

# RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS



A RESOURCE KIT  
FOR VICTORIAN SCHOOLS



Education  
and Training

## Aboriginal acknowledgement

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the first peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on an incredibly disciplined social and cultural order. This social and cultural order has sustained up to 50,000 years of existence.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in addressing and preventing family violence, and in the implementation of this initiative we join with our First Peoples to eliminate family violence from all communities.

— from *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*

## Family violence services and support

This resource addresses issues of family violence.

**If you are concerned for your safety** or that of someone else, contact the police, and call 000 for emergency assistance.

**If you have experienced violence or sexual assault** and require immediate or ongoing assistance, contact 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) to talk to a counsellor from the National Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence hotline. For confidential support and information, contact Safe Steps' 24/7 family violence response line on 1800 015 188.

**If you need to talk to someone** it is recommended that you speak to your school leadership team about arranging appropriate support. You can also talk to your GP or an allied health professional. Victorian government school staff can also contact the Department of Education and Training's Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 008.

## Acknowledgement

This resource kit draws on the content and materials expertly developed by Our Watch for the 2015 Respectful Relationships Education in Schools (RREiS) pilot.

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# BUILDING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN OUR SCHOOLS

As educators we share a common purpose – to provide our students with an education that gives each child the best start to a happy, healthy and prosperous life.

Victoria’s Respectful Relationships initiative supports school leaders, educators and our school communities to promote and model respect and equality – and to teach our children how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence identified the critical role that schools have in creating a culture of respect to change the story of family violence for future generations. In 2016, respectful relationships education became a core component of the Victorian Curriculum from Prep to Year 12, and is being taught in all government and Catholic schools and many independent schools.

This resource kit provides schools with the strategies and tools to implement a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

This approach recognises that schools are a workplace, a community hub and a place of learning. Everyone involved in our school communities deserve to be respected, valued and treated equally.

We know that changes in attitudes and behaviours can be achieved when positive attitudes, behaviours and gender equality are lived across the school community, and when classroom learning is reinforced by what is modelled in our school community.

Taking a whole-school approach is about embedding a culture of respect and equality across our entire school community, from our classrooms to staffrooms, sporting fields, fetes and social events. This approach leads to positive impacts on students’ academic outcomes, their mental health, classroom behaviour, and relationships between teachers and students.

Together, we can lead the way in saying yes to respect and equality, and creating genuine and lasting change so that every child has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

## DELIVERING THE RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS INITIATIVE

The Victorian Government is implementing Respectful Relationships across Victorian schools and early childhood services through:

- A leading and partner schools initiative, providing intensive training and support to Government, Catholic and Independent schools to implement the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships
- The Resilience, Rights & Respectful Relationships suite of teaching materials for Prep to Year 12
- A professional development program for early childhood educators
- A regional Respectful Relationships Workforce to support schools and early childhood education settings to implement respectful relationship education and strengthen referral and response to family violence.

# CURRICULUM CONTEXT: RESILIENCE, RIGHTS AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

In 2016 respectful relationships education became a core component of the Victorian Curriculum. The *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* teaching and learning resources have been developed to support schools to deliver the curriculum.

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 includes learning about respectful relationships in both Health and Physical Education and Personal and Social Capability. In the Health and Physical Education curriculum, students develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to strengthen their sense of self, and build and manage safe and respectful relationships. In the Personal and Social Capability curriculum, students learn to recognise and regulate emotions, develop empathy for others and establish and build a framework for positive relationships.

The teaching and learning resources are referenced throughout **PART TWO** of this resource kit and support schools in delivering a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships. Learning activities are available for the following levels:

Primary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foundation (Prep)</li><li>• Level 1–2</li><li>• Level 3–4</li><li>• Level 5–6</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Level 7–8</li><li>• Level 9–10</li><li>• Years 11 and 12</li></ul>

The learning materials cover eight topics of Social and Emotional Learning across all levels of primary and secondary education. Years 11 and 12 include the relevant topics of goal setting, time management, and safer socialising in place of emotional literacy.

The *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* teaching and learning resources are available online at: [education.vic.gov.au/respectfulrelationships](https://education.vic.gov.au/respectfulrelationships)

## Topic 1: Emotional Literacy

Emotional literacy can be defined as the ability to understand ourselves and other people. It includes the ability to understand, express and manage our own emotions, build empathy, and to respond appropriately to the emotions of others. Building a large vocabulary for emotions helps to increase emotional literacy and build self-awareness and empathy for others.

## Topic 2: Personal Strengths

Children and young people need a vocabulary to help them recognise and understand strengths and positive qualities in themselves and others. This topic provides learning activities to build this vocabulary and to use it when discussing personal, social and ethical challenges.

Research in the field of positive psychology emphasises the importance of identifying and using individual strengths. Social and emotional learning programs which use strength-based approaches promote student wellbeing, positive behaviour and academic achievement.

## Topic 3: Positive Coping

Learning activities in this topic provide opportunities for students to identify and discuss different types of coping strategies. When children and young people develop a language around coping, they are more likely to be able to understand and deliberately utilise a range of productive coping strategies and diminish their use of unproductive coping strategies. Students learn to extend their repertoire of coping strategies and benefit from critically reflecting on their own choices and being exposed to alternative options.

Activities introduce students to the concept of self-talk and practice using positive self-talk to approach and manage challenging situations. Positive self-talk is a key strategy for coping with negative thoughts, emotions and events. It is associated with greater persistence in the face of challenge, and can be learnt or strengthened through practice.

## Topic 4: Problem Solving

Problem-solving skills are an important part of the coping repertoire. The classroom program provides a number of learning activities to develop students' problem-solving skills. The activities in the program assist students to develop their critical and creative thinking skills, and to apply them to scenarios exploring personal, social and ethical dilemmas.

## Topic 5: Stress Management

Children and young people experience a range of personal, social and work-related stressors in their everyday lives. Activities within this topic have an explicit focus on teaching positive approaches to stress management. Assisting students to recognise their personal signs and symptoms of stress, and to develop strategies that will help them to deal with stress effectively, will help students cope with future challenges. The activities focus on the ways in which self-calming strategies can be used to manage stressful situations.

## Topic 6: Help-Seeking

Learning activities in this topic area are designed to help students discuss the importance of seeking help and providing peer support when dealing with problems that are too big to solve alone. This helps to normalise and destigmatise help-seeking behaviour. Scenario-based activities help students identify situations in which help should be sought, identify trusted sources of help, and practice seeking help from peers and adults.

## Topic 7: Gender and Identity

Learning activities within this topic assist students to challenge stereotypes and critique the influence of gender stereotypes on attitudes and behaviour. They learn about key issues relating to human rights, gender, identity and focus on the importance of respect within relationships. The activities promote respect for diversity and difference.

## Topic 8: Positive Gender Relations

Learning activities within this topic focus on building an understanding of the effects of family violence and focus on the standards associated with respectful relationships. Students develop the skills needed to solve problems, set boundaries within relationships, and play an active role within the prevention of family violence. They develop peer support and help-seeking skills that can be applied in response to situations involving gender-based violence in family, peer, community or on-line relationships.



# PART ONE: THE WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

A whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships draws on the Victorian Curriculum and links what is taught in the classroom with:

- The social, physical, cultural and spiritual environment of the school
- The school's policies and procedures
- Community partners and organisations that can support the school community.

This whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships draws on a significant body of research, including the Victorian pilot of Respectful Relationships Education in Schools (RREiS), which demonstrated that changes in attitudes and behaviour can be achieved when:

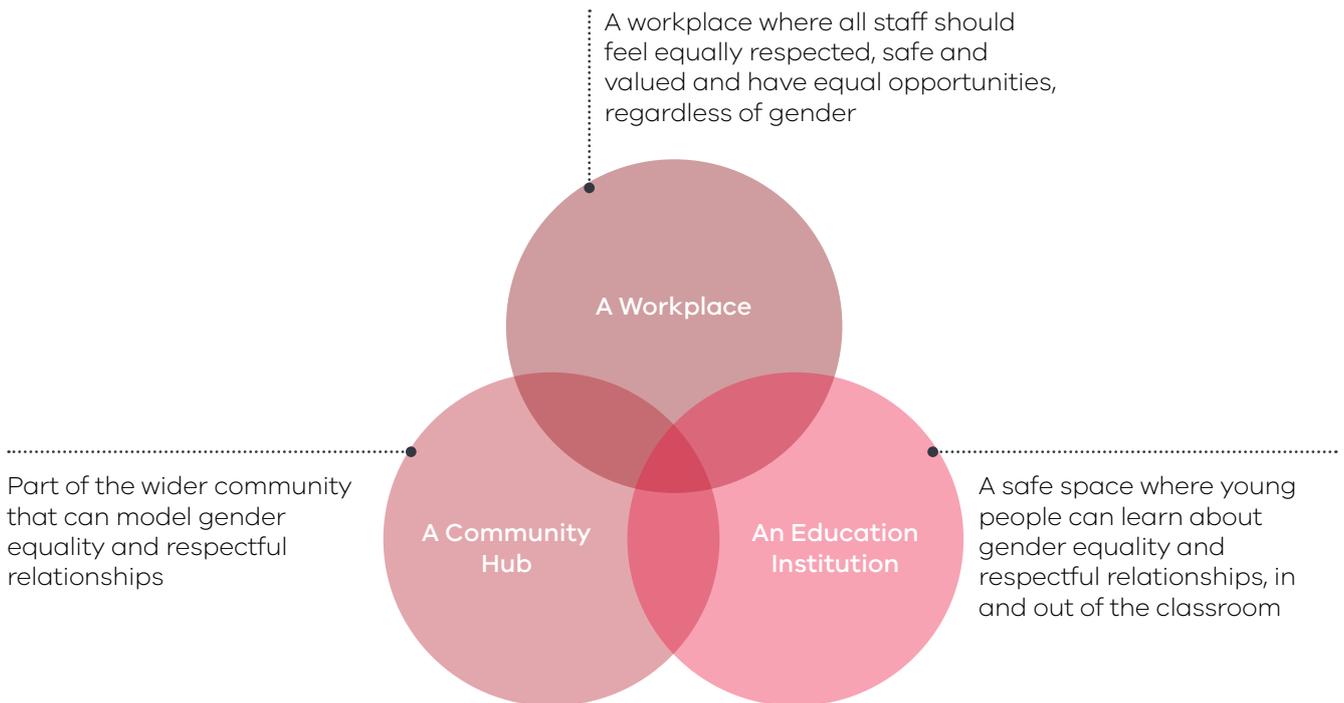
- Positive attitudes, behaviours and gender equality are promoted across the school community
- Classroom learning is reinforced by what is modelled within the school community.

A whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships recognises that schools are more than spaces for young people to learn. Schools are also:

- An important hub in the community, with the opportunity to influence and contribute to healthy community culture
- A workplace where all staff deserve to feel respected, safe and valued and to be treated equally regardless of their gender (see [Figure 1](#)).



**FIGURE 1: SCHOOLS AS A WORKPLACE, EDUCATION INSTITUTION AND COMMUNITY HUB**



## Piloting a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships

Throughout 2015, Our Watch partnered with the Victorian Government to pilot and evaluate the impact of respectful relationships education across the whole school (classroom, staffroom and broader school culture).

The Respectful Relationships Education in Schools (RREiS) pilot:

- Took place in 19 schools and reached 1,700 teachers and 4,000 students
- Examined what works in schools to effect change and promote gender equality
- Built on previous education programs in this area that were also pioneered in Victoria.

The evaluation confirmed that:

- Respectful relationships education is more than the delivery of curriculum
- A whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships can lead to an increase in student engagement, improve teacher–student relationships and change attitudes that allow violence to occur.

During the pilot:

- Almost two-thirds of teachers reported that over the course of teaching the curriculum they had observed an improvement in student classroom behaviour
- Almost half the teachers surveyed indicated that their teacher–student relationships had improved.

## Who does a whole-school approach reach?

A whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships recognises that schools:

- Play a central role in the intellectual, social and emotional development of children and young people
- Are micro communities where respect and equality can be modelled to help shape positive attitudes and behaviours
- Can generate lasting change in culture and attitudes, contributing to a reduction in the prevalence of family violence.

As demonstrated by the Royal Commission into Family Violence and in the RREiS pilot, a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships can produce lasting changes in young people’s attitudes and behaviours towards gender and violence.

As illustrated in [Figure 1](#), a whole-school approach recognises that schools are more than their classrooms, and the approach is designed to reach:

- Students
- School staff members (teaching and non-teaching)
- Families
- Other people who come into or work with the school (community educators, school council representatives etc).

## A CASE STUDY: MARYBOROUGH EDUCATION CENTRE

David Sutton, Principal of Maryborough Education Centre, took part in the 2015 Respectful Relationships Education in School (RREiS) pilot.

The school community fully committed to implementing the pilot, and found that Respectful Relationships provided the school with the “confidence and the language to take on issues around gender equity.”

For David “the real strength of the initiative is looking at the school structure and then teaching the program knowing the values run through the entire school ... It’s one thing to teach kids the value of respect and gender equality, but it’s another to truly live by what one teaches.”

For some male staff members aspects of the teaching and learning materials were quite thought provoking. However, through the pilot, these staff members were able to talk through their concerns.

The school has looked at how its policies and processes might affect different people, which has led to the introduction of a range of new policies, including gender equity policies and a new uniform policy.

“That’s what’s very impressive about this initiative. It’s not just the teaching and learning materials in isolation, because young people will see through it if they are taught to be respectful in all their interactions with people, however if they go into their next class and their teacher is using aggression to try and earn respect, or thumping the table or having an ‘in’ joke with the boys, or making sexist jokes, the kids will be thinking ‘well hold on a minute, we’re taught this yet the school operates like this’, so it just undercuts all the work.”

