



Department of Education

Secretary

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COR26181006

Ella George MP
Chair, Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament of Victoria
cofg@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms George

Please find below the Department of Education (the department)'s response to your correspondence of 17 March 2026 regarding Supplementary written questions on notice – Inquiry into the recruitment methods and impacts of cults and organised fringe groups.

Curriculum and learning programs

1. What curriculum content or learning programs currently help school children (including those in primary or early secondary years) recognise coercive, unsafe or inappropriate behaviours in group settings?

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 is the mandated curriculum for Victorian government and Catholic schools. Both the Health and Physical Education and Personal and Social Capability curriculums include knowledge and skills that support students to recognise coercive, unsafe or inappropriate behaviours in group settings.

The Health and Physical Education curriculum includes a focus on the development of health literacy across primary and secondary school. This enhances an individual's ability to access, understand, interrogate and use health information and services to promote the health and wellbeing of themselves and others. The curriculum includes learning about the development of identity and how values, beliefs and others can shape and influence identity, learning about respectful relationships, including the role of power and coercion in relationships, and learning how to access and analyse health information and how media and influential people in the community impact attitudes, beliefs, decisions and behaviours in relation to health, safety, relationships and wellbeing.

The Personal and Social Capability curriculum includes content focused on emotional awareness and management in social contexts. This includes consideration of behavioural reactions to internal or external events or conditions. It also contains content focused on respectful personal and group

relationships. Students learn about factors that affect the ability to experience respectful personal and group relationships including the distribution of power. Students are introduced to a range of age-appropriate help-seeking and other productive coping strategies.

a) What resources are provided to support teachers to effectively deliver this content (for example, lesson plans, professional learning, guidance materials, or external programs)?

The Health and Physical Education and Personal and Social Capability areas within the Victorian Curriculum provide the basis for teaching and learning about respectful relationships and consent education, and identify the knowledge, skills and understanding for students to be able to engage in respectful relationships.

The department supports schools to deliver this curriculum through the optional *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR)* and *Building Respectful Relationships (BRR)* teaching and learning materials, developed by education experts and updated in 2024. These evidence-based and age-appropriate resources were updated in 2024 in consultation with key stakeholders, including students, teachers and parents, to meet the contemporary needs of students. The resources help students learn and practise social skills and apply them in a positive way to learning, life and relationships, and include learning about sexual harassment, coercive control and consent. The RRRR resource also supports students to identify the early warning signs that can tell young people that something is uncomfortable or unsafe and *Topic 2: Help Seeking* covers help-seeking across all year levels to support students to identify strategies for seeking help, who to seek help from and how to support friends to seek help.

To support effective delivery of Respectful Relationships (RR), there are 25 Project Leads in each department area supporting schools to implement a whole-school approach to RR including by providing professional learning to schools on implementing a whole-school approach to RR and on delivering respectful relationships education using the RRRR and BRR resources. 17 Liaison Officers in each area also support schools to identify and respond to family violence and strengthen referral pathways to appropriate specialist support services.

b) How are cross-curriculum priorities on topics related to this content prioritised and monitored to ensure they are consistently and effectively implemented across schools?

Implementation of the whole school approach to Respectful Relationships is mandated for all Victorian Government schools. One element of the whole school approach includes teaching and learning. The Victorian Curriculum F–10 provides the basis for teaching and learning about respectful relationships and identifies the knowledge, skills and understanding for students to be able to engage in respectful relationships. Implementation of the curriculum and student learning outcomes of the Victorian Curriculum F–10 by schools is monitored through the school review process, managed by the department.

The department's 25 regional Respectful Relationships Project Leads support schools to implement the whole school approach, including delivering respectful relationships education via the Victorian Curriculum. The department is currently exploring options to have greater oversight of the implementation progress of schools and the support they receive from the Respectful Relationships

workforce, to identify targeted support that can be provided by this workforce to strengthen schools' implementation.

c) How is the effectiveness of cross-curriculum priorities assessed, including how student understanding, teacher confidence, or behavioural outcomes are evaluated?

Both the Health and Physical Education and Personal and Social Capability curricula are required to be taught and assessed in all Victorian government and Catholic schools. Personal and Social Capability is taught and assessed in and through 8 learning areas, not as a standalone curriculum. This means, for example, that teachers may plan, teach and assess content drawn from both the Health and Physical Education and Personal and Social Capability curriculum within one teaching and learning unit.

