers to uncritically reproduce existing inequalities, particularly in some local social and political contexts. Second, Lipman questions the claim that collaboration will necessarily promote critical enquiry and dialogue, arguing that it can simply entrench differences and negative understandings like deficit models.

Lipman argues that there is therefore a need to:

- CE challenge the hierarchy of knowledge in schools, and social relationships in society generally;
- CE confront the taken for granted assumptions inherent in school culture, and broader social and political culture; and
- CE change existing power relations to consciously include traditionally marginalised groups in any reform process (Lipman, 1998).

Where to from here?

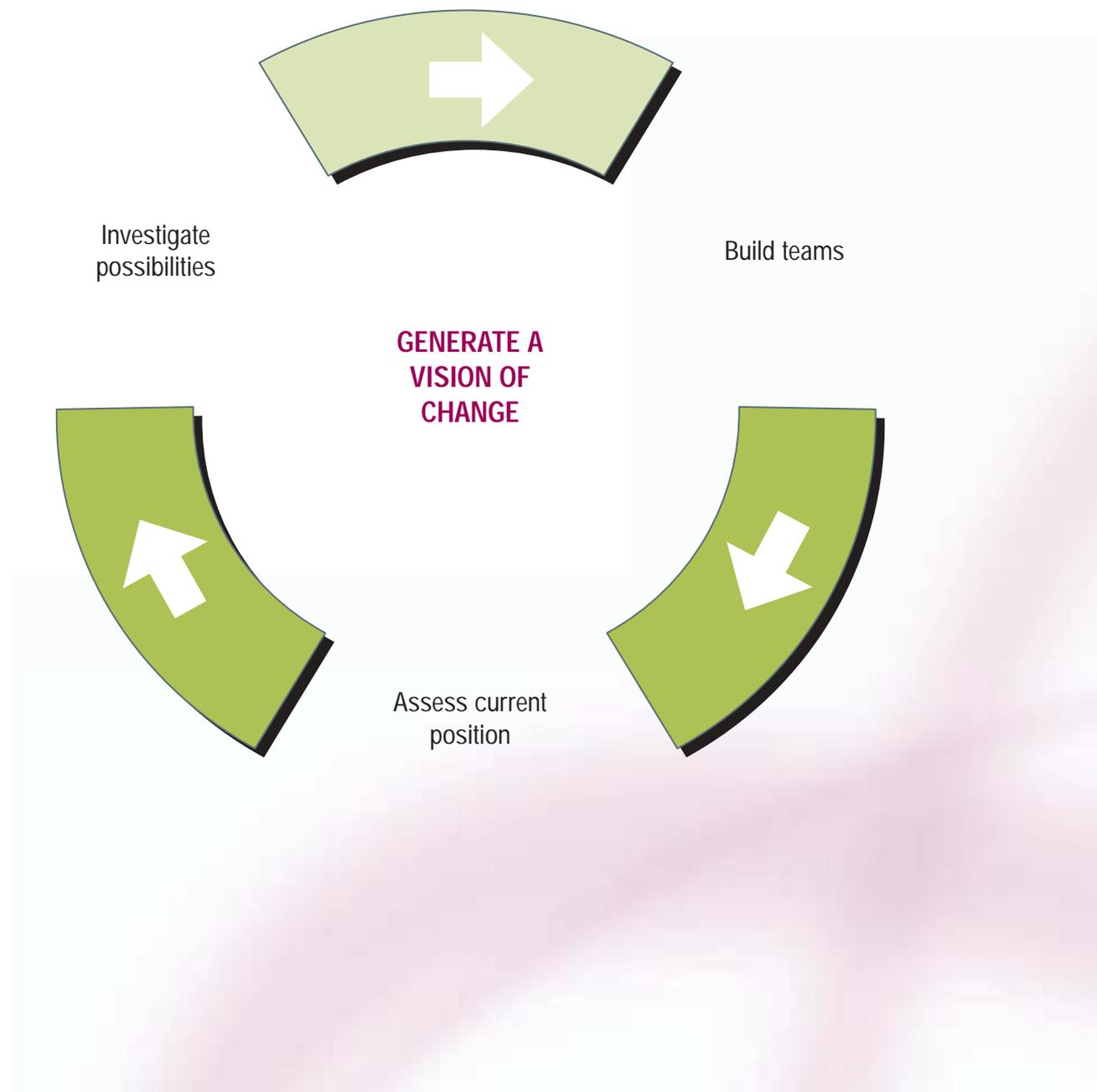
PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING

The audit process may well show that the programmes your school community has in place are working well. If so, there is no need to reinvent the wheel! However, if your school community needs to do some planning for change, the following ideas may be useful. The process outlined is a generic one, and can be adapted to suit local circumstances.