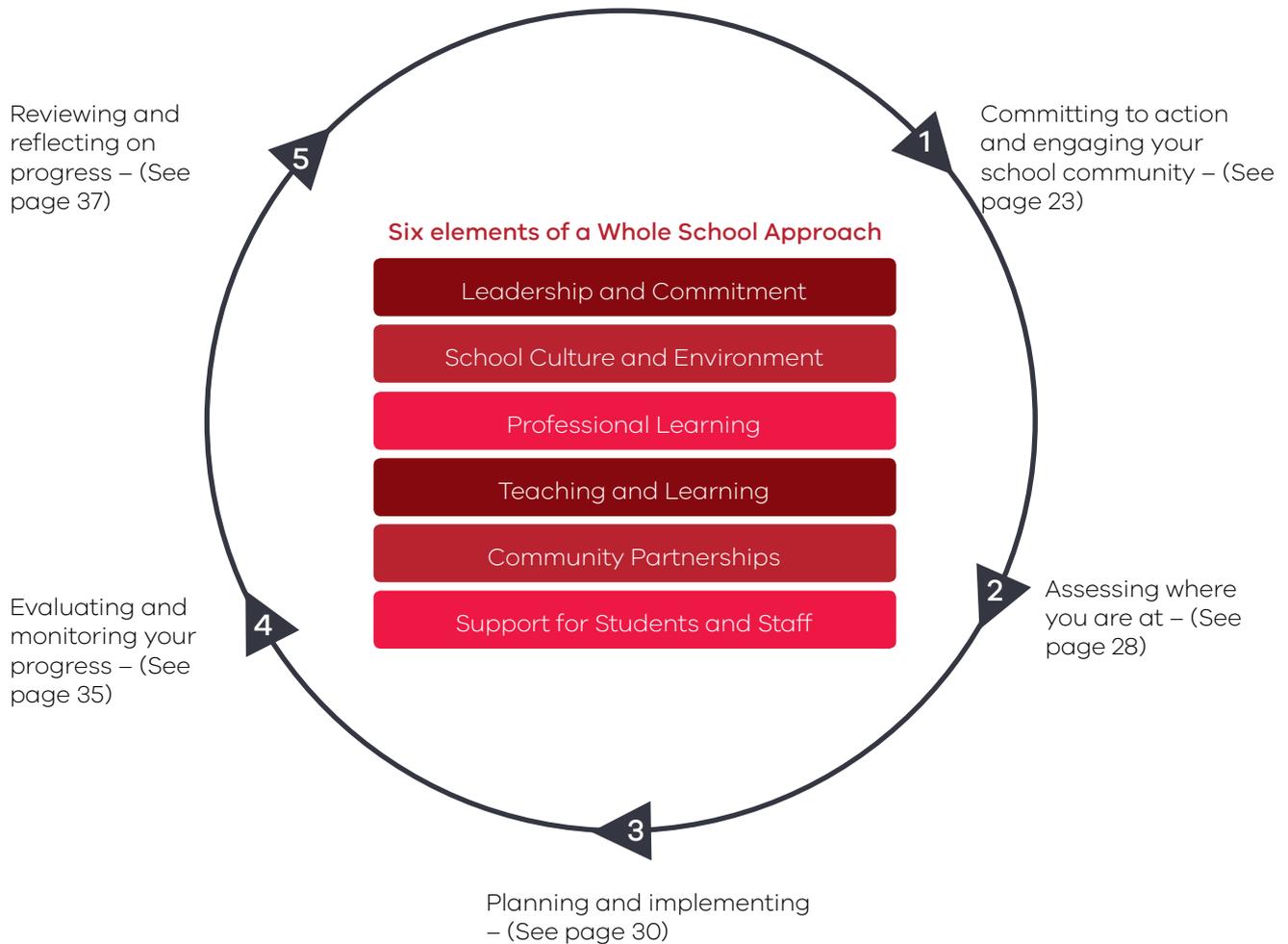


## What are the elements of a whole-school approach?

A whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships includes six key elements.

These elements can be adopted through a five-step continuous improvement cycle (see Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2:** OVERVIEW OF A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS



Content adapted from Our Watch. More information can be found at [www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/Respectful-relationships-education](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/Respectful-relationships-education)

## DISCLOSURES OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Implementing a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships may result in more disclosures of current or previous experiences of violence and abuse. Disclosures from people perpetrating family violence may also increase. Disclosures can come from any member of the school community including staff, parents, carers and students.

This can be a result of:

- Creating a safe space to disclose and acknowledge violence
- Raising of awareness of behaviours that are not acceptable
- Building knowledge of the support that is available.

Schools have a legal obligation to identify and respond to incidents, suspicions and disclosures of abuse (including family violence). In some instances it may constitute a criminal offence not to report family violence. For information on responding to discloser see pages 26 to 27.

## Primary prevention and beyond

The focus of the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships is on schools delivering primary prevention\*, by addressing the gendered drivers of family violence.

Primary prevention involves the whole school community and will invariably reach people who are impacted by family violence. Given this:

- There will be many opportunities for intervening early and responding - known as tertiary and secondary prevention.

Figure 3 includes examples of how the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships falls within the tertiary, secondary and primary prevention categories.

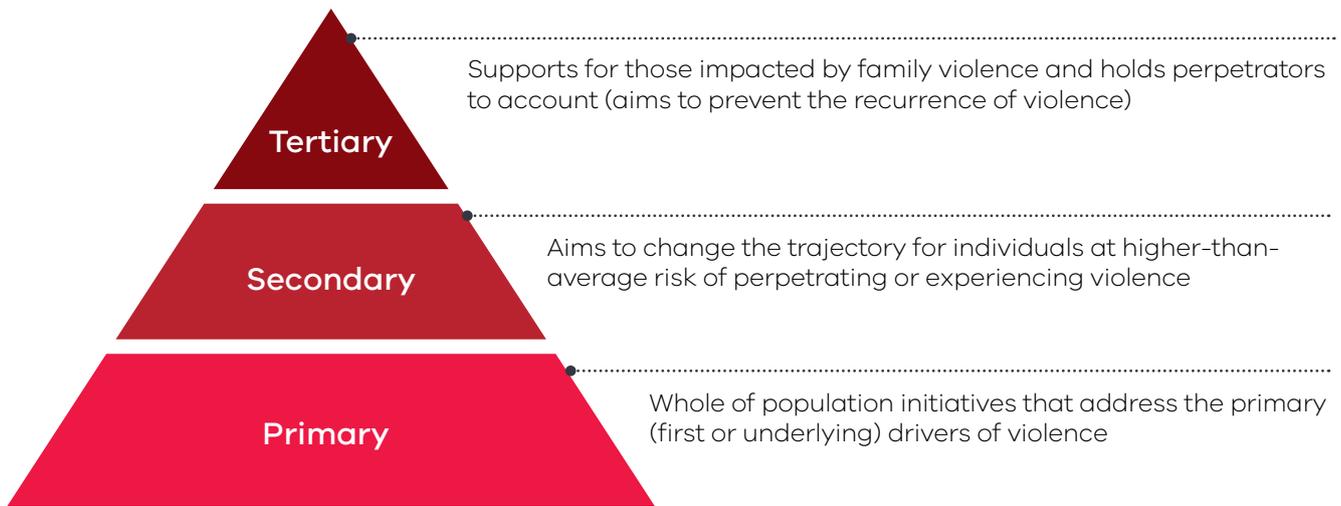
### **\*DEFINING PRIMARY PREVENTION**

Primary prevention of family violence is designed to stop violence before it starts by addressing its deep-seated drivers.

The term 'primary prevention' is drawn from public health and refers to changing attitudes, behaviours, norms and practices to help prevent an undesirable consequence.

Just like other major social and health issues (e.g. smoking and drink driving), family violence can be prevented by using different strategies to address the key drivers.

**FIGURE 3: PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY PREVENTION**



### Examples of intervention types

<b>Tertiary</b>	<p><b>A teacher discloses they are experiencing family violence in their relationship.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The leadership team provides support (including Family Violence Leave) and referral onto support services (including the government school Employee Assistance Program).</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>A student who discloses their experience of violence in the home, to a teacher.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher follows the Four Critical Actions in responding to the disclosure (see Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools), including reporting, referring and linking them into the local specialist family violence service.</li> <li>The student continues to be immersed in the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships, including modelling of equal and respectful relationships.</li> <li>This 'wrap around' support ensures that the student's immediate safety and needs are addressed and that they are given the opportunities to see and practice respectful relationships, thereby providing the student with the best opportunity to 'change the trajectory'.</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary</b>	<p><b>In undertaking the planning stages of the whole-school approach to respectful relationships (as set out in PART TWO of this resource kit), the school identifies that there is a high likelihood that some students will disclose experience of violence in their intimate relationship (i.e. dating violence or stalking behaviour) and all staff need the skills to be able to respond and refer those students to appropriate services.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school ensures that staff undertake the proposed DET PROTECT professional learning on Child Safe Standards and responding to disclosures, and consult with the Liaison Officer about appropriate referrals.</li> <li>All students continue to be immersed in the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships, including modelling of respectful relationships.</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<p><b>A principal and their leadership team undergo a baseline assessment of their employment conditions, organisational policies and curriculum resources (as set out in PART TWO of this resource kit).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The leadership team identifies key actions that they then implement to ensure that staff, students and the wider community constantly see the school modelling and promoting gender equality and respectful relationships.</li> </ul>

Content adapted from Our Watch. More information can be found at [www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/Respectful-relationships-education](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/Respectful-relationships-education)

# SCHOOL FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Victorian government, Catholic and independent schools can access a wide range of funding and support to effectively implement a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

This section of the resource details this support including:

## 1. Respectful Relationships workforce

- Providing direct support to schools in implementation and building their capacity to respond to family violence.

## 2. Leading and Partner School model

- Including direct funding to schools and drawing on the capacity of Leading Schools to create and lead communities of practice.

## 3. Professional learning

- Implementing a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships
- Delivering the *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* teaching and learning materials to meet the requirements of the Victorian Curriculum.

**PART TWO** of this resource includes clear implementation steps and checklists, which will prompt schools to engage with these supports.

## 1. Respectful Relationships workforce

A dedicated Respectful Relationships workforce is in place to work with schools and their communities.

The workforce comprises two staff in each of the Department of Education and Training's 17 local areas.

The Respectful Relationships Project Lead:

- Provides direct implementation support to schools
- Supports the Leading and Partner School model, including:
  - coordinating professional learning
  - developing the capacity of Leading Schools to build learning communities.

The Respectful Relationships Liaison Officer:

- Builds the school's capacity to respond to family violence
- Provides advice on evidence-based approaches and interventions and liaising with specialist services.

In addition:

- **Respectful Relationships specialist curriculum teachers** have been engaged by the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) to provide direct support to schools to implement and deliver the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum, with a priority focus on respectful relationships content.



- The **Respectful Relationships Unit** in DET's central office has been established to ensure that statewide supports and tools are available to enable Victorian government, Catholic and independent schools to successfully implement the Respectful Relationships initiative.

**PART TWO** of this resource includes more information on how this workforce will support schools in implementing a whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, and on responding to family and gender-based violence, detailing when and how schools can engage with key staff members.

## 2. Leading and Partner School model

This whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships is being rolled out across the state through a Leading and Partner School model.

Depending on a school's experience and readiness to implement a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships, Victorian schools elect to participate as either a Leading School or a Partner School.

### Leading School

More than 100 Victorian schools have been selected through an expression of interest process as having capacity to model good practice, lead and mentor Partner Schools and drive change across the state.

Leading Schools are provided with:

- \$10,000 in funding a year for two years (total \$20,000)
- Support to implement a whole-school approach within their own school, and for mentoring Partner Schools.

From mid-2017 until 2018 Leading Schools will assume the role of mentors to Partner Schools by:

- Providing best practice advice on implementation strategies
- Leading communities of practice
- Modelling respect and equality across the system.

## Partner Schools

Partner Schools will be mentored and supported by Leading Schools to implement a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

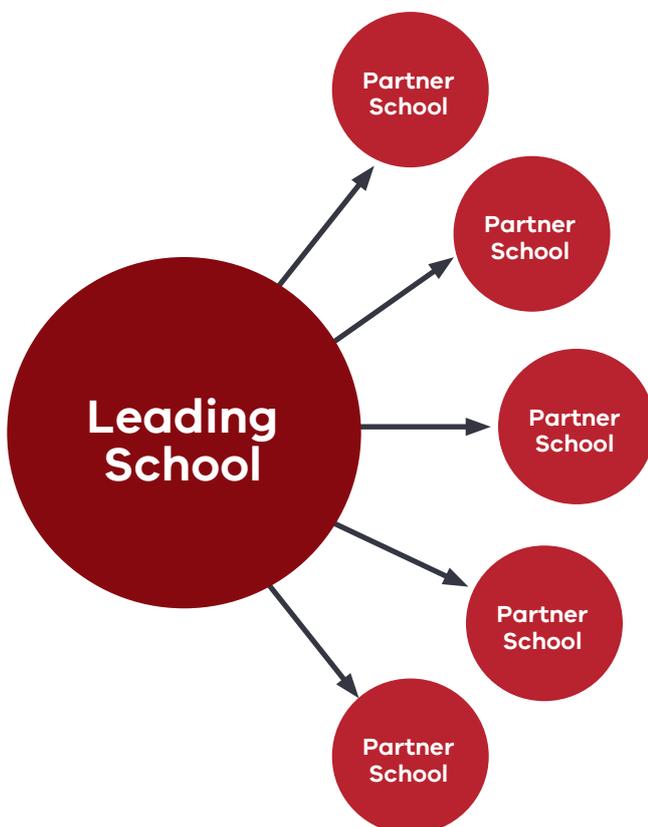
Partner Schools will receive \$4,000 in funding in the initial year and support to implement a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

This approach recognises the:

- Extensive experience many schools have in delivering respectful relationships education, either through the 2015 RREiS pilot or a range of initiatives addressing family violence
- Capacity of Leading Schools to act as system leaders and to form learning communities that work together to influence and drive change.

**PART TWO** of this resource includes further details on how the Leading and Partner School model can operate to build the capacity of schools in implementing the Respectful Relationships initiative.

Targeted professional learning will also be made available to Leading Schools, to workshop effective strategies to build communities of practice and support effective implementation of the initiative across these communities.



## Funding

Schools participating in the initiative will be provided with funding to support implementation, including:

**Leading Schools:** \$10,000 per year, over two years (total \$20,000)

**Partner Schools:** \$4,000 in the initial year.

## How will the funding work?

All transactions will occur via the Schools Targeted Funding Portal accessed from the Department's intranet. Non-government schools will have contractual agreements set up with the Department.

## How can schools use funding?

Allocated funding is to support school-based planning and implementation of Respectful Relationships and may be used for:

- Special payment to a staff member to lead work
- CRT release for planning time and training to lead a dedicated school-based team to plan and develop an action plan
- CRT release to attend the professional learning offered at a local and regional level (including DET-delivered professional development on DET's *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* teaching and learning materials)
- Purchasing resources in addition to what is freely available on the Department's website.

