

A. Entity responses

As mandated in Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to:

- Minister for Education and the Arts
- Department of Education.

We also provided a copy of the report to the following entities and gave them the option of providing a response:

- Premier
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

This appendix contains the responses we received.

The heads of these entities are responsible for the accuracy, fairness, and balance of their comments.



Comments received from Minister for Education and the Arts



Minister for Education and the Arts

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09 DEC 2024

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
Email: gao@gao.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Vagg *Rachel,*

Thank you for your email dated 22 November 2024 regarding the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) draft report, Protecting Students from Bullying (the report), and providing the opportunity to respond.

As confirmed by the report, bullying is a significant issue for the Queensland community and a key concern for parents given bullying can have lifelong impacts for children and young people. Identifying and responding to bullying is becoming increasingly complex for schools and parents given the increase in social media use by young people and the changing nature of student behaviour in our schools.

The Crisafulli Government has identified responding to bullying as a key commitment and your advice will inform our response. It is clear that schools cannot do this work alone and new integrated community approaches to bullying—particularly when it occurs online—are needed, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. The role of parents and their capacity to take the steps needed to protect their child online must be paramount in our response.

I refer you to the response to the report from Ms Sharon Schimming, Acting Director-General, Department of Education, for more detailed information.

Thank you again for writing to me. If you require further information or assistance, please contact

Yours sincerely

JOHN-PAUL LANGBROEK MP
Minister for Education and the Arts

Ref: 24/1038694; M320

Your Ref: PRJ04189



Comments received from the Acting Director-General, Department of Education



Office of the
Director-General

Department of
Education

07 DEC 2024

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
Email: qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Vagg

Thank you for your email dated 22 November 2024 seeking a formal response to recommendations from the proposed Queensland Audit Office report, *Protecting students from bullying*. The Department of Education welcomes the report and notes the recommendations.

The department agrees or agrees in-principle with the recommendations contained in the report as detailed in the enclosed response.

As the report notes, schools play an important role in the lives of students and preventing and responding to bullying. Bullying is a widespread social phenomenon occurring across many environments with potentially significant long-term impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Cyberbullying is of particular concern for the whole community, particularly parents, who must be supported to take action to protect their children's mental health and wellbeing from the impact of social media.

The research evidence confirms, effectively preventing and responding to bullying requires an integrated community focused response to raise awareness, lift capacity of families and services to respond and support every child, young person and parent to access the support they need.

The department has implemented a range of strategies and initiatives aimed at preventing bullying and providing robust support for those affected. The report reflects the continuing efforts of the department and schools.

Each day, Queensland state schools go above and beyond to provide safe and disciplined schools. I am cognisant of managing teacher workload and reducing red tape so schools can focus on teaching and learning. The department is committed to working with schools and the community to prioritise the protection, safety, health and wellbeing of all students and staff as the report's recommendations are addressed.

If you would like further information or assistance, please contact

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Schimming".

SHARON SCHIMMING
Acting Director-General

Ref: 24/1056473

Responses to recommendations

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Department of Education

Protecting students from bullying

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Education:</p> <p>1. clearly documents its approach to bullying. This should include the supports available for state schools to implement evidence-based prevention and response strategies. As part of this it should develop a plan for how it will implement its strategy and monitor its effectiveness.</p>	Agree	Q1 25/26	<p>Subject to Government consideration and consultation with schools and stakeholders, the department will develop an integrated community anti-bullying plan that will include actions to provide clear advice about its approach to preventing and responding to bullying.</p> <p>The plan will align with existing research and better practice and promote integration of health and school responses to bullying. The plan will include advice to the community about how the impact of the strategies will be measured.</p>
<p>2. supports more effective communication of schools' codes of conducts through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> redeveloping the prevention and response to bullying requirements in the State Schools Student Code of Conduct to align with current evidence-based practice and Departmental procedures monitoring schools' documentation of the code of conduct ensuring schools provide sufficient information online to demonstrate the currency of codes of conduct. 	Agree	Q1 25/26	<p>The department will consult with schools and stakeholders on opportunities to streamline existing state school Student Code of Conduct requirements and monitoring of these.</p> <p>The proposed actions by the department will be reported and monitored through the integrated community anti-bullying plan.</p>
<p>3. as part of delivering on its commitment to address recommendations from the <i>Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability</i>, enhances its data collection to include information on students who experience bullying and cyberbullying.</p>	Agree	Q4 25/26	<p>The department notes the QAO's findings in relation to the collection of data about student and parent experience of bullying responses by schools. The department has provided advice to the QAO identifying concerns including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> additional bullying data collection will impact workload and red tape for schools; and



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Recommendation	Agree/Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>4. enhances its approach to monitoring student bullying by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving its collection and analysis of information on the experiences of parents/carers, students, and staff specific to the management of student bullying • establishing processes for monitoring schools' implementation of bullying policies and when and how a region would intervene to support a school that needs assistance to reduce bullying • evaluating the effectiveness of its policies and resources to support schools to prevent and respond to bullying. 	<p>Agree in-principle</p>	<p>Q3 25/26</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usefulness of additional data rather than better use of the existing large body of research about effective strategies, vulnerable cohorts and patterns of bullying behaviour across school years. <p>The department will review existing data collections and analysis to identify insights and opportunities to integrate bullying-specific information.</p> <p>The department is committed to effectively responding to bullying and the needs of schools, parents and students. As indicated in the response to recommendation 3, the department will consider how best to integrate data collections on bullying into existing systems.</p> <p>The department will consult with schools and stakeholders about appropriate thresholds and pathways for schools, students and parents to access support.</p> <p>The department will review its existing policies, procedures and resources to align with evidence and identify opportunities to improve responses where a school community is experiencing high-risk student behaviours and critical incidents.</p>

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Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>5. reviews the Parent and Community Engagement Framework to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • up-to-date, contemporary approaches to engaging working parents/carers • specific guidance on engaging with parents/carers on complex policy issues such as bullying. 	Agree	Q3 25/26	The department has commenced reviewing existing frameworks, resources and advice for schools to support engagement with parents and the community. This will include identifying best practice exemplars and resources about bullying. The department does not seek to duplicate existing national high-quality resources such as those provided by the e-Safety Commissioner and will focus on facilitating access by Queensland schools, parents and communities.
<p>6. make readily available access to professional learning, teaching resources and information for school staff about preventing and responding to bullying behaviour, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to identify bullying behaviour • effective approaches for responding and reporting different types of bullying, including cyberbullying. 	Agree	Q3 25/26	The department will build anti-bullying school staff capability to lift expertise in schools to respond to and identify bullying through targeted professional development opportunities and resources to support students most at risk of bullying.

