

National Report Summary

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This is a summary of a national report – it captures the key points and highlights findings that you may find useful. The full report is available on our website – www.ero.govt.nz

Bullying Prevention and Response in New Zealand Schools ***Bullying Prevention and Response: Student Voice***

National and international studies suggest that New Zealand has a relatively high rate of bullying in schools. The cross-sector [Bullying Prevention Advisory Group](#) (BPAG) has provided evidence-based guidance to schools on how to approach bullying prevention and response, including, most recently, the [Bullying-Free NZ Framework](#) in 2017.

What did ERO do?

In this evaluation, ERO gathered data from 136 primary and secondary schools as part of their regular ERO review in Terms 1 and 2, 2018. We evaluated schools according to the extent to which they were implementing the nine aspects of the Bullying-Free NZ Framework. We also invited students in these schools to complete an online questionnaire, and received 11,085 valid responses. These were incorporated into the main evaluative report, and form the primary basis for the additional student voice report.

What did ERO find?

ERO found that most schools were working towards a bullying free environment: 38 percent to a great extent, 45 percent to some extent, and 17 percent to a limited extent. Most students had learned some bullying prevention and response strategies, and doing so improved their confidence to act when they experienced or witnessed bullying.

The schools working to a great extent were distinguished by the commitment of their leadership, the consistency of their practice, their proactive inclusion of whānau input, and their use of data to monitor bullying and evaluate the

effectiveness of their bullying prevention and response strategies and programmes. While there were some challenges and weaknesses evident, particularly around schools' internal evaluation and engagement with whānau, these findings suggest most schools have some degree of strength across most of the domains of the Bullying-Free NZ Framework.

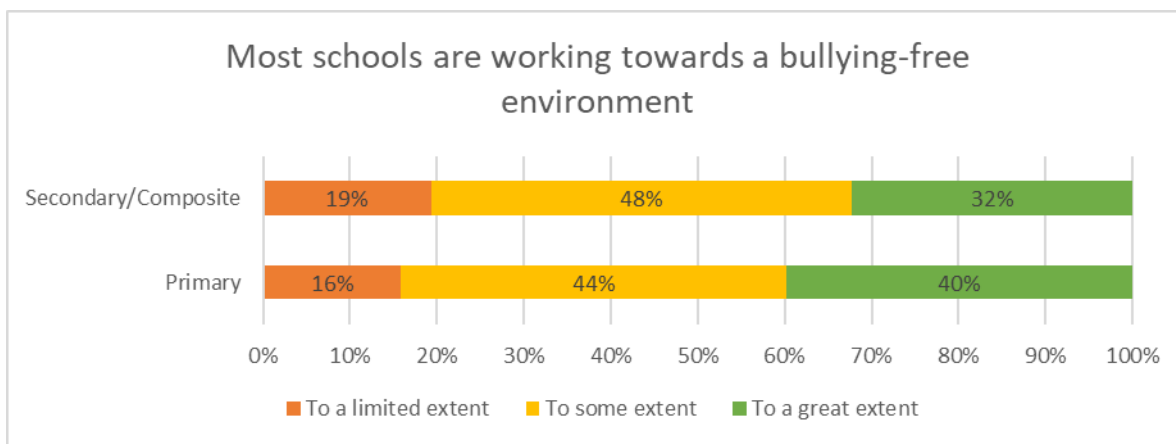
However, ERO's onsite interviews with students and the results of the online questionnaire reinforced research findings that bullying remains a problem in New Zealand schools. In the student survey, 46 percent of primary-aged students, and 31 percent of secondary-aged students reported being bullied to at least some extent in their current school. Sixty-one percent of primary-aged students, and 58 percent of secondary-aged students had seen someone else bullied at their school.

The persistently high rates of bullying suggest that, while consistency and coherence in schools' approaches to bullying prevention and wellbeing are important, there is no silver bullet for bullying prevention. It is possible the Bullying-Free NZ Framework is missing some important elements, or that the elements where performance is weaker (use of data, support for student agency) are crucially important to successful prevention. It may also be that a focus on generic bullying prevention can only go so far, and further improvements can only come from more targeted actions focused on specific issues like racism and homophobia. Finally, many of the most salient drivers of bullying may be beyond schools' direct control, related to parental attitudes, and broader societal issues.

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Figure 1. Most schools are working towards a bullying-free environment



ERO recommends school leaders:

- make sure school staff and community have a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour, school policies are up to date, and bullying prevention and response processes are consistently evident in practice
- strengthen data collection, analysis and evaluation of bullying prevention strategies, including the impact and effectiveness of any specific programmes implemented
- provide opportunities for students to have input into the development of bullying prevention and response strategies, and empower student-led initiatives and groups
- involve parents and whānau more proactively in bullying prevention in addition to response.

Figure 2. Bullying-Free New Zealand Schools Framework



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