

VAGO

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Work-related Violence in Government Schools

May 2025

Independent assurance report to Parliament
2024–25:17

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Independent assurance report to Parliament

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of the Parliament of Victoria

May 2025



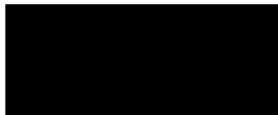
The Hon Shaun Leane MLC
President
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Melbourne

The Hon Maree Edwards MP
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Melbourne

Dear Presiding Officers

Under the provisions of the *Audit Act 1994*, I transmit my report *Work-related Violence in Government Schools*.

Yours faithfully



Dave Barry
Deputy of the Auditor-General
28 May 2025

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters throughout Victoria. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their continuing culture, and to Elders past and present.

Contents

Audit snapshot..... 1

1. Our key findings..... 2

2. Our recommendations 6

3. Recording and reporting work-related violence 7

4. Responding to work-related violence 12

5. Appendices..... 17

Audit snapshot

Does the Department of Education provide and maintain a work environment that is safe from work-related violence resulting from student behaviour?

Why we did this audit

School staff have a right to feel and be safe at work. Work-related violence resulting from student behaviour can negatively impact school staff's health and wellbeing.

Work-related violence includes behaviours ranging from verbal abuse to physical assaults. Risks can come from different cohorts in the school community. This audit examined students behaving in a violent way toward staff in government schools.

As the government school staff employer, the Department of Education (the department) must provide and maintain a safe workplace for government school staff.

Key background information



Source: VAGO.

What we concluded

The department takes reasonable steps to provide a work environment that is safe from work-related violence resulting from student behaviour. The department provides resources and training to school staff to manage student behaviour. Its tailored support approach to individual schools works well.

But there are weaknesses in how it maintains that safe environment. The department does not record or report incident numbers completely. This means that it does not have a clear overall picture of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour. The department has policies and procedures for staff to manage work-related violence incidents. But it does not comprehensively review its policies or systematically collect lessons learned from how it responds to incidents.

These gaps limit the department's ability to take the reasonable steps required to maintain a workplace that is safe from work-related violence resulting from student behaviour.

We made 4 recommendations about completely recording and reporting incidents, and improving policy reviews and planning, to manage the risks from student behaviour.

1.

Our key findings

What we examined

Our audit followed one line of inquiry:

1. Does the Department of Education (the department) have and maintain a system of work to protect staff from work-related violence resulting from student behaviour?

We consulted with WorkSafe Victoria (WorkSafe) when we developed our engagement strategy and examined data on how it regulates occupational health and safety (OHS) in schools.

Terms used in this report

eduSafe Plus

eduSafe Plus is the department's online recording system for all school-based incidents. This includes work-related violence resulting from student behaviour and OHS incidents.

System of work

The governance arrangements, policies, processes, resources and IT systems the department uses to prevent and respond to work-related violence in government schools.

Under-recording

Under-recording is when school staff do not record incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour in eduSafe Plus.

Under-reporting

Under-reporting is when incidents are recorded in eduSafe Plus but are not included in reports to the department's leadership.

Background information

The government school system

As at February 2024, there were 1,570 government schools in Victoria:

- 1,144 primary schools (prep to year 6)
- 257 secondary schools (year 7 to 12)
- 80 P–12 schools (combining primary and secondary levels at the same location)
- 85 specialist schools (specialising in subject or in teaching students with disability)
- 4 language schools.

In 2024 government schools employed 76,650 full-time equivalent staff across principal, teaching and teaching support roles. The department divides Victoria into 4 regions. School supports for managing student behaviour, such as training and other resources, are mainly delivered through regional teams.

Regional offices draw on centrally-developed supports for schools to manage OHS issues. There is some variation in how each region implements these supports.

Legislative obligations

Under the Victorian *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act), employers must provide and maintain work environments that are safe and without risks to staff health. This obligation applies to the department as the government school staff employer.

The OHS Act recognises that it is not possible to remove all risks from the workplace. The department is required to take reasonable steps to address hazards and risks, taking into account the circumstances of managing government schools.

