# Safety at Work for School Staff

Communications Toolkit

2021/2022



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# Introduction

Everyone in the school community has a right to a safe and healthy learning environment and workplace.

As schools adjust to learning onsite, with health and safety measures that prevent the spread of COVID-19, it’s important that adults in school communities continue to treat each other with respect and kindness.

Instances of violence and aggression towards school staff from parents, carers or other adult members of the school community can have a significant impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the person who experiences this, as well as those around them. The impact can also be felt by the wider school community.

The Minister for Education has released a new [Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/Respectful-Behaviours-within-the-School-Community-Policy.aspx) and [resources](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/Respectful-behaviours-in-schools.aspx) aimed at ensuring respectful and collaborative relationships between parents and carers and school staff.

It sets out clear guidelines on the expected standards of behaviour for parents, carers and other adults who interact with the school community to reduce the risk and incidence of work-related violence towards school staff.

We encourage you to use these communications materials to raise awareness about the new policy and to promote positive, respectful relationships between adults in our school communities.

# Suggested email to parents

Please consider using the content below to communicate the policy and new parent webpage to the school community. You can customise the content as required for your style and audiences.

Dear [Audience]

As we adjust to onsite learning with extra health and safety measures, everyone in the school community has a right to a safe and healthy learning environment and workplace.

It is important to the school leadership team that our school community is a safe and positive place where children can learn and thrive. Everyone has a part to play in creating a safe and respectful environment. We need your support to make sure our school continues to be somewhere everyone feels safe and heard.

The Department of Education and Training has released a [new policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/Respectful-Behaviours-within-the-School-Community-Policy.aspx) that describes the positive behaviour expected from parents, carers and other adults in Victorian school communities. The policy sets clear standards of behaviour to create a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment for students, staff and adults.

There are also other resources to support safe and respectful relationships in our school community, including information about getting involved with the school, advice on how to raise a concern or complaint, and parenting support resources. You can find the new policy and these other resources [here](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/Respectful-behaviours-in-schools.aspx).

You may also see a [new poster](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/Parentposter-SafetyatWork.pdf) up around our school, promoting positive behaviour.

For more information on how to engage positively with our school, please contact *[insert Principal’s name and contact details]*.

[Principal signature]

# Suggested email to school staff

Please consider using the content below in an email to staff, or as speaking notes for a staff meeting. You can customise the content as required for your style and audiences.

Dear Colleagues

Recently, the Minister for Education launched a new policy and resources aimed at ensuring all schools are safe and positive places to work and learn.

Our school communities have demonstrated incredible adaptivity and resilience throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The return to our classrooms is another big transition, but it’s the very best one for our children's education. As we navigate changes to onsite learning, including required mask wearing for some students, it’s more important than ever that adults in our school community treat each other with respect and kindness.

Whilst most Victorian schools have positive and constructive relationships with parents or carers, when parents or carers are violent or aggressive towards school staff, everyone suffers.

I am seeking your support in encouraging school staff to access the new resources and information as part of the Safety at Work for School Staff Initiative, which supports schools to create and maintain safe and respectful school environments.

You are encouraged to provide the below materials directly to your schools or re-purpose these for your own school if you find them useful.

**Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy**

The new [Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/Respectful-Behaviours-within-the-School-Community-Policy.aspx)available on the Department of Education and Training’s website, promotes the importance of respectful and collaborative relationships between parents and carers and school staff. It sets out clear guidelines on the expected standards of behaviour for parents, carers and other adults who interact with the school community to reduce the risk and incidence of work-related violence towards school staff.

Posters for [school staff](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/Staffposter-SafetyatWork.pdf)and for [parents/carers](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/Parentposter-SafetyatWork.pdf)have also been developed for display in schools. Resources in multiple languages have been provided to help schools communicate the new policy with their school community.

**New advice page on managing challenging parent/carer behaviour**

The release of the new policy is aligned with a new chapter titled [‘Parent/carer Behaviours’](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/work-related-violence-schools/procedure/risk-controls-parent-carer-behaviour) that has been added to the [Work-Related Violence in Schools Policy and Procedure](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-violence-and-aggression-schools/policy) (previously named Occupational Violence and Aggression in Schools Policy and Procedure).

