



eSmart Schools FAQs

February 2018



**Alannah & Madeline
Foundation**

Keeping children safe from violence

eSmart Schools

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between bullying and cyber bullying, and why should we be concerned about them?

Bullying is when an individual or a group of people with more power, repeatedly and intentionally cause hurt or harm to another person or group of people who feel helpless to respond. Bullying can continue over time, is often hidden from adults, and will probably continue if no action is taken.

While the bullying definition is broad and can occur in a variety of environments, it usually is a relationship problem and requires relationship-based solutions. These are best solved in the social environment in which they occur: in a child or young person's life, this is most often the school.

Cyber bullying is a type of bullying that takes place via digital technologies, including hardware such as computers and smartphones, and software such as social media, instant messaging, texts, websites and other online platforms. Cyber bullying can happen at any time. It can be in public or in private and sometimes only known to the target and the person bullying.

Peer bullying is widespread, although gradually decreasing:

- 1 in 5 Australian children reported being bullied in the past 12 months
- Children who experience bullying are more likely to experience a mental health issue
- 1 in 7 children reported being cyber bullied in the past 12 months.

Bullying is the most common form of violence faced by children and young people. The physical, psychological and emotional impact of violence on children is unavoidable and can be lifelong.

2. Does cyber bullying cause suicide?

Suicide is rarely the result of a single event or factor. Research shows that a wide range of factors are associated with an increased risk of suicide. Risk factors can be things that can change (such as substance abuse) or things that cannot change (a family history of suicide).

Risk factors include:

- Experiencing mental health and / or drug and alcohol problems
- A past suicide attempt
- Experiencing family difficulties or violence
- A family history of suicide
- Loss of a friend or family member
- Social and geographical isolation
- Being male; males have a statistically higher risk than females.

For more information please visit <https://parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/mental-health/suicide-and-teenagers>.

3. What is eSmart Schools?

eSmart Schools is the Alannah & Madeline Foundation's flagship eSmart program designed to help schools reduce cyber bullying and bullying and improve cyber safety. It was developed for schools by RMIT University in 2010 in consultation with cyber safety, bullying, education and industry experts from across Australia.

4. How is eSmart different from other bullying or cyber bullying programs?

It takes more than knowledge to change behavior. In order to make a long-term positive change in the way people behave, the environment needs to be created in which the right behavior is the easy choice. Because of this, eSmart is based on proven behaviour change approaches such as SunSmart and Quit.

Take SunSmart as an example. Since the program's inception, skin cancer incidence has decreased after years of increasing. Rates of skin cancer in young people are falling, and earlier detection of skin cancer is leading to better treatment and lifelong outcomes for all Australians. SunSmart doesn't just focus on messaging - teaching children to "slip, slop, slap". Schools are supported to create children's play areas that are shaded, and a "no hat, no play" policy is key. In addition, teachers are expected to enforce the policies and provide classroom lessons on sun safety. Parents are also exposed to the same messages and encouraged to adopt the same behaviours.

eSmart takes a similar approach. Bullying is a complex issue and unfortunately there is no "silver bullet". Reducing bullying and cyber bullying requires all members of the school and broader community to participate. Many programs exist to address specific aspects of the school's approach to bullying, such as policy development, or focusing just on parents or students or teachers' awareness and behaviours. eSmart is the only program that covers every area that schools need to work on. eSmart includes six areas focusing on teaching parents, students and teachers the right behaviours relating to bullying, cyber bullying and cyber safety whilst also focusing on creating a culture where bullying and cyber bullying is never ok. Starting young, reinforcing kindness and ethical behaviour. Bullying and cyber bullying thrive when children feel left out.

5. What are the six focus areas?

The focus areas are as follows:

1. **The structure of the school** – schools set up a group to oversee the program in the school, and a system is set up for recording bullying complaints and how they are responded to. Schools regularly review the information collected to make sure they know if the actions they are taking to stop bullying and cyber bullying are working.
2. **Policies and procedures** – schools look at their existing policies and procedures to make sure they describe exactly what the school is doing to stop bullying and cyber bullying, as well as having a step by step guide for teachers, parents and students to follow when seeking help if bullying or cyber bullying occurs. eSmart helps schools include the right ways to prevent and respond to bullying and cyber bullying.
3. **Respectful and caring school** – students, parents and teachers work together to promote school-wide values and behaviours that describe the way they are all expected to behave. This focus area sees older students helping younger students; students acting as eSmart Leaders - helping teachers write policies, and presenting at school assemblies to their peers and parents.
4. **Teacher practices** – this area focuses on teachers by making sure they are aware of the work taking place across all focus areas. Teachers are taught how important it is to role model the right behaviours, teach bullying and cyber bullying awareness in the classroom, are provided with opportunities to input into the school's policies and procedures, and how to follow the step-by-step guide if a student or parent has concerns about bullying.