## 3. Professional learning program for schools

Respectful Relationships professional learning is tailored to:

- Build capacity of school staff to deliver curriculum and implement whole-school change
- Support the implementation of a Leading and Partner School model
- Build capacity across the system and into the future.

The program aims to reach all staff within participating schools. Schools will be contacted by their local area Project Lead and/or Leading School throughout the initiative with details of professional learning workshops and support available within their area.

# ENDING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence is one of the most significant and complex issues facing Victorian communities, with a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of many Victorians.

Intimate partner violence is the largest contributor to the ill-health of Australian women aged 18 to 44 years. It is more prevalent than better-known risk factors such as tobacco use, high cholesterol or use of illicit drugs.<sup>1</sup>

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change recognises that family violence is preventable and that schools play a critical role.

This supports the range of evidence that was presented to the Royal Commission into Family Violence by expert Australian and international organisations on the factors that cause violence against women. This body of research indicates that:

- Violence against women and their children is deeply rooted in power imbalances that are reinforced by gender norms and stereotypes
- Attitudes, gender stereotypes and social norms are learned through social and cultural expectations
- Schools can be effective in changing these attitudes and subsequently in reducing the incidence of family violence.

The Respectful Relationships initiative was a direct response to a recommendation from the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The Royal Commission recommended that the Victorian Government:

*...mandate the introduction of respectful relationships education into every government school in Victoria from Prep to Year 12.*

*Implementation should be staged to ensure school readiness and to allow for ongoing evaluation and adaptation.*

*It should be delivered through a whole-of-school approach and be consistent with best practice, building on the evaluation of the model being tested by the Department of Education and Training through Our Watch.*

In 2015 the Department of Education and Training partnered with Our Watch to pilot *Respectful Relationships Education in Schools* (RREiS).

This pilot demonstrated that effective respectful relationships education goes beyond the delivery of curriculum, and is best achieved through a whole-school approach, where positive attitudes, behaviours and gender equality are promoted and modeled across school communities.

The evaluation can be found at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/ourwatchrespectfulrelationships.pdf>

The Victorian Government has expanded the Royal Commission's recommendation by:

- Making a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships available to Catholic and independent schools
- Recognising that building the foundations for respectful relationships starts in early childhood, by delivering a professional development program for early childhood educators to increase their capacity to embed a Respectful Relationships approach into their teaching practices.

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<sup>1</sup> ANROWS, A preventable burden: Measuring and addressing the prevalence and health impacts of intimate partner violence in Australian women: Key findings and future directions, Compass Issue 07 (November 2016).

## VICTORIA'S PLAN FOR CHANGE

*Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change* outlines how Victoria will implement all 227 recommendations from Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence and achieve the vision of a Victoria free from family violence.

The plan lays out an ambitious agenda for the next decade, and includes a focus on preventing family violence from occurring in the first place through education, community awareness and targeted programs.

As outlined in the plan, the Victorian Government recognises that cultural change is necessary to address the unacceptably high rates of family violence across the state, in particular violence against women and their children.



## SAFE AND STRONG: VICTORIAN GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

*Safe and Strong: Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy* aims to build the attitudinal and behavioural change required to reduce violence against women and deliver gender equality.

The strategy incorporates the Respectful Relationships initiative and recognises and affirms the critical role that the Victorian education system plays in driving gender equality and in family violence prevention.

The strategy sets out a framework for enduring and sustained action over time and draws on global evidence of what works in gender equality.



# UNPACKING FAMILY VIOLENCE

## What is family violence?

Family violence occurs when someone exercises power and control over another person. It involves coercive and abusive behaviours that are designed to intimidate, humiliate, undermine and isolate; resulting in fear and insecurity.

Although every experience is unique, family violence is not a one-off incident for most victims. It is a pattern of behaviour that can occur over a long period of time. It does not always end when the victim ends the relationship — this period can be a very dangerous time as there is a heightened risk that the violence will escalate.

The most common and pervasive instances of family violence occur in current or former intimate partner relationships, perpetrated by men against women and their children.<sup>2</sup>

However, the term family violence\* includes all violence between family members, and partner against partner.

Family violence can cause lifelong devastation for families and can be especially damaging for children. For children, experiences of family violence may result in long-term physical, psychological and emotional trauma.

In economic terms, family violence costs Australia \$21.7 billion a year with an estimated \$7.8 billion a year carried by Australian governments for costs on health, administration and social welfare.<sup>3</sup>

It is critical to understand that a child's exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse and action must be taken to protect the child, and to mitigate or limit their trauma (see [PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)).

### \*COMMONLY USED TERMS

The Victorian Government most commonly refers to '**family violence**'.

Family violence covers a wide spectrum of conduct that involves an escalating spiral of violence. These behaviours can include physical and sexual abuse as well as psychological, emotional, cultural, spiritual and financial abuse.

The following terms are also often used within this context:

- **Violence against women**—this term denotes all forms of violence perpetrated against women and while it is not interchangeable with 'family violence', it does overlap.
- **Gender-based violence**—this term covers violence against girls and young women, such as dating violence and non-consensual sharing of sexual images, and violence experienced by the lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and intersex communities.

2 [www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence.html](http://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence.html)

3 PwC, *A high price to pay: The economic case for preventing violence against women* (November 2015).

## Gender and family violence

The 'primary prevention' of family violence means stopping violence from occurring in the first place. To do this, we have to identify the social conditions that drive violence.

Family violence is deeply rooted in power imbalances, which are reinforced by a range of gendered drivers (expressions of gender inequality). The four gendered drivers of violence against women (numbered 1–4 in Figure 4) impact the rate at which violence against women happens. Other reinforcing factors (see Figure 4) are not the cause of violence against women, but they do contribute to the severity and frequency of violence against women.

These gendered drivers reflect the underlying inequalities in social or economic power among different groups of people. We know that these expressions of gender inequality drive a large part of family violence and that women and their children are the main victims and the main perpetrators are men.

Understanding the drivers of violence is key to knowing how to prevent it and schools have a critical role in addressing the four gendered drivers of violence against women, and not focus just on the reinforcing factors.

The primary prevention model embedded in the whole-school approach seeks to change the social norms, structures and practices that perpetuate these inequalities and ultimately influence individual attitudes and behaviours leading to violence. A whole-school approach is key to driving the social and cultural change required across an entire school community. Prevention is not just a task for those affected by violence, nor is it simply the role of family violence services. Rather, prevention requires all kinds of individuals and communities to act on the underlying causes in everyday places, to promote respect and equality and to reject violence in all its forms.

This is why the Respectful Relationships initiative supports schools to take a holistic approach to prevention and is centered around addressing gender inequalities.

**FIGURE 4: GENDERED DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

	Particular expressions of gender inequality which consistently predict higher rates of violence against women:	What can the four gendered drivers look like in schools?
1.	Condoning violence against women	People minimising aggressive behaviour of boys towards girls by saying, "It's just boys being boys"
2.	Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life	The assumption that male principals and teachers are 'stronger' or 'firmer' than female leaders and teachers. For example, when a parent expresses they 'want my child to have a male teacher because he doesn't have a male role model at home'.
3.	Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity	Male students being less frequently disciplined than female students because disruptive, boyish behaviour is more 'expected' of boys.
4.	Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women	Male students using social media sites to rate female students based on their looks

**Reinforcing factors**

Within the context of gender drivers, reinforcing factors can increase the frequency and severity of violence. Factors include:

- Condoning of violence in general
- Experience of, and exposure to violence
- Weakening of pro-social behaviour (especially harmful use of alcohol)
- Socio-economic inequality and discrimination
- Backlash factors (increases in violence when male dominance, power or status is challenged).

Content adapted from Our Watch. More information can be found at [www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/Respectful-relationships-education](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/Respectful-relationships-education)

## A holistic approach to prevention

A holistic approach to respectful relationships recognises that gender inequality cannot be addressed in isolation, and consideration must be given to other forms of discrimination and disadvantage that influence and intersect with gender inequality.

Prevention needs to be approached in the context that:

- Families are diverse and come in many forms. Violence in all its forms occurs in all types of families
- Individuals are not solely defined by their gender - every individual is shaped by their experiences and attributes
- It is the existence of all forms of discrimination, and the interactions between them, that gives rise to and condones violence
- Family violence is experienced differently and to varying degrees based on a range of attributes – for example, for women who are subject to multiple forms of discrimination their experience of family violence is further compounded.

In order to prevent family violence, it is critical to take a holistic approach that:

- Challenges all forms of discrimination
- Ensures expressions of gender inequality are not addressed in isolation, but are considered in the context of people's experiences and how forms of social, political and economic discrimination and disadvantage influence and intersect with gender inequality.

## What are gender stereotypes?

The belief that women and men have different roles or characteristics (both in relationships and in society) is known as gender stereotyping.

Our beliefs about the way girls and boys, women and men are supposed to act are:

- Formed in childhood and adolescence
- Shaped by how we see gender roles and relationships in families, organisations (e.g. schools) and within media and popular culture.

Gender stereotypes can strongly influence:

- Attitudes and behaviours towards us, and our attitudes and behaviours towards others
- How we make decisions
- Our status access to power and control of resources.

### EXAMPLE OF HOW UNPACKING GENDER POWER RELATIONSHIPS CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

Students and school staff who participated in the Respectful Relationships Education in Schools pilot in 2015 identified many examples of changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in the classroom.

From data collected during the pilot, close to two-thirds of teachers (27 of 42) reported that they had observed improved classroom behaviour over the course of teaching the curriculum.

Close to half the teachers (47%) indicated that a positive impact of participating in the RREIS pilot was improved teacher/student relationships.

#### How the teachers felt:

*"Students [are now] more respectful of each other and to the teacher I team teach with."*

*"[Students are now] better at listening to the opinions of others or listening to alternative interpretations."*

#### How the students felt:

*"Say for example some boys making sexist jokes, I've definitely seen a change in that at our school"*

*"I kind of already knew that [gender-based violence was serious issue] but not to the extent of the percentages"*



## EXAMPLE OF HOW GENDER STEREOTYPES CAN IMPACT STAFF

### Situation

Upon returning to full-time work after working part-time for a year to care for young children, a man is jokingly mocked and asked if he had 'finished breastfeeding yet?'

### Stereotypes perpetuated by this response

That caring for a child is inherently a woman's role and that men who act as shared or primary carers must be 'women'; that is they are seen as less 'masculine' than other men.

### Impact

Criticism, ridicule and rejection are common ways that feminine and masculine norms are reinforced.

This 'policing', which often occurs playfully within peer groups, sends a message that it is not acceptable to go outside the norm and that doing so is a threat to an individual's 'status' as a woman or man.



# PART TWO: IMPLEMENTING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

This section:

- Steps through the six elements of the whole-school approach
- Provides practical tools and guidance to support schools in implementing Respectful Relationships through a five-step continuous improvement approach (Figure 5).

This section takes participating schools through key actions to support school-based planning and the implementation of Respectful Relationships. At a minimum, and as part of the five-step process, schools will be required to:

- Conduct an initial all staff briefing
- Establish a school-based team
- Examine if the school's policies and activities treat everyone equally
- Develop and implement an action plan
- Participate in professional learning.

An implementation checklist is available at **Attachment 1** to support schools to work through the step-by-step process.

## Six key elements of a whole-school approach

There are six key elements to a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships:

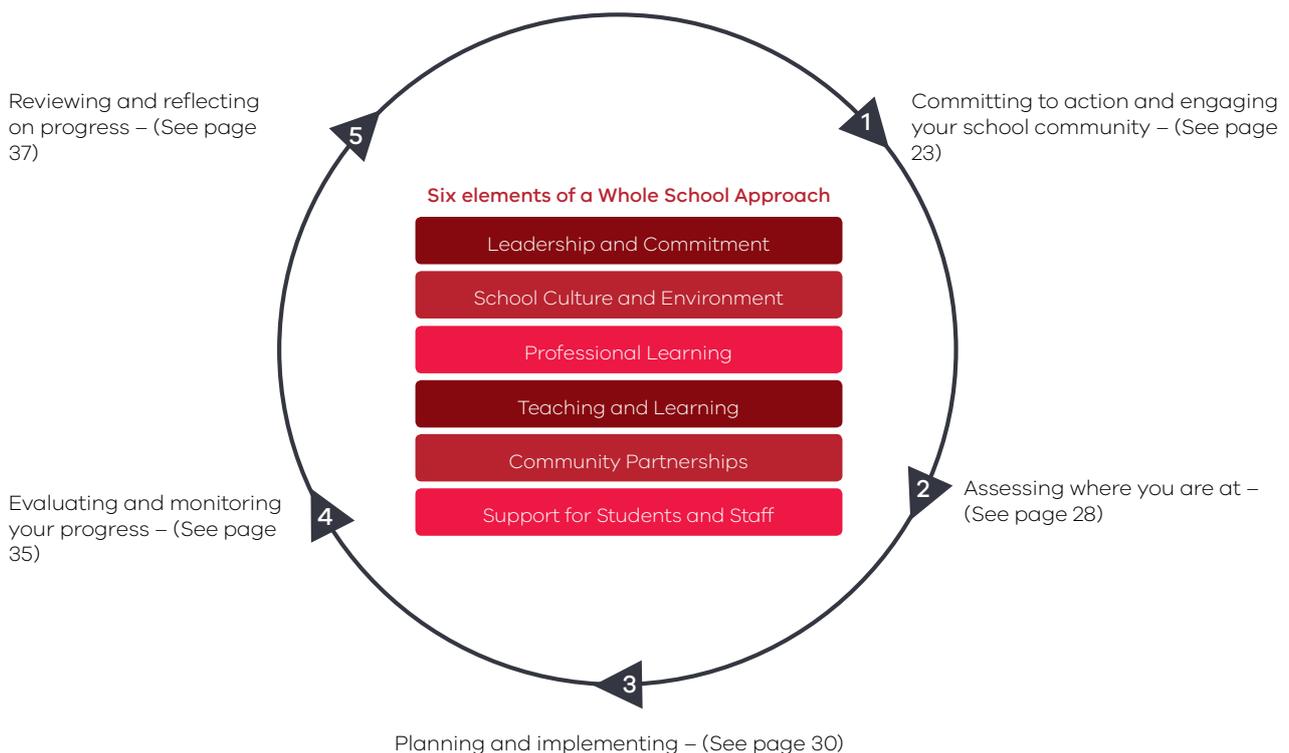
### Six elements of a Whole School Approach



This Resource Kit provides guidance and actions for schools to apply each of the six elements (illustrated above) using the five-step implementation approach, in the Action Planning Template.