This [chapter](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/work-related-violence-schools/procedure/risk-controls-parent-carer-behaviour) outlines strategies and resources to help schools prevent and manage unacceptable behaviours from parents, carers, and other adult members of the school community. This includes guidance to help establish and promote respectful and safe parent and carer behaviour, prevent, and de-escalate unacceptable behaviours and access support and services to restore wellbeing after an incident.

**New Respectful Behaviours in Schools webpage for parents**

A [new web page](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/Respectful-behaviours-in-schools.aspx) has also been created for parents, linking to the new Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy and with additional information and resources to support parents to engage positively with school staff, including the appropriate pathways for raising concerns or complaints with schools and other useful resources for parents.

This work is linked to the new laws introduced by the Andrews Government, which strengthens protections for school staff against parent and career aggression by empowering authorised persons, such as principals, to issue School Community Safety Orders in response to harmful, threatening, abusive or disruptive behaviour at work. The [new School Community Safety Order scheme](https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/new-laws-make-schools-safer-everyone)will be introduced to all schools in mid-2022.

Violent and aggressive behaviour has no place in Victorian school communities. Staff should not feel that being subjected to violence and aggression is part of the job and are encouraged to report any risks or incidents of violence and aggression to their school leader and through their reporting mechanisms.

We are pleased that the Department is taking a strong stance to communicate to the school community the behaviours which are unacceptable.

# Suggested social media content

Here are some sample social media posts that can be used across your own social channels to help encourage awareness of the new policy and respectful behaviours in the community.

Please tag the Department of Education and Training so we can like and share your posts.

[DET LinkedIn](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjpxeDyhrfyAhVl7XMBHclNC5wQFnoECAIQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fau.linkedin.com%2Fcompany%2Fdetvic&usg=AOvVaw0qejYAUPoD9mY9R-31lYgm)

[DET Twitter](https://twitter.com/DETVic)

**Post 1**

School communities have demonstrated incredible resilience over the COVID-19 pandemic. As we return to onsite learning, it's important for everyone to be respectful and kind to each other. Learn more about the new Department of Education and Training policy - Respectful Behaviours within the School Community. [Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy (education.vic.gov.au)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/Respectful-Behaviours-within-the-School-Community-Policy.aspx)

**Post 2**

Safe and respectful school communities create a better environment for children to thrive. Learn more about the expectations of behaviour in Victorian school communities.  [Respectful behaviours in schools (education.vic.gov.au)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/Respectful-behaviours-in-schools.aspx)

**Right click and save an image to use in your posts**

A group of people sitting in chairs

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceA picture containing outdoor, person, ground, sport

Description automatically generated

# Suggested newsletter content to members

**Setting expectations of behaviour in the school community**

**New policy and guidance for schools to help create safe and respectful school communities.**

As we adjust to onsite learning with additional health and safety measures, everyone in the school community has a right to a safe and healthy learning environment and workplace.

The Department of Education and Training has developed a new [Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/Respectful-Behaviours-within-the-School-Community-Policy.aspx), which promotes the importance of respectful and collaborative relationships between parents and carers and school staff.

It sets out clear guidelines on the expected standards of behaviour for parents, carers and other adults who interact with the school community to reduce the risk and incidence of work-related violence towards school staff.

A [new web page](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/Respectful-behaviours-in-schools.aspx) for parents and carers provides additional information about the new policy, with resources to help them engage positively with school staff and tips for raising concerns or complaints.

Victorian schools are overwhelmingly positive and safe places for teaching and learning, with everyone in the school community playing a role in helping students thrive.

However, instances of violence and aggression towards school staff from parents, carers or other adult members of the school community can have a significant impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the person who experiences this, as well as those around them. The impact can also be felt by the wider school community.

## Sharing the new policy and resources with the school community

School leaders can use a range of resources to share the new policy with their school community, including:

* a poster for parents (available in multiple languages)
* a poster for staff
* social media template
* draft newsletter content to communicate with families (available in multiple languages)
* an email template to communicate with staff.

## New advice page on managing challenging parent/carer behaviour

The release of the new policy is aligned with the addition of a [new chapter](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/work-related-violence-schools/procedure/risk-controls-parent-carer-behaviour) on managing parent/carer behaviours within the Work-Related Violence in Schools Policy and Procedure (previously named Occupational Violence and Aggression in Schools Policy and Procedure).

