

Respect and responsibility in schools – guidelines – Parents, carers and visitors

Department of Education and Training

Contents

- 1. Purpose 3
- 2. Scope 3
- 3. Expected behaviours..... 3
 - 3.1. Parents and carers..... 3
 - 3.2. Visitors..... 4
- 4. Implementing Respect and responsibility in schools..... 4
 - 4.1. Proactive strategies..... 4
 - 4.2. Response strategies 5
 - 4.2.1. Immediate response 5
 - 4.2.2. Following a response..... 5
 - 4.2.3. Trespass Notice 6
- 5. Record keeping..... 6
- Definitions 7
- 6. Related legislation, policy and resources 7
 - 6.1. Legislation 7
 - 6.2. Policy..... 8
 - 6.3. Resources..... 8

Read this document with the Respect and responsibility in schools – policy. Resources to support the implementation of these guidelines are available in eLearn.

Guidelines to support the implementation of Respect and responsibility in schools for staff and students are currently in development.

1. Purpose

The Respect and responsibility in school's policy supports schools to work in partnerships with students, parents, families and the wider community to create safe, inclusive environments in which every child is known, valued and supported to achieve to achieve their full potential.

The Respect and responsibility in school's policy outlines four shared commitments that apply in schools, during school-related activities, and across all online and digital platforms where members of the school community interact.

- Safety and wellbeing - We act safely, follow instructions and report and respond to concerns early to protect the wellbeing of everyone in our schools.
- Respect - We show respect by treating everyone with dignity, kindness and fairness and consistently communicating in clear, calm and respectful ways.
- Responsibility - We show responsibility by taking ownership of our actions and choices, maintaining high yet achievable standards, acting with honesty and integrity and addressing concerns positively.
- Partnership - We work together to support learning, attendance and wellbeing, sharing information, supporting participation in our schools and collaborating to solve problems.

This guideline outlines how safety and wellbeing, respect, responsibility and partnerships must be upheld when engaging with Northern Territory (NT) Government Schools.

2. Scope

These guidelines apply to:

- parents and carers
- any visitor who enters or engages with NT Government schools.

3. Expected behaviours

3.1. Parents and carers

Parents and carers of students enrolled at NT Government schools are expected to:

- communicate calmly and respectfully with school staff and families, in person, online and over the phone
- support your child's attendance, wellbeing and learning, including safe and responsible technology use
- raise concerns through the appropriate channels in a calm and constructive way
- work in partnership with the school to support your child's success.

3.2. Visitors

Visitors to NT Government schools are expected to:

- act safely and respectfully at all times
- respect the privacy of students, staff and families
- help maintain a welcoming environment

4. Implementing Respect and responsibility in schools

Schools can implement a range of proactive and response strategies ensure to ensure their school is a safe, respectful, inclusive and supportive learning and working environment for everyone.

With strong partnerships and a culture of kindness, responsibility, and respectful communication, schools strengthen belonging, wellbeing, attendance and learning outcomes for all students.

Staff can access supporting resources through the Respect and responsibility eLearn page.

4.1. Proactive strategies

These strategies aim to encourage safe, respectful and inclusive, and supportive environments in schools. School staff may use some or all of the strategies below:

- promoting Respect and responsibility in schools by displaying the posters in the front office, reception areas, meeting rooms and spaces accessed by parents, carers and visitors
- communicating with parents, carers and visitors information about Respect and responsibility in schools upon enrolment, in school newsletters and the school handbook, and prior to and at school community events
- using culturally responsive engagement and communication strategies
- developing positive relationships with parents, carers and visitors
- working in partnership to strengthen student belonging, wellbeing, attendance and learning outcomes
- ensuring meeting invitations include a clear purpose, agenda and that all participants are aware of the expected behaviours
- inviting the parent, carer or visitor to bring a support person to meetings or school events
- offering interpreters or communication advocacy support to parents and carers to enable equitable participation in meetings
- providing access to departmental complaint management resources, including:
 - complaint resolution processes
 - expected response timeframes
 - escalation pathways where dissatisfaction remains
 - mutual rights and responsibilities information sheets.
- identifying emerging patterns of unacceptable behaviours early and implementing strategies before escalation occurs

- maintaining accurate records of previous interactions where relevant.

Principals may seek advice or support from the Senior Director Education, Director School Operations, or other appropriate departmental officers.

4.2. Response strategies

These strategies may guide school leaders when responding to breaches of the Respect and responsibility in schools' policy. Breaches will be managed promptly and fairly by the department, in line with relevant legislation and department policy.

4.2.1. Immediate response

If a parent, carer or visitor is not acting consistently with the policy, staff must respond calmly, consistently and with a focus on safety and de-escalation.

Immediate responses may include:

- recognising that the parent, carer or visitor may be expressing their frustration and suggest an alternative time for them to engage and raise their concerns
- reminding the person of the behavioural expectations under the Respect and responsibility in schools policy
- reiterating the importance of working in partnership to improve student wellbeing, learning and behaviour outcomes
- clearly and calmly directing the person to stop unacceptable behaviour
- pausing the meeting or interaction to allow time to refocus on working in partnership to strengthen student belonging, wellbeing, attendance and learning outcomes
- seeking assistance from another staff member or school leader
- postponing or relocating a meeting
- moving students and staff away from the area if there is a risk to safety or wellbeing
- directing a visitor to leave the premises where their behaviour is disruptive or unsafe
- not engaging in arguments, retaliatory behaviour or conduct likely to escalate the situation further
- identify the avenues available to parents, carers and visitors to raise concerns and make complaints
- in an emergency, call emergency services on 000

4.2.2. Following a response

Schools must take timely action to address the behaviour, restore safe operations, and prevent recurrence. Principals should seek advice from their Senior Director Education or Director School Operations on implementing strategies following a breach of expected behaviours.