Trends in work-related violence resulting from student behaviour

Work-related violence resulting from student behaviour may not be driven by any intent to cause harm. There are many factors that could mean a student does not understand the consequences of their behaviour or be able to self-manage their behaviour. These include disability or additional needs, age, trauma, mental health and other factors.

Incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour are a significant OHS issue for the department and make up a growing percentage of all OHS incidents.

The department reported that recorded OHS incidents involving government school staff grew from 8,908 incidents in 2014–15 to 30,675 in 2023–24, an average 27.2 per cent increase each year.

During the same period, the department reported an average 46.7 per cent growth in recorded incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour each year, from 2,279 incidents in 2014–15 to 11,858 in 2023–24. When adjusted for staff numbers growth, this is an average annual 31.4 per cent growth.

As explained later in this report, we found that the department's incident numbers and rates are an underestimation.

What we found

This section focuses on our key findings:

1. The department does not record and report all work-related violence incidents resulting from student behaviour.
2. The department's work-related violence policies meet its legislative obligations, but it does not comprehensively review those policies.
3. The department provides staff resources and training to manage work-related violence resulting from student behaviour.

The full list of our recommendations, including agency responses, is at the end of this section.

Consultation with agencies

When reaching our conclusions, we consulted with the audited agencies and considered their views.

You can read the full responses in Appendix A.

Key finding 1: The department does not record and report all work-related violence incidents resulting from student behaviour

Incidents are under-recorded

The department requires school staff to record incidents of work-related violence. eduSafe Plus is the recording system for all school-based incidents. This includes work-related violence resulting from student behaviour, which falls under OHS incidents.

Under-recording happens when staff do not record incidents in eduSafe Plus.

The department has acknowledged under-recording's potential impact. It takes steps to intervene in schools where it suspects incidents are under-recorded. But it does not have a clear view of the issue's scale across the state.

Incident numbers and trends are not completely reported

The department reports OHS incident numbers to its executive board every 6 months and other governance bodies at more frequent intervals. Work-related violence is reported as a separate category in the total OHS incidents.

The department uses eduSafe Plus records to report incident numbers. Under-reporting happens when an incident is recorded in eduSafe Plus but does not appear, or appears inaccurately, in the department's internal reporting.

Under-reporting has increased since the eduSafe Plus rollout. We found that in 2023–24, the department did not include up to 5,014 incidents (29.7 per cent of 16,872) as work-related violence in its OHS reports.

This means the department's executive board and other governance bodies are not receiving complete, consistent incident data. Without complete data, the department's leadership groups cannot be confident they are making evidence-based decisions.

Addressing this finding

To address this finding, we made 2 recommendations to the department about:

- establishing a mechanism to better estimate incident under-recording in eduSafe Plus
 - addressing incident under-reporting to its executive leadership.
-

Key finding 2: The department's work-related violence policies meet its legislative obligations, but it does not comprehensively review those policies

The department has policies for managing work-related violence

The department has OHS and student behaviour management policies that cover work-related violence resulting from student behaviour and treat it as an OHS issue.

These policies are consistent with the department's legislative obligations to provide a safe work environment.

The department does not consistently plan and conduct policy reviews

The department reviews policies that are relevant to managing work-related violence. But the department does not:

- consistently plan those reviews
- always do the reviews as planned.

The department does not consistently gather lessons learned from incident responses

The department has procedures for reviewing its incident responses. But there are no procedures that require when post-incident reviews should happen, and the department does not systematically gather outcomes from completed reviews.

This means the department is not making decisions about how to respond to work-related violence based on lessons learned from past incidents.

Addressing this finding

To address this finding, we made 2 recommendations to the department about:

- strengthening the approach to reviewing policies and procedures for managing work-related violence
 - formalising the post-incident review process and ensuring the lessons learned are gathered and used.
-

Key finding 3: The department provides staff resources and training to manage work-related violence resulting from student behaviour

The department's regional teams provide OHS support and guidance on student behaviour management. They work closely with school staff to respond to incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour and manage risk. Regional leadership staff act as coordination points for incidents and long-term responses.

The department also provides training on how to manage challenging behaviour that leads to incidents and recording incidents in eduSafe Plus.