An overview of the objectives of each key element is shown in Figure 6.

**FIGURE 5: OVERVIEW OF A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS**



**FIGURE 6: OBJECTIVES OF THE SIX KEY ELEMENTS**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Leadership and Commitment</b></p> <p>The principal and school leadership team drive school-wide commitment to the Respectful Relationships initiative by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Committing to implementing a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships, and recognising the vital role schools play in promoting gender equality and addressing family violence</li><li>• Modelling gender equality in their language, professional practice and decision making</li><li>• Speaking about issues of gender equality and family violence with the school community.</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>School Culture and Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gender equality and respectful relationships are articulated and promoted through the school's vision, values and ethos and in procedures and policies for schools as workplaces, education institutes and community hubs</li><li>• Students take leadership and social action to promote respectful relationships in their school and the wider community.</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Professional Learning Strategy</b></p> <p>All staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Receive information to effectively engage them in a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships</li><li>• Receive professional learning on appropriately responding to disclosures of violence or discrimination</li><li>• Are skilled and confident in the delivery of respectful relationships education, aligned to the Victorian Curriculum.</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Teaching and Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respectful relationships education is delivered across all year levels (as is required under the Victorian Curriculum). The <i>Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships</i> learning materials are designed to support schools to deliver on this commitment and to build students' skills, knowledge and attitudes to engage in respectful relationships and to reject attitudes or behaviours that enforce family violence.</li><li>• Respectful relationships is integrated across all curriculum areas and teachers have the capability and confidence to engage students in understanding and discussing gender inequality.</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Community Partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents and families are recognised and engaged as key partners in violence prevention. They are informed and engaged in understanding respectful relationships and provided with the opportunity to work in partnership with the school to prevent violence and gender inequality.</li><li>• Schools are engaged with local specialist family violence and sexual assault services who can provide support for staff and students experiencing family violence.</li><li>• Schools are supported by local agencies with expertise in gender equality and prevention of violence against women to implement a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Support for Students and Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schools recognise that there is a high likelihood that some members of the school community (including staff and students) may have or may be experiencing and witnessing family violence.</li><li>• School leaders feel confident that everyone in the school can identify and respond safely and effectively to suspicions, disclosures or incidents of family violence.</li></ul>

## Five-step continuous improvement cycle

This five-step continuous improvement cycle will assist schools to:

- Evaluate where they are at
- Prioritise and set goals
- Implement strategies
- Monitor activities and outcomes.

The steps are set out in **Figure 7** and are designed to be a continuous quality improvement cycle (it is recommended that schools repeat the process annually, and that it becomes embedded in school processes and culture).

This cycle complements the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) and the Annual Implementation Planning cycle for government schools.

Every school will be at a different stage in promoting gender equality and respectful relationships.

Schools may move through the steps in different ways and at different paces.

This resource provides implementation detail for all schools on each of the five steps.

For each step there is a:

- Descriptor of the objectives
- Range of suggested actions and corresponding resources
- Checklist to support schools to determine when to move onto the next step.

## How does this implementation approach complement existing planning cycles?

Implementing a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships can support all schools in undertaking their strategic planning.

For government schools the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships can be included in their Annual Implementation Plans and support the delivery of the priorities identified under the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO).

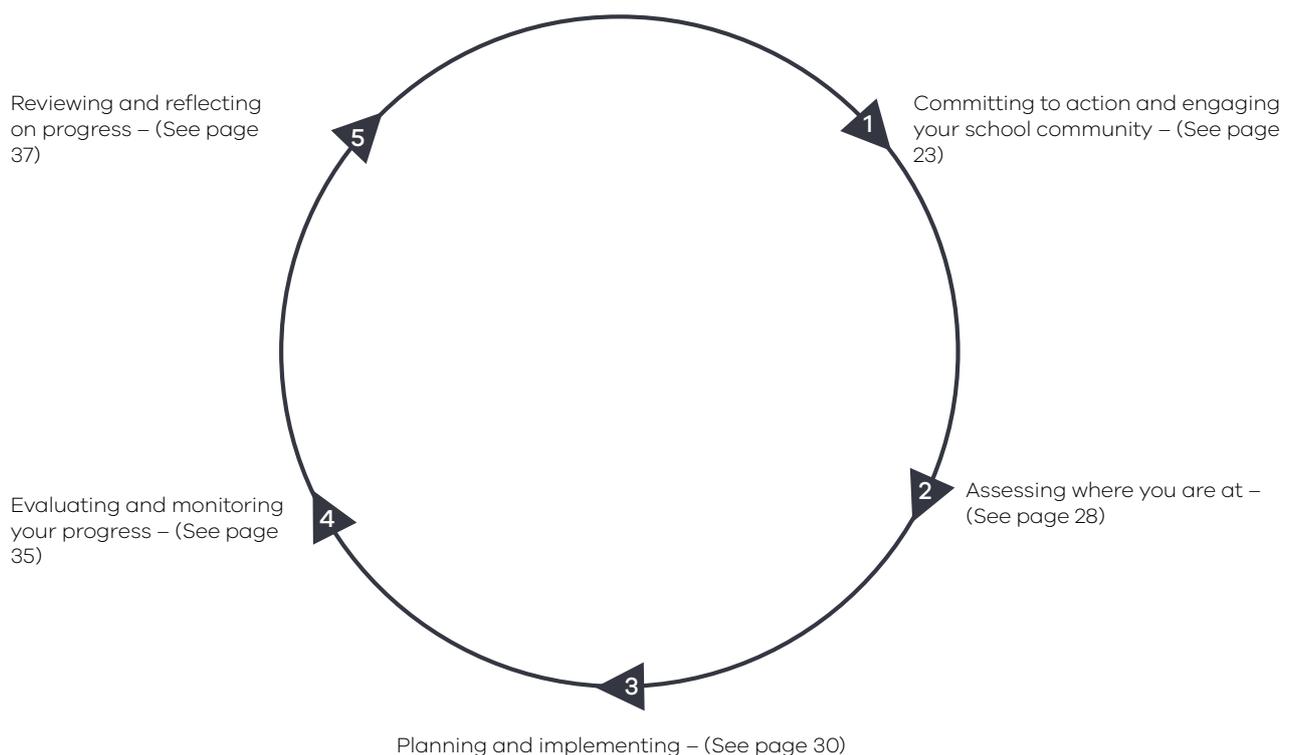
The whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships five-step implementation cycle complements the improvement cycles set out in FISO.

As outlined in **Figure 8**, a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships can support schools in delivering on a range of priorities under FISO.

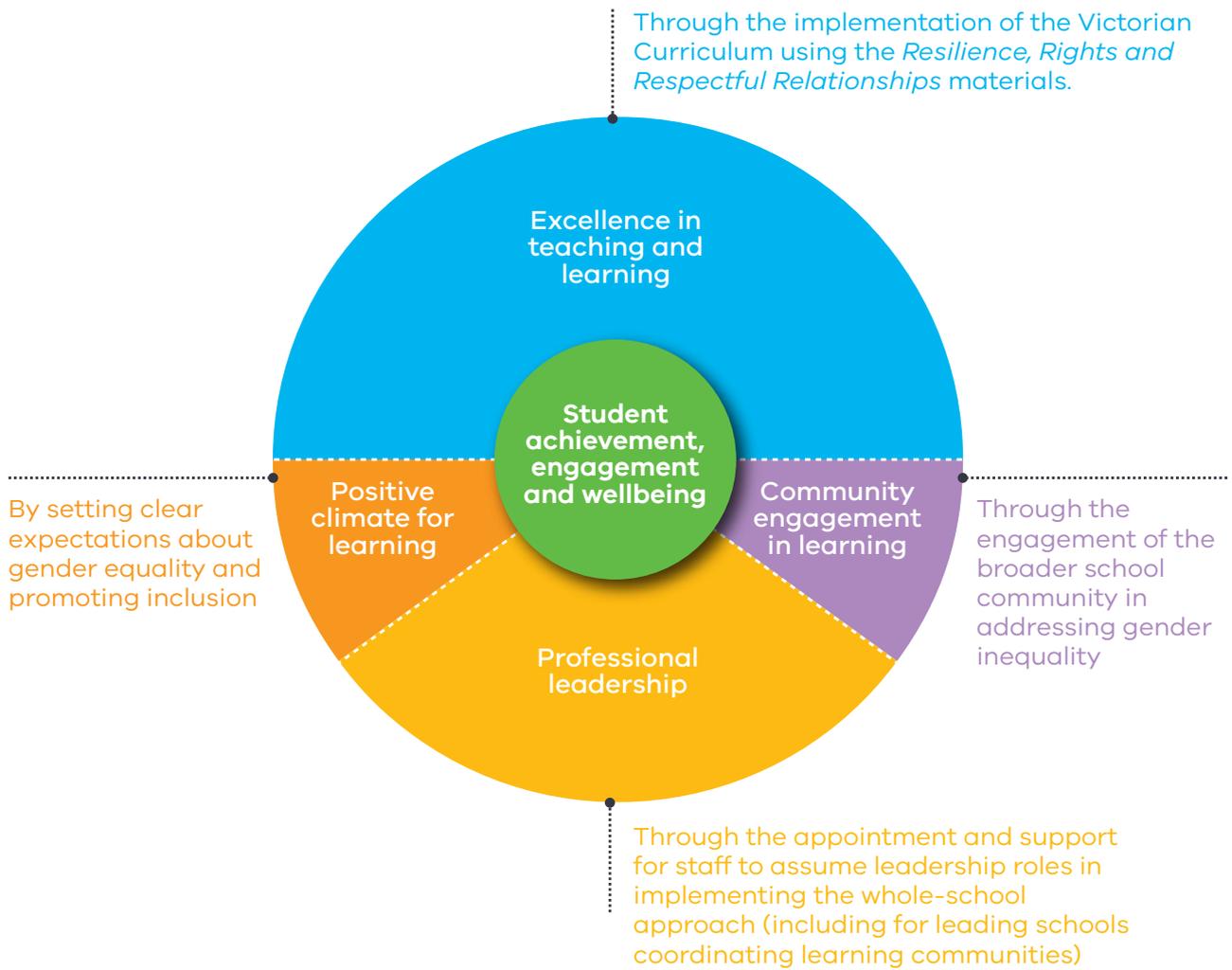
These include:

- Fostering excellence in teaching and learning, through the delivery of the new *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* materials and implementation of the Victorian Curriculum
- Creating a positive climate for learning, by setting clear expectations about gender equality and promoting inclusion
- Building professional leadership, through the appointment and support for staff to assume leadership roles in implementing the whole-school approach (including for leading schools coordinating learning communities)
- Strengthening community engagement in learning, through the engagement of the broader school community in addressing gender inequality and promoting respectful relationships.

**FIGURE 7: FIVE STEP IMPROVEMENT CYCLE**



**FIGURE 8:** ALIGNMENT OF FISO PRIORITIES WITH A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS



## Before beginning...

A wide range of social, cultural, political, biological, educational and economic factors influence our individual needs and realities, including community expectations of how we should behave and interact based on our gender.

Before moving into the implementation of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships, it is important to understand our unique perspectives and how they can influence our approach to the work.

Being sensitive to potential gender bias can improve our implementation of the Respectful Relationships initiative, encouraging us not to be 'blind' to harmful gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and inequality.

## How do you spot gender bias?

One way to look out for gender bias is to ask questions about our own values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

These questions can help to create and maintain space for safe and honest communication and feedback about gender equality. For example, in a school community it is necessary to understand how the gender of staff, students and families might affect how students, staff and parents perceive and experience their workplace, their education or their child's school.

## HOW CAN WE BE SENSITIVE TO GENDER BIAS?

Being sensitive to gender bias helps us see the different ways that gender impacts how we experience the world and recognising when, where and how this difference occurs.

### Example questions:

- How will this policy, action or approach impact on women, men, girls and boys?
- How will the realities of girls and boys impact on their ability to participate in this situation?
- What are the needs of women, men, girls and boys in this instance?
- Is power shared equally between women and men and girls and boys in this instance? How will this policy, action or approach impact on how power is shared?
- How might the policy, activity or approach inadvertently perpetuate or actively work to overcome existing stereotypes and gender inequities?
- Are there measures in place to address gender inequities and to ensure that girls and boys, women and men have equal opportunities, and are equally valued and respected?
- How might your own values, biases and assumptions affect your decisions?
- Do you have specific beliefs about the roles of women and men in society?
- Does this impact on your actions and decision-making?

## Step 1: COMMITTING TO ACTION AND ENGAGING YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

This step has three parts:

- A. Committing to action
- B. Establishing a Respectful Relationships team
- C. Trauma and support

### A. Committing to action

Effective implementation of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships begins with:

- A shared high-level understanding of the initiative and its potential to address family violence
- A shared commitment to implementing the initiative and to modelling gender equality across the school community.

To fulfill this step schools will need to engage with:

1. Staff
2. Students
3. Broader school community.

Strategies for engaging with each of these groups are included in the following pages.

#### i. Engaging with staff

It is important that staff members have a shared understanding of what will be expected of them in implementing a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

A genuine whole-school approach requires that all staff (not only teachers) understand the importance of promoting gender equality and respectful relationships in preventing violence.

All staff will need to:

- Be supported to build a culture where gender stereotypes are challenged, gender-based discrimination is unacceptable and gender equality is actively promoted and modelled in and outside the classroom
- Be equipped to respond to questions, challenges and disclosures of violence being experienced, which may arise from the implementation of the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships (see C. Trauma and Support).

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

A wide range of resources are available to support schools in engaging their staff with this initiative.

How schools engage their staff will depend on the school structure and culture. However, key steps include:

- Providing professional learning for school leaders to build their understanding of, and capacity to drive a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships (Project Leads will contact schools to coordinate this)
- Providing professional learning for school staff to build their understanding of, and capacity to support the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships (this includes the delivery of an All Staff Briefing slide presentation)
- Encouraging regular discussions in whole-staff or team meetings about the initiative and its objectives and about equality and/or violence
- Sharing information and resources with staff to prompt their thinking, learning and discussions about gender equality and/or family violence (schools can use resources available on the Respectful Relationships website)
- Addressing any questions or concerns about the initiative (schools can use a range of resources available on the Respectful Relationships website).