5. eSmart Curriculum – the focus is on teaching bullying and cyber bullying awareness in the classroom. An important aspect of this focus area is to run activities with students where they can input into the schools’ policies and procedures and develop anti-bullying messages in their own language.
6. Parents and the community – this area focuses on ensuring parents are receiving consistent and constant messages relating to all focus areas. Schools will share policies with parents, include information in their newsletter about bullying and cyber bullying, showcase students work with anti-bullying messages and run parent workshops on bullying and cyber bullying.

eSmart leads schools to take action against bullying and cyber bullying that they may not have otherwise taken, thereby ensuring students, parents and teachers are all on the same page about what behaviours are acceptable and how to respond if bullying or cyber bullying occurs.

For example, a year 5 student is receiving threatening messages from students from another school via WhatsApp. As a student in an eSmart School, the student has had the opportunity to input into the schools anti-bullying and cyber bullying policy so they know this is cyber bullying and that there are steps to take to get help. The teacher that the student confided in will know how to respond in the best interest of the student.

In another example, a teacher notices that one of their year 10 student’s grades had begun to fall, and that the student had stopped coming to school as often. When they were at school, they had stopped speaking up in class and were not hanging around their regular group of friends anymore. As a teacher in an eSmart School, this teacher knew that these were potential signs of bullying and cyber bullying. The teacher was familiar with the school’s approach to bullying. The teacher created an opportunity to have a supportive conversation with the student in a secure place and it turned out the student was experiencing bullying at school. The teacher responded appropriately by letting the student tell their story and then working with the student to decide on the right course of action.

6. What do schools say about eSmart? Does it work?

Across 2013 and 2014 2,409 teachers, 396 principals, 2,956 students and 526 parents were surveyed about their experiences with eSmart. The results showed that:

- eSmart prompted their school to take action on cyber bullying and student wellbeing, action that it might not have otherwise taken.
- eSmart was effective for changing school-wide culture and behaviour with regard to cyber safety, technology use and bullying.
- Students felt safer in terms of both bullying and cyber bullying and knew what to do if they experienced bullying or cyber bullying.
- Teachers felt confident advising students about bullying and cyber bullying and knew how to help a student if the reported being bullied or cyber bullied.
- School leaders said their school improved the way they responded to and managed bullying, provided training for teachers and taught awareness of bullying, social and emotional skills and had discussions around values.
- Over half the principals thought the number of incidents of bullying and cyber bullying had reduced since implementing eSmart Schools. Unfortunately there is no standard recording or reporting system across schools or states which made it difficult for schools to accurately respond to this question. However, many schools have instigated internal reporting systems, and this evaluation found that eSmart Schools prompted schools to either review their existing recording mechanisms or introduce new mechanisms.

7. What does eSmart look like in a school?

The simple answer is that eSmart looks different in every school. This is because when a school signs up to eSmart they use the framework and its focus areas to tick off which areas they are doing well and which they need to work on or their "gaps". Each school will have different gaps and therefore will need to do take different actions to address their gaps.

Once a school has identified the areas they need to focus on, the expert eSmart Schools team from the Alannah & Madeline Foundation work with them to develop and implement an action plan that addresses the gaps. When the school has addressed all its gaps, and with approval from the eSmart Schools team, the school achieves eSmart Status. eSmart Status provides the school and parents with the peace of mind that the school community is doing everything it can to create a culture that prevents bullying and cyber bullying.

Schools are then encouraged to continue to review and enrich the actions they have put in place to ensure they stay up-to-date with best practice in this area.

See question 4 for the different types of activities schools should be doing in each area of eSmart.

8. How much does it cost?

The current cost is \$3,500.00 (plus GST) per school for four years. Thanks to funding from the Victorian and Tasmanian Governments, eSmart can be accessed for no cost by Victorian and Tasmanian government schools.

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation has found that when a whole community uses eSmart the schools and children and young people within that community gain the best outcomes. This is why the Alannah & Madeline Foundation is asking for support of a national roll out of eSmart Schools.

9. How long does it take schools to complete the program?

On average it takes schools 12 – 18 months to complete the required focus areas and achieve eSmart Status. However, because schools are such busy places a school's registration is valid for four years.

Schools are then encouraged to continue to review and enrich the actions they have put in place to ensure they stay up-to-date with best practice in this area. Therefore a school's eSmart journey really has no end point. Continual support, guidance and resources are essential to ensure children and young people are kept safe.

10. When a school signs up what do they get?

eSmart is designed to acknowledge the work schools are already undertaking whilst helping them to identify and address gaps in their practice.

Schools are supported to address these gaps with the following:

- A dedicated website providing a central point for resources, tools, best-practice information and case studies. Resources included lesson ideas, policy templates, fact sheets on bullying and cyber bullying and many more.
- An online system to record, track and report on the school's progress through the framework.
- A starter kit explaining eSmart and outlining the steps to achieving eSmart Status.
- Regional training sessions and online training.
- Regular support webinars.