Working well: Regional leadership supporting principals

Regional leadership staff are a key support for principals. They help principals manage risks and identify schools' support needs after incidents.

Regional leadership staff also progress and monitor principals' professional development, so they know when to ask for help.

2.

Our recommendations

We made 4 recommendations to address our findings. The Department of Education (the department) has accepted our recommendations in full or in principle.

			Agency response	
Finding: The department does not record and report all work-related violence incidents resulting from student behaviour				
Department of Education	1	Establish a mechanism to better estimate under-recording of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour.	Accepted	Green
	2	Review and fix data issues to ensure incidents are reported completely to the department's executive leadership.	Accepted in principle	Yellow
Finding: The department's work-related violence policies meet its legislative obligations, but it does not comprehensively review those policies				
Department of Education	3	Strengthen the approach to reviewing and updating all policies and procedures for managing work-related violence as an occupational health and safety issue.	Accepted	Green
	4	Ensure there is consistent criteria on when to conduct post-incident reviews and incorporate the lessons learned into policy reviews.	Accepted in principle	Yellow

3.

Recording and reporting work-related violence

Government schools are required to record incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour. The department knows not all schools accurately record incidents, but it does not know how many are under-recorded.

The department also under-reports incidents to its leadership.

These under-recording and under-reporting issues mean that the department cannot make decisions based on complete data.

Covered in this section:

- Recording incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour
- Reporting incidents using eduSafe Plus data

Recording incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour

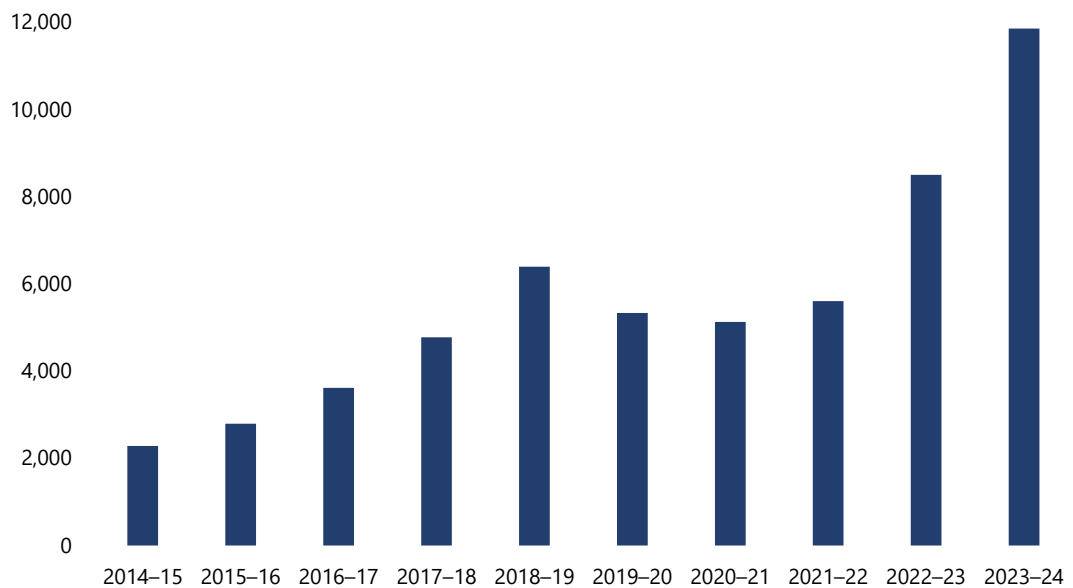
Department records

According to the department, recorded OHS incidents involving school staff grew an average 27.2 per cent each year over the last 10 years.

Figure 1 shows that in the same period, the department's recorded incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour grew from 2,279 in 2014–15 to 11,858 in 2023–24, an average 46.7 per cent each year.

When adjusted for the increase in staff numbers over this period, this is a 31.4 per cent increase from 4.0 to 15.5 incidents per 100 full-time equivalent staff.

Figure 1: Recorded incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour in government schools between 2014–15 and 2023–24, according to the department



Source: Department of Education.