**For additional support, Leading Schools can contact their Project Leads about effectively engaging staff.**

**Partner Schools can draw on the advice of their Leading School and learning community for practical advice.**

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR STEP 1

- Video: [Let's Change the Story: Violence Against Women in Australia](#)
- Video: [Attitudes to gender equality and violence against women](#)

## ii. Engaging your school community

It is important that there is a shared understanding and commitment to the initiative across the school community.

Parents and families are central to successful implementation and will need to have an understanding of:

- What a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships entails
- The benefits of a whole-school approach (e.g. implementation of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships can lead to a decrease in attitudes that allow violence to occur and an improvement in behaviours and engagement among students and staff)
- Their role in supporting the initiative and modelling respectful relationships and gender equality.

It is important to come up with a shared vision of what your school wants to achieve. Schools can do this by involving staff, students and families in developing the vision.

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

There are a number of ways to inform the school community about what the school wants to achieve.

Schools may already have a range of effective communication processes (e.g. e-newsletters, forums, school community events).

Access the following resources to support effective communication with the school community:

- School community newsletter excerpts available from your Project Lead
- School promotional posters
- Information on the initiative for your school community is available on the Department's website.

## iii. Engaging your students

Ensuring that students are engaged in the initiative is critical to its success. Valuing student input in all areas of the school can strengthen and reinforce efforts to promote gender equality and create a sense of pride and belonging.

Students can also play a leading role in implementing a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

For example, students can assist in:

- Assessing where the school is at as part of Step 2. (e.g. by engaging with, designing and analysing school data and surveys)
- Designing and implementing strategies to address gender stereotypes and promote gender equality within their schools (e.g. students can take an active role in developing the school's Action Plan and can be assigned key actions to implement).

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

There are many ways to engage students in the Respectful Relationships initiative (in addition to the delivery of the new *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* teaching and learning materials).

Schools may already have a range of successful strategies to communicate with and engage students in planning and implementing improvement strategies (e.g. assemblies, student led-forums, student action groups).

## iv. Engaging local specialist agencies

Local area agencies can support schools to respond to student and staff disclosures of family violence, and provide expertise in gender equality and prevention of violence against women.

Engaging specialist community agencies can assist schools to:

- Implement a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships
- Connect with other local prevention activities
- Link students and staff impacted by family violence to specialist services
- Update family violence and sexual assault policies and procedures in line with latest best practice.
- Have a secondary consultation to ensure students and staff who have disclosed are receiving the support and specialist services they need.

To find your local family violence or sexual assault services visit: [www.thelookout.org.au](http://www.thelookout.org.au)

## B. Establishing a Respectful Relationships team

Successful implementation of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships will rely on having a dedicated and engaged team to:

- Lead the implementation of the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships
- Drive and promote the initiative across the school community
- Identify and celebrate successes.

### Respectful Relationships team membership:

- A member of the school leadership team
- Key teachers with a particular interest and/or with responsibility for teaching respectful relationships content in the Victorian Curriculum
- Wellbeing staff
- Parents can help to capture the views of the school community, they may have unique skills and knowledge to draw on and play a critical role in modelling respectful relationships and supporting learning
- Students - student voice is an important part of a whole-school approach, and can maximise student engagement.

This broad membership is important to:

- Ensure different perspectives are captured
- Help to get collective buy-in from across the school community
- Provide a broad range of expertise and skills to fulfill the varied tasks and responsibilities
- Deliver a sustainable model to ensure work keeps going despite team turnover.

Once established, the school's Respectful Relationships team will be involved in, and committed to, identifying, planning, leading and resourcing activities to promote gender equality and implement Respectful Relationships across the school community.

## SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

The Respectful Relationships team will play a key role in leading the school through the five-step continuous improvement cycle.

Key tasks for the Respectful Relationships team include:

- Developing a clear understanding of the importance of the Respectful Relationships initiative and gender equality and what is trying to be achieved (see Step 1—A. Committing to Action)
- Building an understanding within the school's community about the initiative (see Step 1—A. Committing to Action)
- Creating ongoing mechanisms for staff feedback on gender equality in the workplace (see Step 2)
- Creating mechanisms for ongoing feedback from the wider school community, including students (see Step 2)
- Undertaking a school gender equality assessment to highlight areas of need (see Step 2)
- Identifying actions to promote gender equality across the school community (see Step 3)
- Supporting staff in the delivery of respectful relationships content in the curriculum (see Step 3)
- Undertaking and coordinating evaluation surveys and reporting (see Step 5)
- Promoting and celebrating the school's success.

Additionally, professional learning for school leaders will provide an opportunity for leaders to consider the composition and operation of their Respectful Relationships teams (Project Leads will contact schools).

For additional support Leading Schools can contact their Project Leads about the establishment of effective Respectful Relationships teams. Partner Schools can draw on the advice of their Leading School and learning community.

## C. Trauma and support

School staff and school community members will bring different perceptions, experiences and history to the initiative.

Reflecting on something as personal as gender can be confronting. Likewise, discussing family violence may:

- Cause some distress for students or staff impacted by family violence
- Increase disclosures from students experiencing family violence or violence within their own intimate relationships
- Increase suspicions that a student is experiencing family violence or child abuse.

In reflection of this, it is critical that staff:

- Feel confident that they can recognise the warning signs a student may be experiencing family violence or violence within their own intimate relationship
- Feel confident in responding to disclosures and meeting their legal obligations to protect children
- Know their role in responding to disclosures from students, colleagues or school community members impacted by family violence and when to seek further support from within the school, and specialist family violence or sexual assault agencies
- Know where to go for support if they are impacted by family violence
- Consider whether staff members would find it supportive to co-teach with a colleague, or to negotiate with school leadership about who is best equipped to teach particular elements of material.

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

Relevant staff should undertake professional learning on:

- The *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* teaching and learning materials, which will build teachers' capacity, teach the content confidently, including familiarising teachers with the pedagogical features of the learning activities, highlighting the evidence and advice on appropriately responding to instances of student disclosures.

All school staff should also be familiar with the [Child Safe Standards](#), which will build the capacity of school staff members to identify and respond to suspicions, disclosure and incidents of family violence and child abuse (proposed training details will be made available to schools).

See the PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse at [www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect) for clear advice on meeting legal obligations and for how to best support students. This guide includes Four Critical Actions that must be undertaken for disclosures, suspicions and incidents of abuse.

## IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO ALL FORMS OF ABUSE FOR VICTORIAN SCHOOLS

The Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse for Victorian Schools guidance was developed by the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria. It supports all school staff in Victorian schools to take action if they suspect, or are witness to, any form of child abuse, including family violence.

The guidance includes information on the Four Critical Actions that schools must undertake when responding to disclosures, suspicions and incidents of child abuse.

A school's duty of care to a student who is living in a family where violence is occurring between their parents, or who has disclosed an experience of dating violence within their own relationship extends beyond mandatory reporting requirements.

It is important when addressing the issue of family violence with students that secondary consultation is undertaken to ensure that the safety of both the child and their parent (usually the mother) who is the victim of violence is paramount and that action taken by the school does not increase the risk of violence to a student or their parent. For further information about what to say when you receive a disclosure, see [www.partnersinprevention.org.au/resources/responding-to-disclosures/](http://www.partnersinprevention.org.au/resources/responding-to-disclosures/)

The guidance and Four Critical Actions can be found on the PROTECT online portal, along with a range of other resources on how schools can create a culture of child safety, support students and meet relevant legal obligations. Download a copy of the guidance at: [www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect)



### Referral services

Referral services for school staff, students and school community members:

- The National Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence hotline 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)
- Safe Steps' 24/7 family violence response line 1800 015 188
- Centres Against Sexual Assault [www.casa.org.au](http://www.casa.org.au)
- Sexual Assault Crisis Line 1800 806 292
- No To Violence Men's Referral Service 1300 766 491
- Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 008 (Victorian government schools only).
- Lookout service directory [www.thelookout.org.au](http://www.thelookout.org.au) (for family violence referral and support services across Victoria)

For additional support, schools can contact the Respectful Relationships Liaison Officers who are available to build schools' capacity to respond to family violence.

### Step 1: KEY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

- Build your school community's understanding of, and commitment to, a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.
- Build the understanding and capacity of school leaders to drive a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships by attending Respectful Relationships leadership professional learning.
- Provide an all-staff briefing on Respectful Relationships to help develop a strong and shared understanding among key staff and leaders of the gendered drivers of family violence and the core elements of respectful relationships education.
- Establish a Respectful Relationships team to lead and plan for the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships and ensure this team is supported in its work and adequately resourced.
- Share information and resources with staff to prompt their thinking, learning and discussions about gender equality and/or family violence.
- Ensure that staff are aware of available supports should discussion about family violence cause distress.
- Ensure that teaching staff undertake the professional learning on the *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* teaching and learning materials, which will build teachers' capacity to deliver respectful relationships education in the classroom.
- Ensure that all staff are familiar with Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools (available at [www.education.vic.gov.au/protect/](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect/)) and complete the professional learning when it is made available.

**When you have completed this checklist you have completed Step 1 and are ready for Step 2.**

## Step 2: ASSESSING WHERE YOU ARE AT

Conducting a school baseline assessment enables schools to:

- Explore how gender equality and respectful relationships are currently promoted
- Identify areas that might need improvement across the six elements of the whole-school approach (before developing an action plan in Step 3).

It is important that measures are taken to consult with staff, students, parents and carers to identify and eliminate conscious and unconscious gender discrimination, and provide equal opportunities regardless of gender.

A Baseline Assessment Template (**Attachment 2**) has been designed to assist the school leadership/Respectful Relationships team to:

- Ensure that participating school community members have an understanding of what a baseline assessment is and what it means for school operations
- Engage with key staff, (including the leadership team), students and families to undertake the assessment drawing on, and interpreting new and existing data
- Work through the six key elements of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships and identify gaps and opportunities in the school's approach to gender equality and respectful relationships.

It can be used as both:

- A baseline assessment of the school's current activity and capacity for change, and
- A tool to guide planning actions as part of the whole-school approach to the Respectful Relationships' annual cycle.

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

The Respectful Relationships team should lead the completion of the Baseline Assessment Template (available at **Attachment 2**).

When completing the assessment the team should use the prompts within the assessment template to:

- Ensure participating school community members have an understanding of what a baseline assessment is and what it means for school operations to assess current activity on gender equality
- Engage with key staff, (including the leadership team), students and families (see strategies on following page)
- Visit the Workplace Gender Equality Agency at [www.wgea.gov.au](http://www.wgea.gov.au) for useful resources and information
- Draw on new and existing data to complete the assessment template.

Professional learning for school leaders will provide an opportunity for leaders to consider strategies for completing the gender equality assessment.

At this stage, schools should discuss their baseline assessment with the other schools in their communities of practice. This will allow schools to identify gaps and share best practice. This process can be supported by Project Leads and community sector agencies.

## Creating opportunities for staff to provide feedback on their experience of gender equality in their workplace

Opportunities for feedback:

- Considering questions about gender equality in staff surveys and at interviews
- Offering a third-party feedback channel so staff can report issues to someone outside the leadership team
- Acknowledging the principles of merit and equity
- Undertaking a review of staff roles and responsibilities to ensure gender equality is modeled.

## Creating opportunities for students and families to provide feedback on their experience of gender equality in their school

Opportunities for feedback:

- Engaging the school's student body and/or Student Action Team to develop strategies to collect feedback from students and their families
- Including questions about gender equality in student surveys and reviewing these to identify recurring issues
- Looking at school activities to ensure male and female students have equal access, resources, support and opportunities to participate
- Surveying students and families on issues of gender equality.

### SAMPLE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Students could be directly involved in helping to identify gender equality in your school. The below statements may be useful in starting a conversation with students about respectful relationships:

- Our school plans and runs activities to promote gender equality and respectful relationships.
- Our school leaders, including the principal, actively promote gender equality and respectful relationships through school newsletters, assembly, posters and in conversation.
- There are opportunities for me to be involved in organising student voice activities around gender equality and respectful relationships at school (e.g. SRC, Student Leadership, awareness raising days, celebration days, student led activities etc).
- The school seeks feedback and my opinion on safety, gender equality, respectful relationships, discrimination and harassment for planning purposes.
- I feel confident that my school would know how to support me if I was feeling unsafe or experiencing family violence at home or school.

### Step 2: KEY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

- Ensure key staff have a clear understanding of gendered analysis and what it means for school operations.
- Undertake the Baseline Assessment (available at **Attachment 2**), by:
  - Engaging with key staff, (including the leadership team), students, parents and carers.
  - Drawing on new and existing data to complete the assessment template.
  - Test baseline assessment with your community of practice, supported by a Leading School and Project Lead.

**When you have completed this checklist you have completed Step 2 and are ready for Step 3.**

## Step 3: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING

This step has three parts:

- A. Developing an Action Plan
- B. Alignment with Annual Implementation Planning (AIP) and FISO (government schools only)
- C. Developing and reviewing school policies

### A. Developing an Action Plan

Once the school assessment is completed schools will have a better understanding of the areas of need and what can be done to make short-term but significant changes.

Step 3 requires schools to develop an Action Plan (**Attachment 3**), which maps the school's priorities over the six elements of the whole-school approach.

The Action Plan template has been designed to prompt schools to identify the actions they can take to address gender inequality and promote respectful relationships within the school.

Schools can include a broad range of actions within the Action Plan, for example:

- Developing or reviewing key policies for staff and students in the promotion of gender equality across different learning areas
- Communicating regularly with the school community in increasing awareness and confirming the school's commitment to preventing family violence.

The template prompts schools to consider timing, resourcing and responsibility, noting that:

- It is important to consider actions across the school year, as not all actions can be undertaken in one year, and some of the larger actions may need to be broken up into smaller activities that will build towards the achievement of a larger goal
- It is recommended that actions are planned, with clearly identified steps towards larger goals.

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

It is recommended that the Respectful Relationships team oversee completion of the Action Plan template (available at **Attachment 3**).

The completed Action Plan should be signed off by the leadership team and shared among the staff community to help promote whole-school ownership and accountability to meet the priority actions.

The identified actions should be included within the school's broader planning with clear timelines, milestones and resourcing.

Identified Respectful Relationships team staff members should be assigned accountability for each action and be asked to report back on progress.

Professional Learning for School Leaders will provide an opportunity for leaders to consider strategies for the implementation of the gender equality assessment.