- One-on-one support face to face or via webinars from the eSmart team and a dedicated help desk available Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm via phone and email.
- Regular newsletters containing current cyber safety and bullying issues, as well as resources, webinars, training events and helpful tips.

11. Our school tried eSmart and it didn't work?

Across 2013 and 2014 2,409 teachers, 396 principals, 2,956 students and 526 parents were surveyed about their experiences with eSmart. The survey found that a successful eSmart School has six characteristics:

1. It involves the whole school community from leadership, parents, teachers, students and the broader community.
2. The school utilised the supports and resources provided by the Alannah & Madeline Foundation.
3. The school has a strong set of schools values.
4. The school allocates the times and resources to complement the program.
5. Schools engage parents in schools day-to-day life to extend the right behaviours into the home.
6. Staff model the positive behaviours.

When state and territory governments invest in eSmart, the Alannah & Madeline Foundation are able to provide face-to-face and local staff to support schools in these areas. The Victorian government funded almost 1,700 schools to be part of the program of which 1,281 have completed the required actions and achieved eSmart Status.

The remaining schools are expected to achieve eSmart Status by the end of 2018. The Tasmanian Government provided funding for their 180 government schools to be part of eSmart at the beginning of 2017. Just recently, the first school achieved eSmart Status. A nationally funded roll out of eSmart will increase the support provided in other states and territories leading to the same success.

12. How many schools are already involved?

1 in 3 Australian schools are currently participating in eSmart Schools. To date the program has reached over 1.3 million children and young people in both primary and secondary schools.

13. Our school is outside Victoria and Tasmania. How do we become involved?

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation needs your voice to advocate to Federal, State and Territory governments to support a national roll out of eSmart across all Australian schools. eSmart is most effective when it is adopted by entire communities because everyone has a role to play in preventing bullying and cyber bullying.

As a school we encourage you to visit our website www.esmart.org.au where you can show your support for eSmart by completing a simple online form and / or downloading an email template that you can send to your Premier and Education Minister. The website also contains resources for enhancing your school's Digital Literacy program, and ideas for getting a group of local schools together to talk to us about becoming eSmart.

14. Our school is in Victoria but didn't take up the opportunity to be involved, is it too late?

Unfortunately the funding provided by the Victorian Government for new government schools to now join the program has ceased. The school can register for the program at a cost of \$3,500.00 (plus GST) for four years.

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation is seeking support for a national roll out of eSmart across all schools and sectors. As a school we encourage you to visit our website www.esmart.org.au where you can show your support for eSmart by completing a simple online form and / or downloading an email template that you can send to your Premier or Education Minister. The website also contains resources for enhancing your school's Digital Literacy program, and ideas for getting a group of local schools together to talk to us about becoming eSmart.

15. Our school is in Tasmania how do I get involved?

Thanks to funding from the Tasmanian Government, state schools can receive eSmart at no cost to the school for four years and receive an implementation grant to support activities relating to achieving eSmart Status.

Catholic and Independent Schools can register for the program at a cost of \$3,500.00 (plus GST) for four years. The Alannah & Madeline Foundation are seeking support for a national roll out of eSmart across all schools and sectors. We encourage you to visit our website www.esmart.org.au where you can show your support for eSmart by completing a simple online form and / or downloading an email template that you can send to your Premier or Education Minister. The website also contains resources for enhancing your schools Digital Literacy program, and ideas for getting a group of local schools together to talk to us about becoming eSmart.

Please visit contact esmart@amf.org.au

16. Didn't Queensland schools have access to eSmart for free?

In 2011, the Foundation and the Queensland Department of Education signed an agreement where the Alannah & Madeline Foundation would provide eSmart Schools to all Queensland government schools at no cost. Whilst a number of schools registered for eSmart Schools, with no government mandate or support, schools struggled to prioritise eSmart and subsequently most have not progressed.

To be successful, we know that eSmart needs strong leadership buy in, not just at a school level but from Education Departments. Without funding, the support required to successfully implement and sustain eSmart is difficult to achieve. This is another reason the Alannah & Madeline Foundation is advocating for a national roll out of eSmart.

17. How do I find out if my school or my child's school is part of the eSmart program?

Ask your school! Schools who have completed the requirements of the program and achieved eSmart Status will have a sign out the front of the school saying it is an eSmart School.

18. I'm a parent, how do I get my school involved in eSmart?

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation needs your voice to advocate to Federal and State or Territory governments to support a system wide national roll out of eSmart across Australia. eSmart is most effective when it is adopted by entire communities because everyone has a role to play in preventing bullying and cyber bullying.

As a parent we encourage you to visit our website www.esmart.org.au where you can show your support for eSmart by completing a simple online form and / or downloading an email template that you can send to your Premier or Education Minister. The website also provides ideas on how you can help keep your child safe at home.

19. Our school has stalled with eSmart. How do we get help?

Contact our Help Desk via phone 1300 592 151 or email esmart@amf.org.au Monday to Friday 8am – 5pm (AEDST).