The rates of incidents of work-related violence differ between school types. When interpreting the incident report data, it is important to consider the complexities around student behaviour, supports and interventions in specialist schools. In 2023, the rates of incidents per 100 full-time equivalent staff were:

- 75.06 in specialist schools
- 12.16 in primary schools
- 11.15 in combined schools
- 3.32 in secondary schools.

But we found the department's numbers are an under-estimate, because schools do not always record incidents or record them accurately.

Recording incidents

When an incident happens, the department requires school staff to record it in eduSafe Plus.

eduSafe Plus is the online portal for recording all school-based incidents that impact school operations, not just OHS incidents (which includes work-related violence resulting from student behaviour).

Records in eduSafe Plus include:

- incidents that impact school operations, such as burst water mains
- OHS incidents, such as trips and falls.

The department uses eduSafe Plus's incident category field to identify the different school-based incident categories and incident numbers in each category.

School staff can record incidents in eduSafe Plus under either the broad operational category or the more specific work-related violence category.

But the department does not require school staff to include a category when recording incidents.

Under-recording Under-recording happens when staff do not record work-related violence incidents resulting from student behaviour in eduSafe Plus.

The department recognises that under-recording is an ongoing compliance issue and takes steps to address it.

Addressing under-recording After the department implemented eduSafe Plus in 2021, it rolled out information campaigns and eduSafe Plus training to help schools meet OHS incident recording compliance requirements.

The department says this is why incident numbers are growing. But it did not show evidence that its information and training activities caused the increase.

The department also produces quarterly and yearly reports on schools' incident recording. These reports categorise schools as having high, low or no incidents recorded in eduSafe Plus.

The department expects regional leadership staff to engage with schools to identify issues driving under-recording and provide support if needed.

But the department does not provide guidance on how that engagement should be done. It does not have a process to analyse regional leadership staff's findings and lessons learned.

The department cannot be confident that its information campaigns, training and other engagement activities are addressing under-recording.

Reporting incidents using eduSafe Plus data

Internal department reports The department uses eduSafe Plus data in a range of its reports. It uses eduSafe Plus categories to decide which incidents it includes in OHS reports to its executive leadership.

One key report is the OHS and Workers Compensation Biannual Performance Update (OHS update report). The department provides the OHS update report to its executive board every 6 months and to other governance bodies at more frequent intervals.

The OHS update report includes OHS incident numbers as a key OHS metric, with work-related violence reported as a separate sub-category in the total number. But not all eduSafe Plus records are included in this report.

Excluded incidents The department does not include uncategorised incident records or operational incidents in the OHS update report.