For additional support and expert advice on developing and implementing the Action Plan, Leading schools can contact their local area Project Lead. Partner Schools are encouraged to seek support from Leading Schools and within their learning communities.

Before agreeing on the priority actions within the Action Plan it is important to consider:

- Do these actions respond to the feedback and evidence gathered from members of the school community?
- Do these actions address both the needs of staff and students?
- Are these actions likely to help create sustainable cultural change in our school?
- Do these actions align with the goals and strategies in the School Strategic Plan?
- As a Leading or Partner School, have you planned the use of the funding provided by the Department to build knowledge, enhance resources and support systems to undertake these actions?
- Are there appropriate resources to implement these actions?

### GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS ONLY

- Have we incorporated the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships planning into our AIP and identified how Respectful Relationships fits into the FISO (See section B. Planning and the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes)?

## B. Alignment with Annual Implementation Planning and FISO (government schools only)

Implementing a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships can support government schools in the delivery of the priorities identified under the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO).

As outlined in Figure 9, the Respectful Relationships cycle of continuous improvement complements the improvement cycles set out in FISO.

A whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships can support schools in delivering on a range of priorities under FISO.

Figure 10 highlights these FISO priority areas and their alignment with:

- Excellence in teaching and learning, through the implementation of the new *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* materials
- A positive climate for learning, by setting clear expectations about gender equality and promoting inclusion
- Professional leadership, through the appointment and support for staff to assume leadership roles in implementing the whole-school approach (including for Leading Schools coordinating learning communities)
- Community engagement in learning, through the engagement of the broader school community in addressing gender inequality and promoting respectful relationships.

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

It is recommended that government schools incorporate Respectful Relationships planning into the AIP in one of two ways:

- Selecting one of the FISO priorities that aligns with a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships within Section 2 of the AIP (see Figure 10)
- Including its Respectful Relationships planning in the Other Improvement Model dimensions area of the AIP (Section 3 of the AIP).

**FIGURE 9: ALIGNMENT OF FISO IMPROVEMENT CYCLE WITH RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS**



**FIGURE 10:** ALIGNMENT OF FISO PRIORITIES WITH RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS



## C. Developing and reviewing school policies

Reviewing and embedding respectful relationships and gender equality within policies and procedures is central to the implementation of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

Schools are required by federal and state equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation and by state institutions, such as the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, to have particular policies in place.

Embedding a culture of gender equality also requires a commitment to promote respectful attitudes, norms, behaviours and practices within the school's broader policies and procedures.

To achieve this it is recommended that schools develop or review their:

- Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Policy
- Student Engagement Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct.

It is also important to make sure that these policies include a clear commitment to supporting students and staff who are experiencing or have previously experienced family violence.

Having clear policies in place sends a strong message to students and staff that the school is a safe place where they can disclose their experience and be linked to appropriate support.

## SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

Schools develop or review their:

- Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Policy (guidance available at **Attachment 4**)
- Student Engagement Policy (guidance available at **Attachment 5**)
- Staff Code of Conduct (guidance available at **Attachment 6**)

Schools should reflect on their individual context and needs and adapt this guidance as necessary.

Schools should also consider how they have articulated their support for students and staff who are experiencing or have previously experienced family violence.

This may include drawing on the guidance in *Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse within Victorian Schools* to familiarise staff and the school community with the school's obligations and available supports (available at [www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect)).

For additional support and expert advice on developing and reviewing school policies Leading Schools can contact their local area Project Lead.

Partner schools are encouraged to seek support from their Leading school and within their learning communities.

For advice about evidence-based approaches to supporting students impacted by family violence schools can contact the Respectful Relationships Liaison Officer.

### Step 3: KEY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

- Engage the Respectful Relationships team in the development of the school's Action Plan.
- Complete the Action Plan (template at **Attachment 3**) to map the school's priorities over the six elements of the whole-school approach and plan actions.
- Ensure that the plan:
  - Responds to the feedback and evidence gathered from members of the school community
  - Equally addresses the needs of staff and students
  - Includes actions that are likely to create sustainable cultural change
  - Aligns with the goals and strategies in the School Strategic Plan
  - Sets out the use of the funding provided by the Department (for Leading and Partner Schools)
  - Assigns responsibility for actions to ensure accountability
  - Is signed off by the leadership team and shared among the staff and school community.
- Work with the Respectful Relationships team to develop and review policies including:
  - Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Policy (guidance available at **Attachment 4**)
  - Student Engagement Policy (guidance available at **Attachment 5**)
  - Staff Code of Conduct (guidance available at **Attachment 6**).
- Promote the school's capacity to support students and staff who are experiencing or have experienced family violence (e.g. circulate student, staff and parent/carer factsheets).
- Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse within Victorian Schools, available at ([www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect)).

**When you have completed this checklist you have completed Step 3 and are ready for Step 4.**

## Step 4: EVALUATING AND MONITORING YOUR PROGRESS

This step has two parts:

- A. School-based evaluation
- B. Statewide evaluation

### A. School-based evaluation

School-based evaluation enables individual schools to assess their own performance and progress in student achievement, wellbeing and engagement. Schools are encouraged to collect information about their activities and prior efforts to assess which areas may need further attention and investment.

Individual schools require information about their own school community to help track their progress as they implement Respectful Relationships.

Each school that participates in Respectful Relationships will begin their journey at a different starting point. School-based evaluation supports each individual school to set its own targets, develop measures of success and track progress relative to its own starting point. To assess a school's baseline, each school will review their policies, procedures, activities and school culture to ensure consistency with the six components of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

This assessment will assist schools to inform an Action Plan, which documents their current status and the milestones schools expect to meet as they implement Respectful Relationships (developed at Step 3).

When evaluating and monitoring progress against these milestones, it is important for schools to consider not only what has been achieved but also the barriers and enablers to success, and lessons they can share with other schools.

For Leading schools, the local area Project Lead will be available to provide support on how to effectively evaluate progress.

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

Evaluation support tools and surveys are under development through a statewide evaluation process with participating schools.

These tools will also support schools in undertaking individual evaluation and data collection.

Schools should involve students, parents and staff and consider the following:

- Have we implemented the intended actions?
- Did we change any strategies?
- What data have we collected or need to collect to measure changes? Schools may wish to revisit data collection methods used in Step 2 to compare against baseline data.
- Did we meet the expected milestones?
- What can we do in the future to continue to improve?

Professional Learning for School Leaders will build capacity to undertake effective school-based evaluations

For additional support and expert advice on undertaking a school-based evaluation Leading Schools can contact their local area Project Lead.

Partner Schools are encouraged to seek support from their Leading school and within their learning communities.

## B. Statewide evaluation

The evidence demonstrating that respectful relationships education is an effective form of primary prevention of gender-based and family violence is growing.

The Government's commitment to a statewide rollout of Respectful Relationships offers Victorian schools a unique opportunity to contribute to this evidence base by participating in the statewide Departmental evaluation.

### What are the aims of the Department-led Respectful Relationships evaluation?

Each school participating in the Respectful Relationships initiative will evaluate and monitor its progress in their school community. In much the same way, the Government is seeking to measure the impact of a system-level change on family violence and gender inequality.

### School involvement

As the evaluation gets underway, participating schools will be asked to undertake a range of evaluation activities including:

- Surveys
- Group discussions
- Interviews.

Evaluators will gather information from teachers, students, parents and families, community agencies, Respectful Relationships local area staff and school leadership teams to understand how the implementation approach is working.

Evaluators will gather information to build an understanding of:

- How Respectful Relationships is implemented effectively in individual schools
- What supports, resources and activities schools find valuable
- What the Department can do to continue to improve the support provided to schools.

#### Step 4: KEY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

- Use the Action Plan (and identified data collection methods) to determine whether the school:
  - Implemented the intended actions
  - Collected sufficient data
  - Achieved the expected milestones
  - Modified any strategies based on the evaluation outcomes.
- Has the school responded to any requests to contribute to the statewide evaluation?

**When you have completed this checklist you have completed Step 4 and are ready for Step 5.**

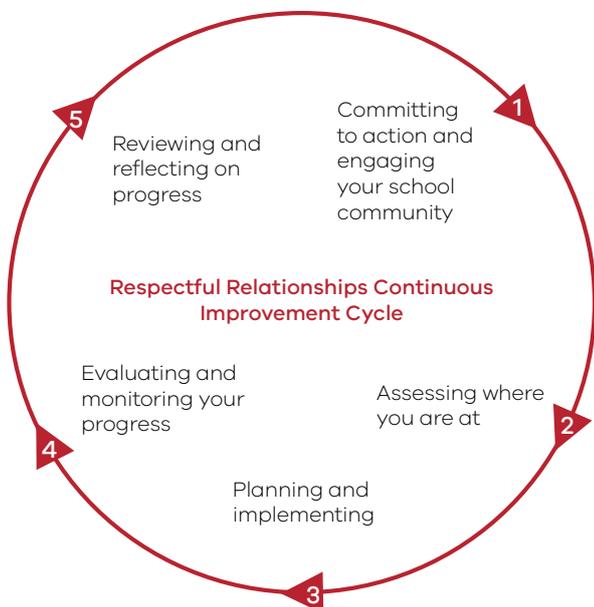
## Step 5: REVIEWING AND REFLECTING ON PROGRESS

Reviewing and reflecting on progress is an essential step in the cycle of continuous improvement.

Reviewing progress and considering what further actions the school community can take to promote gender equality and address family violence will help to ensure that the school continues to drive real change.

A whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships is a cycle of continuous improvement. Once schools have moved through the five steps, they are encouraged to complete the cycle again.

It is recommended that this is an annual process and becomes embedded in a school's processes and culture.



### Step 5: KEY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

- Engage with the Respectful Relationships team and broader school community to:
  - Reflect on the evaluation and its outcomes
  - Consider areas that haven't worked as intended and/or require change
  - Celebrate successes and continue to promote and build a shared commitment to promoting gender equality and addressing family violence (Linking back to Step 1 of the continuous improvement cycle).

**When you have completed this checklist you have completed Step 5.**

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

When reviewing and revisiting the Respectful Relationships planning and implementation process, it is suggested that schools:

#### Keep talking

Communicating with staff and other members of the school community about your commitment to promoting gender equality should be a continual process. Keep others up-to-date on priority actions and progress that has (or has not) been made.

#### Reflect and learn from what has been tried

The primary prevention of family violence is relatively new. Respectful Relationships is informed by significant research and experience, and there are many lessons to learn from how it is implemented.

Make space to reflect honestly on how things are going and do not be afraid to identify areas or strategies that need improvement.

#### Celebrate successes, however small

Cultural change takes a long time and moves at a different pace in different settings, groups and age levels.

For example:

- Students may be quick to agree with respectful relationships messages in the classroom but need time to identify and apply them in their everyday lives
- Students may readily promote gender equality and can actively support staff to see opportunities to promote gender equality in their teaching practice or interactions with others.

It is important to use the positive examples that you see as models and celebrate these achievements.

It is important to celebrate successes as the school progresses through the steps of implementation.

Look for ways to celebrate milestones, such as establishing a team, and developing your action plan—this helps maintain interest and motivation throughout the whole process.

# PART THREE: IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

## ATTACHMENT 1:

### Implementation checklist

Key activity/milestones	Estimated duration	Status (Underway/complete)	Timelines			
			Term <input type="checkbox"/>	Term <input type="checkbox"/>	Term <input type="checkbox"/>	Term <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Step 1: Commit to action and engage community</b>						
Attend a leadership briefing	Half or whole day					
Release key staff (minimum 2 teachers) to attend RRRR PD	Two consecutive days					
Hold an initial whole staff briefing (and set dates throughout the year for further meetings)	1-2 hours					
Engage broader school community of commitment						
Establish a Respectful Relationships team						
Plan and manage for how to spend funding (own school and as a Lead in a Cluster)						
Release staff to attend PD for managing disclosures and utilising referral pathways to ensure affected students and staff are supported						
<b>Step 2: Assessing where you're at</b>						
Conduct Gender Equity Assessment and Reflection Tool	Within a term					
Participate in staff, student and parent attitudes survey	As and when required					
<b>Step 3: Planning and Implementing</b>						
Analyse results from school-based evaluation to inform an Action Plan	2-3 weeks					
Develop and publish Action Plan (identify long-term actions with at least 3-4 priority actions to complete)	Within a term					
<b>Step 4: Evaluating and Monitoring</b>						
Participate in interviews or small focus groups as part of statewide evaluation	As and when required					
<b>Step 5: Reviewing and Reflecting on Progress</b>						
Use existing forums and meetings to reflect on progress, what students, parents and staff think of the process	Ongoing					
<b>Working as a Leading School with a Cluster of Schools ( for Leading Schools only)</b>						
Release staff to run specific PD/briefings for Partner School staff (disclosures, RRRR or action team)						
Coordinate regular face-to-face meetings (minimum once a term) with Partner Schools to share/debrief on implementation		Ongoing				
Create an online network to share information and practice between meetings		Ongoing				

## ATTACHMENT 2:

# Baseline Assessment Template

This template is designed as a guide for discussion and reflection among the team leading Respectful Relationships in the school.

This template is required under Step 2 of the five-step continuous improvement cycle.

## Using this template

This template has six sections based on the six elements of the whole-school approach.

Each section has an introduction and then a series of statements for you to answer 'yes' or 'no'.

While you're discussing each statement jot down in the comment section any comments, concerns or actions you would like to undertake to address the needs or gaps identified.

This template is not designed to externally assess your performance; it helps you to highlight and identify areas that may need to be strengthened.

You can work through this template in total or you can select aspects to work through at different stages or with different staff teams.

Step 3 requires schools to develop an Action Plan, which builds upon this activity. It will be useful to read the Action Plan template before starting your school gender equality assessment (available at **Attachment 3**).

## 1. Leadership and commitment

This section includes assessing:

- Governance and leadership
- Planning, monitoring and coordination
- Policies and procedures.

### Introduction

Effective strategies to promote gender equality and respectful relationships among staff and students require a whole-school approach and commitment.

To successfully implement systems, policies and procedures to promote gender equality and respectful relationships through a whole-school approach, your school leadership team and other senior staff must:

- Actively promote this work
- Provide support to ensure that all school staff can help create a safe, equitable and respectful school environment.

Good engagement comes from effective communication with staff, students and families.