Schools can also analyse their Attitudes to Schools Survey data to assess students' personal and social skills reflected in that survey. If schools participate in the voluntary Respectful Relationships evaluation, they can also analyse their school's results to assess students' personal and social skills and their attitudes towards having healthy and respectful relationships.

Support pathways and help-seeking

2. What opportunities currently exist to provide children with age-appropriate information about where to go for help if they feel unsafe, pressured, or uncomfortable in a group setting?

On 24 March 2026 the department published its refreshed PROTECT guidance to identify and respond to child abuse, including grooming. The refreshed guidance now reflects the current family and specialist service system and makes it easier for school staff to navigate, find information – and follow a pathway based on the source of abuse. To support the release of the refreshed PROTECT guidance, the department has developed student facing posters that remind students of their right to be safe and protected from all forms of abuse. The posters also prompt students that they can speak up and they will get help. The posters have been produced for different levels of reading ability, including a poster for younger students or those with a lower reading level, a poster for older students or those with a higher reading level and a visual poster which can be used in primary and specialist schools. Schools will receive printed posters and can download them from the PROTECT website at <https://www.vic.gov.au/protect-resources-schools>.

The department has also developed the Raising and resolving issues at school resources for students, including posters, factsheets and scenarios. These are resources for senior primary and secondary school students to help them to understand their rights and participate in decisions affecting them, including concerns about their access to things at school, a decision that was made or feeling unsafe at school or at home. These resources provide practical information in a student-friendly way and align with the department's Compliant Resolution Policy and the Child Safe Standards. The resources are available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/school-complaints#how-to-make-a-complaint>.

3. Are there plans to expand or improve access to support contacts (e.g., school wellbeing teams, helplines, online safety resources) for students (including those in primary or early secondary year)?

The refreshed PROTECT guidance for schools, published on 24 March 2026, is now aligned with the family service system and the child safety policies that schools are required to follow. PROTECT supports schools to meet their child safety obligations and provide children and families with the right support at the right time.

Schools are supported to identify wellbeing and safety concerns and refer students and their families to specialist support services.

PROTECT provides more clarity on the specialist support services available for students or their family, including:

- The Orange Door - Providing help for people who are experiencing or using family violence or who need support with the care and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Sexual Assault Services - For matters involving sexual offences, schools can refer directly to local Sexual Assault Services. These services support students who have experienced sexual harm and abuse and provide support for wellbeing staff to manage sexual abuse incidents involving students.
- Student Support Services (SSS) - works as part of the department's Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Workforces to support schools and students to achieve their learning and wellbeing goals. SSS are multidisciplinary area-based teams of allied health professionals.

Opportunities outside the curriculum

4. Beyond the curriculum, what initiatives are in place to promote understanding of coercive behaviours?

The department's PROTECT website provides guidance for all Victorian schools to identify and respond to child abuse, including grooming and provide ongoing support. The guidance supports school staff to identify the signs and indicators of abuse and respond based on the source of the abuse. The PROTECT guidance enables schools to connect students and their families to the right support at the right time including assistance available through the school, referring students and their families to specialist services, or reporting to authorities for investigation.

The whole school approach to Respectful Relationships supports schools to embed a culture of respect and gender equality across the entire school community and leads to positive impacts on students' academic outcomes, their mental health, classroom behaviour and relationships between teachers and students.

To support schools' implementation of Respectful Relationships initiative there are 25 Project Leads in each department area supporting schools to implement a whole-school approach to RR including by providing professional learning to schools on implementing a whole-school approach to RR and on delivering respectful relationships education using the RRRR and BRR resources. 17 Liaison Officers in each area also support schools to identify and respond to family violence and strengthen referral pathways to appropriate specialist support services.

within schools (for example, posters on bathrooms, common areas, messaging), and are there opportunities to expand this (for example, partnering with external experts or services to improve prevention and support pathways)?

To support the release of the refreshed, PROTECT guidance, the department has developed student facing posters that remind students of their right to be safe and protected from all forms of abuse. The posters also promote the message to students that if they speak up about any form of abuse - they will get help. The posters have been produced for different levels of reading ability, including a poster for younger students or those with a lower reading level, a poster for older students or those with a higher reading level and a visual poster which can be used in primary and specialist schools. Schools will receive printed posters and can also download them from the PROTECT website at <https://www.vic.gov.au/protect-resources-schools>.

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If you would like further information, please contact Claire Tobin, Executive Director, Wellbeing Health and Engagement Division, Department of Education, on 03 7022 1769 or by email: claire.tobin@education.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Tony Bates PSM

Secretary

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