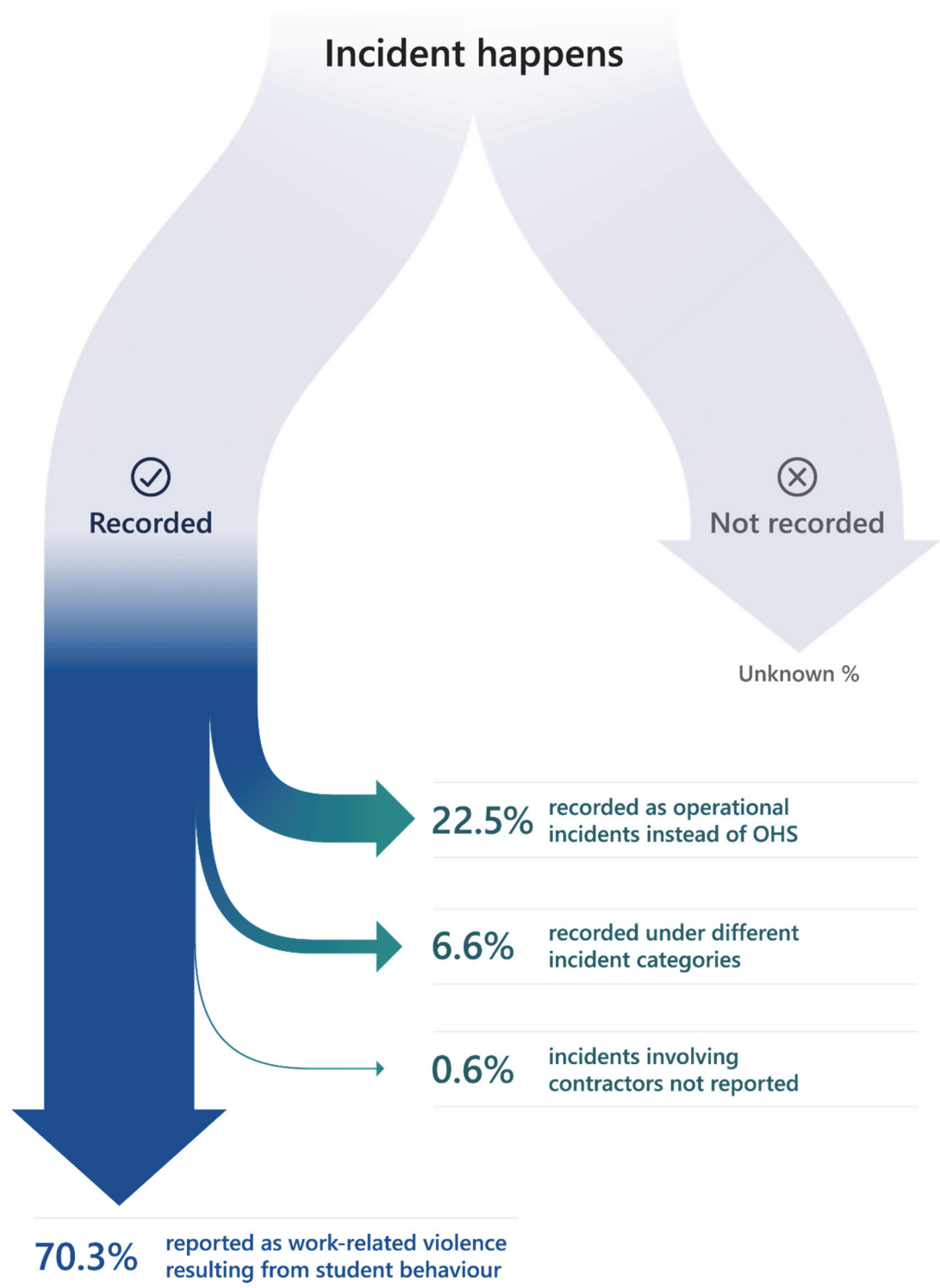
Incidents that involve contractors were also excluded for reporting purposes.

Incidents involving sexual harassment, bullying and psychological harm are sometimes, but not always, included in the OHS update reports.

Although sexual harassment, bullying and psychological harm are work-related violence, they are reported under different incident categories such as sexual harassment or 'other psychological factors'.

Figure 2 shows how records excluded in eduSafe Plus reduce incident numbers in the department's OHS update report.

Figure 2: Incident records excluded from the OHS update report between 2014–15 and 2023–24



Source: VAGO, based on Department of Education data.

Under-reporting Between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2024, the department reported 56,261 incidents of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour.

But we found up to 11,093 more incidents that should appear in the OHS update report:

- 6,904 eduSafe Plus records were excluded because they were not categorised as OHS incidents.
- 3,242 OHS records were excluded because they were not categorised as work-related violence.
- 947 eduSafe Plus records were excluded because they involved contractors.