Following the guidance in Step 1 of the five-step continuous improvement cycle and using the communication materials suggested in the **Attachment 3** Action Plan template, will support you in building your school's commitment to creating a culture, which promotes gender equality and respectful relationships.

Communication materials that present information on gender, respect and violence against women in an informative and accessible way can have a positive impact on parent and community engagement as well as contribute to changing negative attitudes on equality, gender and violence.

## Governance and leadership

Effective strategies to promote gender equality and respectful relationships among staff, students and families require a whole-school approach. In achieving success, it is important that the school leadership team actively promotes and models a safe, equitable and respectful school environment.

Governance and leadership		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
1.1	Our school leaders demonstrate the skills and confidence required to plan and embed a whole-school approach to gender equality and respectful relationships.			
1.2	Our school allocates Respectful Relationships funding and other appropriate resources to the promotion of gender equality and respectful relationships.			
1.3	Our school leaders take responsibility for planning and implementing activities to promote gender equality and Respectful Relationships.			
1.4	Our school leaders, including the principal, actively promote gender equality and respectful relationships and regularly express commitment to these issues. (See <b>Attachment 3</b> for suggested communication materials).			
1.5	Our school has a process for the early identification of staff with leadership potential, which addresses any systemic barriers women may face in becoming leaders.			

## Planning, monitoring and coordination

Having systems for planning and monitoring helps ensure that activities to promote gender equality and prevent family violence are carefully designed and align with best practice and government policy. These systems and procedures also help ensure implementation of key actions is supported through regular feedback about achievements and areas for development.

Planning, monitoring and coordination		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
1.6	We allocate a senior member of staff responsibility to ensure that activities on gender equality and respectful relationships are coordinated in our school.			
1.7	We ensure that any relevant data and information we collect is disaggregated by gender to support our school to better understand how we can address gender inequality .			
1.8	We conduct regular discussions with staff, students and families on safety, gender equality, respectful relationships, discrimination and harassment.			
1.9	We incorporate key issues and actions identified using surveys or this assessment tool annually into our school planning process.			

## School policies and procedures

While schools are required by state and federal equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation to have particular policies in place, embedding a culture of gender equality requires going beyond these requirements to ensure commitments to promote respectful attitudes, norms, behaviours and practices are also embedded in school policies and procedures.

School policies and procedures		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
1.10	We have an equal opportunity and sexual harassment policy (see template at <b>Attachment 4</b> ).			
1.11	We are confident in how to identify and respond to incidents, suspicions or disclosures that a student has been exposed to family violence (see Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools).			
1.12	Our Staff Code of Conduct includes a clear statement that all employees and students will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their sex, gender identity, socioeconomic status, cultural background, sexual orientation or level of ability (see guidance at <b>Attachment 6</b> ).			
1.13	Our policies are accessible, visible, disseminated and regularly promoted to staff students and families.			
1.14	We provide training to staff on relevant policies when updated and as part of the induction process.			
<b>VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS</b>				
1.15	Our Student Engagement Policy includes a clear statement about our commitment to promoting gender equality and respectful relationships (see guidance at <b>Attachment 5</b> ).			

## 2. School culture and environment

This section includes assessing:

- School ethos, vision and values
- Internal and external communications
- School environment and facilities.

### School ethos, vision and values

Commitment to these values, demonstrated by staff and students alike, is essential for supporting the development and maintenance of school structures, policies and procedures that promote equality and respect.

School ethos, vision and values		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions and what outcomes we want to achieve
2.1	Our school values statement includes a focus on gender equality and respectful relationships for all members of the school community.			
2.2	We have mechanisms in place to ensure that our staff and students and visitors to the school model school values on gender equality and respectful relationships.			
<b>VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS</b>				
2.3	We use the OHS management system (OHSMS) and the related <i>Occupational Violence Hazard Guide and Workplace Bullying Hazard Guide</i> to identify (and report where appropriate) risks of family violence and bullying and put in place appropriate local controls to manage these risks.*  * Schools can access OHS advice and support by contacting the OHS Advisory Service.			
2.4	Our Annual Implementation Plan includes at least one goal (and associated targets and key improvement strategies) that focuses on increasing gender equality and supporting respectful relationships relevant to both staff and students.			
<b>VICTORIAN CATHOLIC AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS</b>				
2.5	Our School's Annual Plan/Strategic Plan includes a focus on increasing gender equality and supporting respectful relationships for both staff and students.			

## Internal and external communications

Communication materials that present information on gender, respect and family violence in an informative and simple way can have a positive impact on parent and community engagement, as well as contribute to shifting negative attitudes on equality, gender and violence. It is also important to ensure that all school communication materials promote diversity, equality and respect and do not reinforce gender roles and stereotypes.

Communications		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions and what outcomes we want to achieve
2.6	We produce and disseminate material relevant to staff, students and families, which indicate our commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships (see <b>Attachment 3</b> for suggested communication materials).			
2.7	We regularly review our communications materials (including our school website, school newsletter, orientation, enrolment and parent information materials) to ensure they promote gender equality and support respectful relationships.			
2.8	We provide practical information to staff and students and skill them to take bystander action, promote gender equality and support victims of sexism, harassment, discrimination or family violence.			
2.9	We look for opportunities to promote messages and themes of gender equality and respect in extracurricular activities and school events, such as sporting events, carnivals, school musicals and school formals and we ensure extracurricular activities do not promote negative gender stereotypes.			
2.10	We have communication materials visible in the school for staff and students indicating our commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships.			
2.11	We prohibit material being placed or distributed in our school that is sexist, discriminatory or which stereotypes gender.			

## School environment and facilities

The workplace environment reflects the school's commitment to gender equality to prevent gender-based violence and communicates to employees, the school community and the public that the school is committed to gender equality. It is important to consider the messages shared in the school environment and to ensure that facilities are appropriate to the needs of women and men.

Environment and facilities		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions and what outcomes we want to achieve
2.12	We undertake regular assessments of the physical school environment to ensure that staff and students regardless of gender have equality of access and use of all school facilities and areas including the schoolyard, computer labs, library, sports areas and facilities and all indoor areas.			
2.13	Women have access where possible to appropriate private breastfeeding facilities at our school, including storage facilities for expressing milk.			
2.14	Classrooms and shared spaces are organised to enable and promote social interaction and integration.			

## 3. Professional learning

This section includes assessing professional learning and capacity building.

Professional development and capacity building		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
3.1	Our relevant teaching staff are trained to deliver respectful relationships education aligned with the Victorian Curriculum to students.			
3.2	We have mechanisms in place to ensure that staff have adequate support when undertaking activities to promote gender equality and respectful relationships.			
3.3	Our staff professional learning development strategy is regularly reviewed to ensure female and male staff have equal access to and participate equally in all professional development.			
3.4	Our staff receives adequate training on responding to and referring to disclosures and incidents of violence from staff and students, aligned with school policies and procedures.			
3.5	Our leadership staff receives training on their roles and responsibilities to promote gender equality and respectful relationships through their leadership roles.			

## 4. Teaching and learning

This section includes assessing teaching and learning practices.

Teaching and learning		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
4.1	Our staff uses language that is equitable and respectful and does not consciously promote gender stereotypes or gender inequality.			
4.2	Our school explicitly plans for teaching about respectful relationships and social and emotional learning and ensures that every student has the opportunity to learn the knowledge, understandings and skills defined in the Victorian Curriculum.			
4.3	Our school teaches, assesses and reports student progress in relation to respectful relationships content in the <i>Victorian Curriculum Achievement Standards for Health and Physical Education and the Personal and Social Capability</i> , consistent with the whole-school teaching and learning plan.			
4.4	Our school regularly reviews curriculum content across curriculum areas to ensure equal representation of the range of experiences, knowledge, skills and aspirations of students regardless of gender.			
4.5	Our school takes into consideration teacher allocation (classes or subjects) that actively promotes gender equality.			
4.6	Our school uses evidence-based teaching and learning resources that promote gender equality and the prevention of family violence.			
4.7	Our school challenges disruptive and dominating student behaviour in a framework that understands gender equality. For example, the term 'boys will be boys' is challenged when a male student misbehaves.			

## 5. Engagement with your school community

This section includes assessing school community and parent/family partnerships.

School community partnerships		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
5.1	We work in partnership with all members of our school community, including parents and families, the school council and community partners to take action in support for our approach to gender equality and respectful relationships.			
5.2	We undertake joint activities focused on gender equality and respectful relationships with other organisations in the wider school community including other local schools, sports clubs, youth services, local governments or community health centres.			
5.3	We actively facilitate and promote staff participation in events focusing on preventing family violence and promoting gender equality.			
5.4	We engage families as active supporters of gender equality and violence prevention in our school, where possible.			

## 6. Support for staff and students

### Introduction

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and students, it is essential to understand the prevalence of family violence and the high likelihood that members of the school community may experience, witness or perpetrate it.

While the focus of Respectful Relationships is on primary prevention, it is imperative that school staff members feel supported and confident in their ability to:

- Meet their legislative responsibilities to report child abuse
- Meet their duty of care to support students experiencing abuse
- Create a safe work and learning environment
- Find appropriate referral pathways and further support.

### Supporting students

*Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools* has been developed to support schools to meet their legislative responsibilities and best support students impacted by child abuse, including family violence (available at [www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect)).

This resource sets out Four Critical Actions to support schools to identify and respond to all forms of child abuse, and specifies that:

- You must act as soon as you witness an incident or form a reasonable belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused
- You must act, by reporting to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse)
  - **It is a criminal offence not to report in these circumstances. In fact, all adults (not just professionals who work with children) are obligated to report to police where they have formed a reasonable belief that another adult may have committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 years of age.**
- All teachers and relevant school staff must undertake the online Mandatory Reporting Training every 12 months to be aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities around identifying and reporting suspected child safety issues (family violence is covered in this training).

### Supporting staff members

It is important to consider the impact family violence can have on the workplace. Violence can impact the wellbeing of those who experience or witness it. Appropriate processes to support staff experiencing family violence should be implemented.

### Victorian Government schools

Victorian government school staff can contact the Department of Education and Training's Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 008 for support. In addition the Department is developing a Family Violence Policy for employees. This will be available on HRWeb. The policy sets out employee entitlements and advice in relation to supporting employees experiencing family violence.

## Support for staff and students

Schools can enhance their ability to support staff and students experiencing family violence by developing strong relationships with organisations in their community that specialise in responding to family violence. In addition schools can engage with Respectful Relationships Project Leads and Liaison Officers who can support schools to understand local referral networks and systems and to develop policies and procedures to support the person disclosing.

		Yes	No	Comments to consider in developing actions
6.1	We are aware of local community organisations with expertise in gender equality and violence prevention.			
6.2	We are aware of local community organisations with expertise in responding to family violence.			
6.3	We have access to advice and support through the Liaison Officer on response and referral policies and processes, and training opportunities for all staff on responding to violence and gender equality as needed.			
6.4	We are confident that we have clear and well-understood policies and protocols on how staff should respond to disclosures from staff and students.			
6.5	We are confident that our staff feel capable and competent to respond to disclosures from staff and students.			

## ATTACHMENT 3:

# Action Plan Template

Leadership and commitment	
<b>Key improvement</b> Strategies and significant projects	
<b>What</b> Activities and programs to progress the key improvement strategies	<b>Key actions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prompt discussion among staff about key gender issues</li><li>• Talk to staff about the impact of gender roles, norms and stereotypes in the classroom</li><li>• Include gender equality and the prevention of family violence on the staff meeting agenda</li><li>• Encourage critical thinking among staff about language and the impact of sexist words and phrases</li><li>• Ensure goals on gender equality are included in annual and strategic planning</li><li>• Engage in reflection and a progress assessment of the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships on an annual basis.</li></ul>
<b>How</b> Budget, equipment, IT, learning time, learning space	
<b>Who</b> Individuals or teams responsible for implementation	
<b>When</b> Start and anticipated end dates to track progress	
<b>Achievement milestones</b> Changes in practice or behaviours	

School culture and environment	
<b>Key improvement</b> Strategies and significant projects	
<b>What</b> Activities and programs to progress the key improvement strategies	Suggested actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase your school's understanding of gender equality issues in the workplace and strategies to challenge unconscious bias and structural inequality</li> <li>• Strengthen your policies and procedures to promote gender equality in school structures and norms, including drafting a school gender equality policy and distribute to staff</li> <li>• Ensure strong shared understanding among staff of respectful relationships education</li> <li>• Speak publicly about the school's commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships</li> <li>• Use visual communications to promote gender equality throughout the school</li> <li>• Undertake a review of school communication messages in newsletters and website information and ensure both female and male achievements are promoted.</li> </ul>
<b>How</b> Budget, equipment, IT, learning time, learning space	
<b>Who</b> Individuals or teams responsible for implementation	
<b>When</b> Start and anticipated end dates to track progress	
<b>Achievement milestones</b> Changes in practice or behaviours	

<b>Professional learning</b>	
<p><b>Key improvement</b> Strategies and significant projects</p>	
<p><b>What</b> Activities and programs to progress the key improvement strategies</p>	<p>Suggested actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the Professional Learning Program, which sets out the professional learning available to your school (leadership, teaching staff and all staff) for Respectful Relationships. This will help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increase the awareness and understanding among all staff of the links between gender inequality and family violence and the whole-school approach to respectful relationships education</li> <li>– Develop the skills of all staff to integrate gender equality into the curriculum across all key learning areas</li> <li>– Ensure all staff receive professional learning on appropriately responding to disclosures of violence or discrimination and know the processes to refer students and fellow staff for further support.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>How</b> Budget, equipment, IT, learning time, learning space</p>	
<p><b>Who</b> Individuals or teams responsible for implementation</p>	
<p><b>When</b> Start and anticipated end dates to track progress</p>	
<p><b>Achievement milestones</b> Changes in practice or behaviours</p>	

Teaching and learning	
<p><b>Key improvement</b> Strategies and significant projects</p>	
<p><b>What</b> Activities and programs to progress the key improvement strategies</p>	<p>Key actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support staff to deliver respectful relationships education (using evidence-based teaching and learning materials such as the <i>Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships</i> resource)</li> <li>• Work to ensure students receive consistent messages as part of delivering the Victorian Curriculum, which is reinforced through explicit teaching of respectful relationships as well as through delivering curriculum content across all curriculum areas</li> <li>• Ask students to review an extracurricular activity (musical, formal, sporting event) across the six components of the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships. Ask what they could do to ensure these events promote gender equality and challenge negative stereotypes</li> <li>• Consider teaching topics to ensure they promote equality and do not condone violence or promote negative gender stereotypes</li> <li>• Develop the skills of all staff to integrate gender equality into the curriculum across all key learning areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How</b> Budget, equipment, IT, learning time, learning space</p>	
<p><b>Who</b> Individuals or teams responsible for implementation</p>	
<p><b>When</b> Start and anticipated end dates to track progress</p>	
<p><b>Achievement milestones</b> Changes in practice or behaviours</p>	