Actions may include:

- contacting the individual to hear the nature of their concerns when they are calm and outline concerns about their conduct and expectations for future conduct
- reflecting with school staff on the nature of any concerns raised and whether the schools' response was appropriate, timely and respectful consistent with the behaviours for staff in the Respect and responsibility in schools framework

- providing written notice of the specific breach using the sample breach letter template
- referring serious matters to police or other relevant external authorities
- arranging restorative conversations, mediation or facilitated resolution where appropriate
- ensuring the individual understands the department's complaint processes
- developing specific behaviour agreements or communication protocols for future interactions
- specifying or restricting communication channels for a defined period
- limiting attendance at meetings to appointment-only arrangements or requiring third-party attendance
- providing wellbeing support to affected staff or students, including access to employee assistance or counselling services where appropriate
- reviewing whether any workplace health and safety controls require strengthening.

4.2.3. Trespass Notice

Where immediate safety concerns persist, a principal may issue a trespass notice in accordance with departmental policy.

The use of trespass notices are unlikely to improve the partnership between parents, carers, visitors and schools, and should only be issued as a last resort for the purposes of:

- ensuring the safety and wellbeing of those lawfully at the premises
- preventing or minimising damage to the premises or to property on school premises
- maintaining good order at the school
- maintaining proper management of the school.

Principals should engage with their Senior Director Education or Director School Operations prior to issuing a trespass notice to ensure that the notice is issued appropriately and safely.

5. Record keeping

Breaches must be:

- documented accurately and objectively
- recorded in line with school and department record keeping processes

Definitions

Term	Definition
Breach	Any action or behaviour that violates the standards outlined in this policy or associated guidelines.
Parent	A child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for that child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary law or tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis.
School community members	All school staff, families, and people who have direct involvement or interest in the school including all employees, visitors, volunteers and service providers, employed or engaged by a school representative body or school management council to provide services to the school representative body, school management council or the school.
School	Includes early childhood settings, primary schools and secondary schools, and any other location external to the site premises where education is being provided as part of a school excursion or other activity organised by the education site including off-site venues used for school activities, and digital learning environments, for example: virtual classrooms, learning platforms, collaboration tools.
Student	A person enrolled at a school and children who attend Department of Education and Training early childhood services and programs delivered on school premises.
Visitor	A person that enters or engages with NT Government Schools.

6. Related legislation, policy and resources

6.1. Legislation

Education Act 2015 – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>

Education Regulations 2015 – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-REGULATIONS-2015>

Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) – <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2021C00189>

Northern Territory Public Sector Code of conduct employment instruction number 12 – <https://ocpe.nt.gov.au/employment-conditions-appeals-grievances/code-of-conduct>

Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993 – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/PUBLIC-SECTOR-EMPLOYMENT-AND-MANAGEMENT-ACT-1993>

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>

6.2. Policy

Alcohol consumption on department premises - policy -

<https://education.nt.gov.au/media/docs/policies/school-operations/alcohol-consumption-on-department-premises/policies/alcohol-consumption-on-department-premises-policy.pdf>

Complaint resolution - policy - https://elearn.ntschoools.net/system/files/resource_document/2024-07/Complaint%20resolution%20-%20policy.pdf

Safety management policy – <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/4451>

Smoke free schools - policy - https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1594990/smoke-free-schools-policy.pdf

Student wellbeing and positive behaviour - policy - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/behaviour-and-wellbeing>

Safe use of digital technology in early childhood education and care settings policy

https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1555025/policy-safe-use-digital-technology-early-childhood-education.pdf

6.3. Resources

Weapons in schools – guidelines - <https://education.nt.gov.au/media/docs/policies/school-operations/weapons-in-schools/weapons-in-schools-guidelines.docx>

Contractors site rules and declaration - form - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/media/file/7651>

Individual rights and mutual responsibilities in complaint resolution – Information sheet - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/media/file/17532>

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - <https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

Respect and responsibility in schools expected behaviours -

https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1606288/respect-responsibility-schools-expected-behaviours.pdf

Respect and responsibility in schools shared expectations -

https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1606289/respect-responsibility-schools-our-shared-expectations.pdf

Trespass on school grounds - procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/media/docs/policies/school-operations/trespass-on-school-premises/trespass-on-school-grounds-procedures.pdf>

Weapons in schools - guidelines - <https://education.nt.gov.au/media/docs/policies/school-operations/weapons-in-schools/weapons-in-schools-guidelines.docx>

Your complaints journey – leaflet - https://elearn.ntschoools.net/system/files/resource_document/2024-07/Your%20complaints%20journey%20-%20leaflet.PDF

Where else can I make a complaint – information sheet - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/media/file/17534>

Acronyms	Full form
Cth	Commonwealth
NT	Northern Territory

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