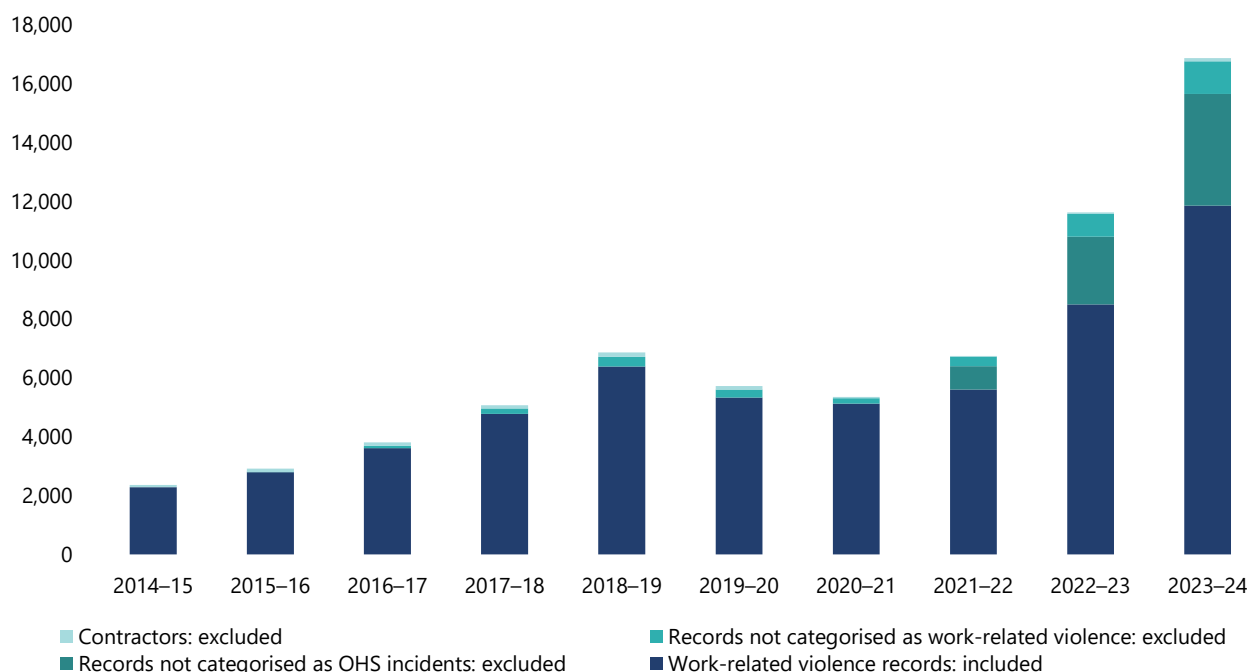
This means the department under-reported incidents by 16.5 per cent over the 10-year period.

Of the 11,093 excluded records, 5,014 incidents (45.2 per cent) happened in 2023–24 alone.

When adjusted for the increase in staff numbers over the period, including the records shows incidents growing from 4.2 per 100 full-time equivalent staff in 2014–15 to 22 per 100 full-time equivalent staff in 2023–24.

Figure 3 shows excluded records increasing over time.

Figure 3: Records excluded from the OHS update report, by financial year



Source: VAGO, based on eduSafe Plus data.

Impact of under-reporting

Under-reporting issues mean the department's executive leadership does not have complete or consistent information about work-related violence resulting from student behaviour or trends over time. Without accurate data the department cannot be confident it is making evidence-based decisions.

4.

Responding to work-related violence

The department has policies to manage work-related violence and provides schools with resources and training.

But the department does not comprehensively collect information on how its work-related violence policies work as a whole. The department does not consistently manage OHS policy reviews or review how it responds to individual incidents.

These gaps mean the department is missing opportunities to review and update its response to work-related violence resulting from student behaviour.

Covered in this section:

- The department's OHS obligations and policies
- Planned OHS policy reviews
- Post-incident reviews
- Managing and responding to student behaviour

The department's OHS obligations and policies

**Victorian
Occupational
Health and
Safety Act 2004
(OHS Act)**

As the government school staff employer, the OHS Act requires the department to:

- provide and maintain a safe work environment
- eliminate risks to school staff health and safety
- keep records about school staff health and safety.

The OHS Act recognises that it is not always possible to eliminate a risk or hazard completely. This means the department's OHS obligations only go as far as doing what is reasonable in the circumstances.

Because the department must balance its OHS responsibilities with its obligation to provide children in Victoria with equal access to education, it focuses on student behaviour policies and interventions to manage risk.

To meet OHS Act requirements, the department must review and update its response to work-related violence resulting from student behaviour as needed to achieve a safe working environment.

The Secretary is ultimately responsible for this. The department's executive board supports the Secretary by overseeing department-wide supports, systems, policies and assurance.

The executive board is supported by various governance bodies that focus on specific aspects of OHS performance.