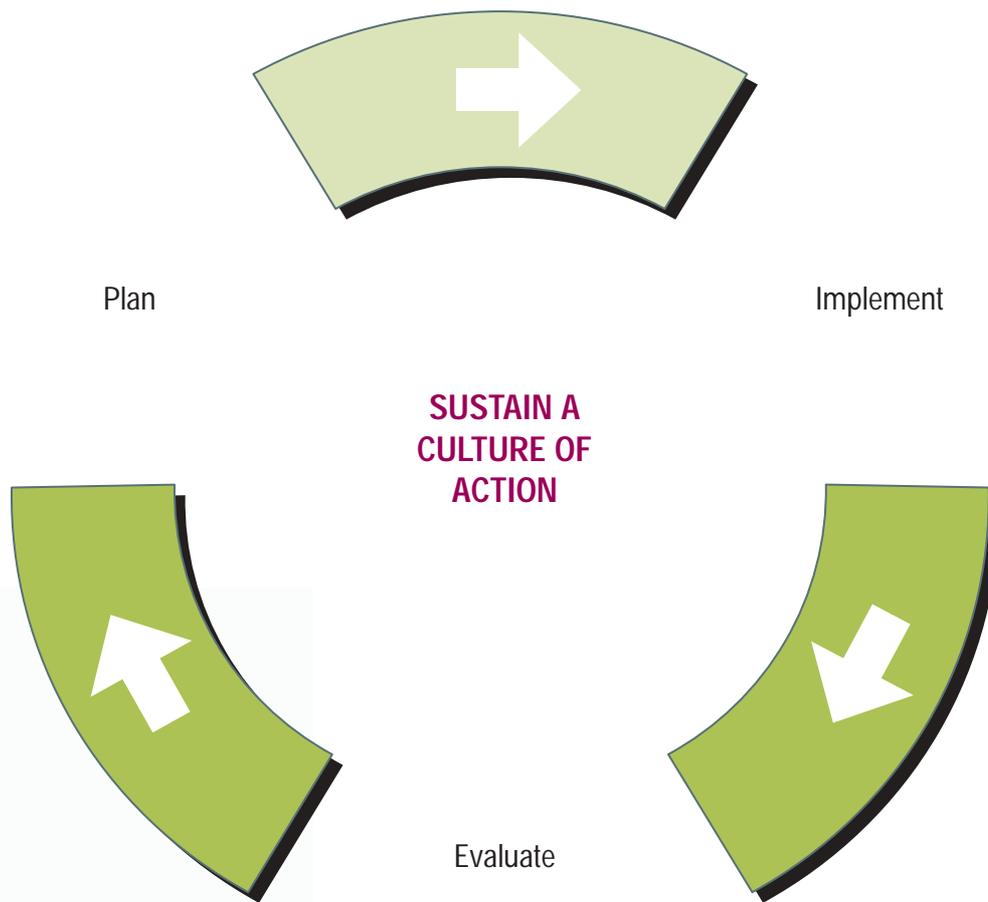
You may also find it useful for other change management processes in the school.

The purpose of the data gathering and auditing processes is to provide a strong basis for planning, implementing and evaluating the prevention, intervention and response strategies the school community deems appropriate. It was suggested earlier that schools engage in this process through an ongoing cycle of assessment, action and reflection.

Initiating phase



Implementation cycle



ACTION PLANNING

What is an Action Plan?

An action plan describes how a strategic direction (such as the *National Safe Schools Framework*) is put into practice at the local level.

The development of action plans is an important part of any goal setting or problem solving. They are the means by which the future is planned, and thereby controlled and changed. Action planning converts a goal or a solution into a step by step statement of who is to do what by when.

The strategic direction is usually framed in terms of broad **goals**. The National Safe Schools Framework's key goal is captured in the vision statement:

All Australian schools are safe and supportive environments.

The function of the action plan is to identify the **objectives** that need to be achieved at the local level to realise the overall goals of the strategy. Objectives should be specific to the local environment, and constructed in such a way that progress towards achieving them can be measured.

An Action Plan allows those involved to keep track of progress towards meeting those objectives, and enables monitoring and review to be built into the process.

An Action Plan should detail:

- ☒ Specific objectives derived from an understanding of the local context.
- ☒ Action to be taken.
- ☒ Resources (physical and financial resources, and people).
- ☒ Time-lines for action.
- ☒ Monitoring our progress (performance indicators).
- ☒ Evaluation processes.

Further information on action planning and an action planning matrix can be found in Appendix 14.

Action Planning

Deepening knowledge about the issues

A list of **useful websites** related to a range of issues with which the *National Safe Schools Framework* is concerned has been provided in **Appendix 15**, available at www.dest.gov.au/schools/Publications/2004/NSSF/Appendices-combined-original.pdf.

Reference

Lipman, Pauline (1998), 'Conclusion: Restructuring in social context' in Pauline Lipman (ed), *Race, Class, and Power in School Restructuring*, New York, State University of New York Press