The change in the name of this policy aligns with WorkSafe’s recent changes in referring to ‘occupational violence and aggression’ as ‘work-related violence’. The definition remains the same, and still encompasses incidents in which a person is abused, threatened, or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.

The new chapter outlines strategies and supporting resources for schools to prevent and manage unacceptable behaviours from parents, carers, and other adult members of the school community, including guidance to:

* help establish and promote respectful and safe parent and carer behaviour
* prevent and de-escalate unacceptable behaviours
* access support and services to restore wellbeing after an incident.

## Policy, guidance, and resources

The new policy for parents and carers and guidance for schools can be found below:

* [Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/Respectful-Behaviours-within-the-School-Community-Policy.aspx)
* [Work-Related Violence in Schools Policy and Procedure – Parent/carer behaviours chapter](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/work-related-violence-schools/procedure/risk-controls-parent-carer-behaviour)

# Parent-facing webpage content

Publish this information on relevant pages on your intranet or website.

**Respectful behaviours in schools**

To help make sure that your child feels supported at school, it’s important that you work with the school to create a supportive environment. This will also help meet your child’s learning and wellbeing needs.

Getting involved gives your child confidence and helps them feel in control of their education.

**Respectful Behaviours within the School Community policy**

As we enjoy being back in the classroom, with some additional health and safety measures that prevent the spread of COVID-19, it’s important that adults in school communities continue to treat each other with respect and kindness.

The Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy defines standards of behaviours for all adult members of the school community. It also defines unacceptable behaviours and consequences for such behaviours. This helps to ensure schools are safe, supportive, and respectful places for work and learning for all students, staff, and other adults.

Read the new [Respectful Behaviours within the School Community Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/Respectful-Behaviours-within-the-School-Community-Policy.aspx) to learn more about the behaviours that help create strong, collaborative relationships and what behaviours are unacceptable in schools, or download the poster [here](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/work-related-violence-schools/resources) (available in 30+ languages).

**Advice about how to have a positive relationship with your child’s school**

Guidance is available to help maintain positive relationships in school, including:

* Ways to [Get involved with your school](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/get-involved-at-school.aspx) such as volunteering, parent clubs and school councils.
* Learn more about the whole-school approach to [Respectful Relationships](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/capabilities/personal/Pages/respectfulrelapproach.aspx) and how parents/carers and the wider community have a role to play in modelling respectful behaviours and creating an environment where everyone feels safe, respected and valued.
* The [Family Engagement in Learning resource](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/family-engagement-in-learning.docx) for parents and carers explains the impact and importance of a meaningful parent-school relationship on a student's development and wellbeing.
* [Building a relationship with your child's school](https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/school-learning/working-with-schools-teachers/relationship-with-school) - includes tips on how to build and maintain strong relationships.
* Find out how to [raise a concern about your child’s school](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/school-complaints.aspx).
* [Managing Difficult Conversations with your child's school](https://positivespecialneedsparenting.com/managing-difficult-conversations-with-your-childs-school/)- advice about how to manage difficult conversations.

**Extra parenting support services and resources**

* [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/family-support) - services and support for families, including:
* [Strengthening Parent Support Program](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/strengthening-parent-support-program) – a free program for parents and carers with a child from birth to 18 years, with a disability or developmental delay.
* [Regional Parenting Services](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/regional-parenting-services) - support for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years located in regional Victoria.
* [Family intervention services](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/services-for-parents/Pages/family-intervention-services.aspx) - advice on how to develop your parenting skills when you’re having difficulties in managing your child’s behaviour.
* [Child, family and relationship services](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/servicesandsupport/child-family-and-relationship-services) – family support services to help parents raise their children.
* [Raising Children Network](https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age) - guidance on supporting school age children, including resources, videos, articles and apps.
* [Parentline](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/parentline) - a confidential counselling and support services for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years old.
* [Child behaviour](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/behaviour/Pages/default.aspx) - information about how to manage and build positive behaviour with your child.
* [Parenting Ideas](https://www.parentingideas.com.au/parent-resources/) - resources about raising confident, happy and resilient children.
* [MyTime program](https://www.parentingrc.org.au/programs/my-time/) – support for parents and carers of children with disabilities. Skilled facilitators provide guidance to help access local services and reliable information.
* [Triple P Parenting program](https://www.triplep-parenting.net.au/vic-uken/triple-p/) - ideas and strategies to help parents and carers including ways to set routines, manage behaviours and how to take care of yourself

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