



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas EMerson MLA

Addressed to: Ms Angela Spence, Deputy Director-General, Education Directorate

In relation to: Reporting of harassment in schools

Hearing: 17 February 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 34-35

Transcript provided: 20 February 2025

Answer Due: 27 February 2025, 05:00 PM

Ms Spence took on notice the following question(s):

Ms Spence: So all of our schools, as part of the Safe and Supportive Schools Policy, have a requirement to implement, I guess, systems of support. And most of our schools implement the Positive Behaviours for Learning Framework. That is a tiered approach to supporting what we would call prosocial behaviours in schools. And a key part of that work is actually to—the team actually analyses all of our incident data, and they look at the incident data on a school by school basis, and they cut it through all different areas.

One of those areas is harassment or bullying on the basis of race, and they will look at that data, and when they start to see increased trends in specific data sets, be that race, be it something about gender based harassment, they will actually go and provide a more targeting coaching approach with those schools, to work with them to understand the data and to actually implement different strategies, to proactively teach, I guess, the behaviours that are expected across the whole school setting, but then also start to look at more tiered approaches, so that when they might need to do something extra, what they could do to support that.

For example, in the bullying and harassment space, it could be a specific bullying program that we support that would be implemented in a specific school because the data is telling us that that is something that might need to have extra at that particular school. So the coaches work in that way across our system, and depending on the needs of the school and what the data is telling us, some schools might get more support than others.

MS BARRY: Thank you.

MR HANSON: I have a follow up on that as well.

THE CHAIR: Yes, sure.

MR HANSON: So you have got a data set that shows you incidents of racism and, where applicable, for which racial group is being identified or being victimised. Have you got that?

Ms Spence: So our incident reporting system picks up all incidents. One of the insights that we can get from that data, when we define it down to bullying and harassment, there is a subsection that you can check a box that is racial bullying and harassment. That information is available to us.

MR HANSON: Great. And as a result of that, have you seen any increase, more generally, in racist attacks or bullying? And secondly, does that identify against a particular group? And I guess getting back to that antisemitism, have we seen that spike in antisemitism, or is it consistent with where we have been over a number of years? Have you done that analysis, or has somebody?

Ms Spence: If you drill down to the racially based incidents, bullying and harassment is only a new feature, so we do not have the ongoing trend data to be able to get that kind of insight. And also, it is individual school information. It is not correlated across the whole system, because it really is about targeting supports for individual schools, as opposed to system-wide data analysis.

THE CHAIR: Ms Spence, you said that most schools—what was the name of the framework or approach? The prosocial—

Ms Spence: Positive Behaviours for Learning.

THE CHAIR: Positive Behaviours for Learning. I think you were going to say, "all schools" and then you stopped yourself and said, "most schools." Do you have that data on which of the schools—like, how many of the incidents are occurring in schools that are using that framework, and how many are not?

Ms Spence: I do not have that data available, and—

THE CHAIR: You might be able to, perhaps, provide a summary on notice of how many incidents of, say, racial related harassment are occurring in the schools that are applying that approach, as opposed to those that are not, or a kind of proportion to look at whether or not the approach is working?

Ms Spence: Yes. We would not have the long-term data to be able to show that, even 12 months.

THE CHAIR: Maybe just this last year?

Ms Spence: But probably just to clarify, all of our schools are required to have systems in place to support the teaching of the prosocial behaviours as part of our policy setting. Most of our schools uptake the Positive Behaviours for Learning program. Those schools that do not implement PBL are required to still demonstrate that they are teaching explicit prosocial behaviours to support safe systems in our schools. In terms of the specific data set, I can look into that, but I am not sure that specific data you are asking is available, but we could have a look to see what we could make available.

THE CHAIR: That would be great, even if it is more general. It is good to know whether a specific approach is working. Ms Tough. Thank you for waiting.

Minister Berry: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

77 ACT public schools (82%) are implementing Positive Behaviours for Learning as the framework for systems and practices to respond to student needs. PBL is not mandatory.

Incidents of harassment are reported through the School Administration System and can be sub-classified as racial by the reporter. In 2024, there were 848 reported racial incidents, and 25 have been recorded so far in 2025.

The Education Directorate acknowledges the need for improved data capture and reporting in relation to incidents of racism. System enhancements are being explored to enable more efficient and consistent collection of this information in the future, ensuring better visibility and responsiveness to trends data on racism in schools.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:

By Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood

Date:

4/03/25