<b>Community partnerships</b>	
<b>Key improvement</b> Strategies and significant projects	
<b>What</b> Activities and programs to progress the key improvement strategies	Suggested actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand and assess your key community partnerships</li> <li>• Strengthen relationships with partners that specialise in the promotion of gender equality and can support work to prevent family violence in your school</li> <li>• Engage with other organisations to coordinate strategies and to gain further gender equality expertise to support the implementation of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships</li> <li>• Engage with local government, as local governments are playing an increasing role in promoting gender equality and have a good overview of the work of other community organisations</li> <li>• Share information with parents about links to the Victorian Curriculum</li> <li>• Identify key strategies for engaging parents in a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.</li> </ul>
<b>How</b> Budget, equipment, IT, learning time, learning space	
<b>Who</b> Individuals or teams responsible for implementation	
<b>When</b> Start and anticipated end dates to track progress	
<b>Achievement milestones</b> Changes in practice or behaviours	

<b>Support for staff and students</b>	
<p><b>Key improvement</b> Strategies and significant projects</p>	
<p><b>What</b> Activities and programs to progress the key improvement strategies</p>	<p>Key actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with the Liaison Officer who is responsible for providing advice about responding to family violence</li> <li>• This includes creating links and connections with specialist services in your local area, including family violence service providers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How</b> Budget, equipment, IT, learning time, learning space</p>	
<p><b>Who</b> Individuals or teams responsible for implementation</p>	
<p><b>When</b> Start and anticipated end dates to track progress</p>	
<p><b>Achievement milestones</b> Changes in practice or behaviours</p>	

## ATTACHMENT 4:

# Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Policy Guidance

Equal Opportunity is a requirement under federal and state anti-discrimination legislation and principals have a legal responsibility for its implementation in individual schools.

Schools in Victoria should be guided by the following Victorian Department of Education and Training policies:

- [Human Resources: Equal Opportunity Guidelines for Victorian Government Schools](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Checklist](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Policy Template](#).

Please review the *Equal Opportunity Policy Template* and then consider the following suggested additions:

Section	Equal Opportunity for all	Example
OUR COMMITMENTS	<p>Gender inequality is a key cause of some forms of discrimination, harassment, vilification, bullying and victimisation.</p> <p>Schools have a positive duty to proactively address this.</p> <p>Several forms of discrimination, harassment, vilification, bullying and victimisation are experienced either solely or disproportionately by women.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vilification or discrimination based on breastfeeding and pregnancy (solely women)</li> <li>• Sexual harassment in the workplace (disproportionally women)</li> </ul>	<p>At (name of school) we want to play our part in ensuring women don't experience harassment and discrimination purely because they are women.</p> <p>While both women and men can experience discrimination, harassment, vilification, bullying and victimisation, we acknowledge that women experience several forms either solely or disproportionately.</p> <p>We will work to address gender inequality.</p>
	<p>The <i>Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i> introduces a positive duty requiring all organisations to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation as far as possible.</p> <p>'Positive duty' is aimed at addressing the systemic causes of discrimination, sexual harassment and victimization.</p> <p>Schools can play a powerful role in helping to build a society free of gender-based discrimination and harassment.</p>	<p>Under the <i>Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i> all organisations have a positive duty to be proactive about discrimination and take steps to prevent discriminatory practices.</p> <p>At [Name of school] we are committed to building a school culture that challenges the stereotypes, power differences and social norms that foster gender inequality.</p>

The Victorian Department of Education and Training Sexual Harassment Policy applies to Department and school council employees, casual staff, volunteers, contractors and students. While individual schools are covered by this policy, it is recommended that schools develop a school-specific Sexual Harassment Policy as a way of signaling to staff and students their commitment to deterring and responding to sexual harassment.

A Sexual Harassment Policy can be standalone, or can be integrated into the Equal Opportunity Policy.

The development and review of your Sexual Harassment Policy (or the Sexual Harassment section of your Equal Opportunity Policy) should be guided by the following Victorian Department of Education and Training policies:

- [Sexual Harassment Policy](#)
- [Guidelines for Managing Complaints, Unsatisfactory Performance and Misconduct – Teaching Service](#).

For further explanations and examples of sexual harassment, see: *Ending workplace sexual harassment: A resource for small, medium and large employers by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2014)*.

In addition to the above guidance, consider the following inclusions:

Section	No to Sexual Harassment	Example
SEXUAL HARASSMENT	<p>Schools need to ensure their definition of Sexual Harassment in their school policy is the same as that in the Victorian Department of Education and <a href="#">Sexual Harassment Policy</a>. This ensures the definition of Sexual Harassment is sufficiently broad and makes clear that the intent of actions is irrelevant to whether they are lawful.</p>	<p>‘Sexual harassment is conduct of a sexual nature that is unwelcome. Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written. It involves behaviour that could reasonably be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Even if the behaviour is not intended by the individual to be sexually harassing, it may still be unlawful’.</p>
	<p>Many subtle forms of sexual harassment can be invisible, normalised or seen as acceptable.</p> <p>You should include as many examples as possible from the Victorian Department of Education and Training Sexual Harassment Policy to ensure clear understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment.</p>	<p>Sexual harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments about a person’s sex life or physical appearance</li> <li>• Comments of a sexual nature</li> <li>• Suggestive behaviours such as leering and ogling</li> <li>• Unnecessary physical intimacy such as brushing up against a person</li> <li>• Physical contact such as touching or fondling</li> <li>• ‘Flashing’ or sexual gestures</li> <li>• Sexual propositions or repeated unwanted requests for dates</li> <li>• Making promises or threats in return for sexual favours</li> <li>• Sexual jokes, offensive telephone calls, displays of offensive photographs, reading matter or objects</li> <li>• Sending jokes or graphics of a sexual nature by email or internet</li> <li>• Unwelcome questioning about a person’s private life</li> <li>• Offensive computer screen savers</li> <li>• Unwanted requests for sex</li> <li>• Stalking, indecent assault or rape (which are also criminal offences).</li> </ul>
STUDENTS	<p>It is vital that students understand that sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.</p> <p>This includes students who wittingly or unwittingly make comments about teachers.</p> <p>School staff need to feel confident that if a student or students are disrespecting them, particularly on the grounds of their gender, that the school’s leadership team will support the staff member and take the issue seriously.</p>	<p>At [Name of school] sexual harassment and sex discrimination of any kind towards anyone is simply not tolerated, and will be taken seriously. This also applies to students who are engaging in that unacceptable behaviour towards staff.</p>
TAKING ACTION	<p>Building a culture of respectful relationships means saying something when you hear or see bad behaviour.</p> <p>The school needs to send the message that by-standers who do something – no matter how small – when they see bad behaviour can make a difference to making the school a better place for all.</p>	<p>[Name of school] encourages staff and students to intervene safely and respectfully when they see or hear about sexist language, sex discrimination, sexual harassment.</p>

## ATTACHMENT 5:

# Student Engagement Policy Guidance

The development and review of the Student Engagement Policy should be guided by [Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance](#).

It is a requirement that every Victorian government school has a Student Engagement Policy that articulates the expectations and aspirations of the school community in relation to student engagement, including strategies to address bullying, school attendance and behaviour.

A high-quality Student Engagement Policy will be a pivotal reference document for the implementation of a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships.

In developing a Student Engagement Policy schools should consider the following:

- Do school leadership and staff promote a culture of respect, fairness and equality, and foster respectful relationships?
- Is the school environment inclusive and empowering, valuing the positive contributions of students and creating a sense of belonging and connectedness that are conducive to positive behaviours and effective engagement in learning?
- Are there multiple opportunities for students to take responsibility and be involved in decision-making?
- Are there school-wide and classroom processes to identify vulnerable students and those at risk of disengagement from school?
- Are there school-wide and classroom processes for ongoing collection and use of data for decision-making?
- Is there social/emotional and educational support for at-risk and vulnerable students?
- Are the school-wide and classroom expectations and consequences for problem behaviour clear?
- Are there multiple opportunities for students to take responsibility and be involved in decision-making?
- Has the creation of physical environments that are conducive to positive behaviours and effective engagement in learning been considered?
- Are the strategies backed by a solid evidence base?

Section	Student Engagement	Example
WELCOMING DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE	In building a positive school culture free of discrimination, it is vital that all students feel welcome, and experience school as a tolerant and inclusive environment.	[Name of school] is proudly a safe and welcoming school for everyone – regardless of gender, sexuality, cultural background or family circumstances. We believe everyone has a right to a great education.

Section	Student Engagement	Example
<p><b>ENSURING STUDENTS GET THE SUPPORT THEY NEED</b></p>	<p>For some students, a teacher may be the only person they feel they can trust to tell about what is happening at home or in their social group.</p> <p>Students experiencing or witnessing, family violence or wanting to disclose that they have been a victim of sexual harassment or sexual assault need to feel safe that they will be heard and taken seriously – especially in an environment that is championing a whole-school Respectful Relationships culture.</p>	<p>At [Name of school] students can feel safe to talk to a teacher if they are seeking confidential advice and support from on any issues relating to family violence, sexual harassment or sexual assault.</p> <p>Students can feel confident their issue will be taken seriously and the right support given.</p>
	<p>All students should feel they will be supported to finish their education, regardless of their personal circumstances.</p> <p>Students who are mothers and students who are pregnant can face additional challenges to stay at school.</p> <p>It is important that these students do not face any discrimination at school because of their family circumstances.</p> <p>Schools are encouraged to be flexible in supporting these students, whether it be allowing them to work from home, providing a welcoming breastfeeding area or being flexible with assignments around their childcare arrangements.</p>	<p>At [Name of school] we support all our students, regardless of their family circumstances because we believe everyone has the right to finish their education.</p> <p>We will do everything we can to be flexible to the needs of our students who are young mums or expecting a baby.</p>
<p><b>EXPECTATIONS</b></p>	<p>In building a culture of respectful relationships in a school it is important to make it clear to students which behaviours are acceptable in building this culture and which are not.<sup>4</sup></p> <p>Students also need to understand the impact of their behaviour on others. This includes how gender stereotypes and discrimination impacts on family violence.</p> <p>For example: Unacceptable behaviour includes male students displaying particular behaviours – such as using gendered insults – as a means of proving or asserting their masculinity. Dismissing this behaviour as normal or natural risks students not realising or understanding its potential implications or that it is wrong.</p>	<p>At [Name of school] we expect our students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat everyone with respect regardless of their gender, sexuality, cultural background, disability or family circumstances.</li> <li>• Never use insults or sexist jokes</li> <li>• We do not tolerate sexism, sexual harassment and discrimination.</li> </ul>

4 For more information on the best-practice student behaviour management see: McDonald, D. and Astbury, B. with St Leger, P. (2011) "Engage positively with kids – it works!" A Final Evaluation of the School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support for Engagement and Learning Pilot Project for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Centre for Program Evaluation, University of Melbourne.

## ATTACHMENT 6:

### Staff Code of Conduct Guidance

A Staff Code of Conduct clarifies what behaviours are acceptable and appropriate and applies to staff in the learning environment, during education events and activities and in their interactions with all members of the school community. As such, it is useful for schools to develop a Code of Conduct unique to their individual context and community. In contrast to an Equal Opportunity Policy, which prohibits discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimisation, a Code of Conduct takes a more proactive approach to the expected behaviour of staff. A Code of Conduct should be an active guide to decision-making by providing examples to illustrate the ethical problems that staff might encounter and strategies for dealing with them.

A Code of Conduct:

- Outlines the standards of behaviour set by your school
- Reinforces your commitment to respectful interactions between staff and other members of the school community and effective conflict resolution
- Communicates your school's expectation that all staff will meet these standards and how staff will be accountable for meeting these standards.

All Victoria Department of Education and Training staff are bound by the *Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees* and all Victorian teachers are guided by *the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct*.

To ensure your school's Code of Conduct promotes gender equality and respectful relationships, consider the following inclusions:

Section	Respectful Relationships culture	Example
OUR COMMITMENTS	<p>Many forms of gender-based discrimination, harassment or violence can be subtle or not clearly visible to others. This risks harmful actions and words becoming trivialised, accepted or ignored.</p> <p>Being clear about your school's commitment to gender equality ensures that gender-based discrimination and harassment is unacceptable and will be taken seriously at your school.</p>	<p>At [Name of school] we are committed to equality and fairness and will not tolerate gender-based discrimination and harassment.</p> <p>We are committed to building a school culture that challenges the stereotypes, power differences and social norms that foster gender inequality.</p> <p>We are committed to treating all members of the school community with dignity and respect regardless of their gender.</p>
	<p>Research shows that gender inequality is one of the key factors driving the prevalence of violence against women (see page 4).</p> <p>Making clear the link between the prevention of violence against women and gender equality is an important way of raising awareness and challenging inequitable norms, practices and attitudes.</p>	<p>At [Name of school] we recognise that gender inequality is one of the key factors driving the prevalence of violence against women in Australia.</p> <p>We are committed to building a school culture and structure that challenges the stereotypes, power differences and social norms that foster gender inequality as a way of contributing to the prevention of violence against women in our society.</p>

Section	Suggested addition to Staff Code of Conduct	Example
TEACHERS AS ROLE MODELS	Teachers are role models to their students, and they are in a good position to send a strong message through their interaction with colleagues, students and parents the value of an environment free of gender-based discrimination and harassment.	<p>As part of [Name of school's] commitment to building a culture of respectful relationships in everything we do, our teachers will reinforce positive behavior. This includes taking the appropriate action if they become aware of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexist, stereotyping or discriminatory language</li> <li>• Jokes that rely on gender stereotypes</li> <li>• Sexist or discriminatory materials.</li> </ul>
HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING	It is important for staff to be mindful and sensitive to the fact that some of their colleagues may have experienced family violence. It is important to ensure staff know the school is a caring and supportive environment and that there is support for any staff experiencing family difficulties.	[Name of school] will ensure staff know there is confidential support available for any colleagues experiencing family violence.

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