Department policies

The department has policies and procedures to guide staff managing OHS risks and incidents, in line with its OHS Act obligations. Some are specific to student behaviour and others are more general OHS policies.

The ...	describes ...
<i>Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management in Schools</i> policy (OHSWM in schools policy)	the materials available for schools to manage OHS and contains many specific policies and procedures.
<i>Work-Related Violence in Schools</i> policy	the procedure for preventing, managing and responding to OHS risks posed by work-related violence in schools.
The <i>Safe and Well in Education Framework</i> (the Framework)	the OHS responsibilities and expectations for department staff.
<i>Managing and Reporting School Incidents (Including Emergencies)</i> (MARSi)	the procedure for managing and reporting incidents that impact students or school operations.
<i>Behaviour - Students</i> policy	the positive behaviour, prevention and early intervention strategies for classrooms, and a tiered response approach for student behaviour and wellbeing.

Planned OHS policy reviews

Policy and procedure reviews

Policies and procedures in the OHSWM in schools policy are subject to a rolling review program. For example, the *Work-Related Violence in Schools* policy is currently undergoing a full review. The department says the review program is planned and that policies are reviewed based on priority. But we have not seen evidence that planning for the review program is complete and comprehensive.

There are policies listed in the OHSWM in schools policy that are not included in the review program. There are also relevant policies that are being reviewed outside the review program, including MARSi.

We did not see enough evidence to verify that all policy reviews are coordinated or cover all relevant policies and procedures for work-related violence resulting from student behaviour. Without overall review coordination, policies may be missed or not reviewed according to their intended review processes.

Policy reviews not completed as planned: the Framework and the Strategy



The department published the Framework on its public website in 2019. The Framework set up requirements to strengthen the department's safety culture, set accountabilities and support OHS compliance across the department.

The Strategy, also published in 2019, outlined the department's 5-year roadmap to systematically improve and support staff health, safety and wellbeing outcomes. Together the Framework and the Strategy aim to improve the department's safety culture systems and build stronger support structures for staff.

The Framework includes a plan for reviews to be completed at least every 2 years (i.e. 2021 and 2023). The department did not complete the planned reviews and did not document why it did not go ahead with them.

The Strategy included detailed commitments to a continuous improvement process over its lifecycle, including establishing an evaluation strategy early. The department did not follow the planned evaluation approach.

The department started evaluating a subset of initiatives under the Strategy in mid-2019, but did not complete it. It told us it did not complete the evaluation because of COVID-19. It did not document the decision to not complete the evaluation until 2022.

The department commissioned a full Strategy evaluation in 2024, to be completed in 2025.

Source: VAGO.

Post-incident reviews

Structured post-incident reviews WorkSafe recommends employers complete structured reviews after work-related violence incidents, focusing on underlying causes and lessons learned for managing future incidents.

It is important the department reviews incidents so it knows how well its policies and procedures are working.

The department has mechanisms for reviewing incident responses, including informally sharing lessons learned within regional networks. But the review results are not generally shared outside the regions.

There is no pathway for the department to identify patterns or common issues in the way schools are managing risks or incidents of work-related violence. This is a missed opportunity and does not follow WorkSafe's guidance.

Incident response process: MARSİ

MARSİ directs how the department responds to incidents at schools, including work-related violence resulting from student behaviour. MARSİ provides a step-by-step procedure focusing on the immediate response and ensuring staff and students' safety.

While MARSİ focuses on managing operational incident responses, it includes guidelines for completing post-incident reviews. But the policy does not set out when the response to an incident must be reviewed.

MARSİ indicates that an incident response is reviewed at the school or regional staff's discretion. It does not provide specific guidance on how to apply this discretion.

If school or regional staff complete a review, there is no formal mechanism to share review findings within the department.

This means any insights into MARSİ performance as an incident response process are not consistently gathered.



Source: VAGO.

Managing and responding to student behaviour

Recording and managing risks

The department has 2 templates for school staff to record student behaviour risks:

- Behaviour support plans can include preventative strategies to reduce triggers that lead to challenging student behaviour.
- Risk management plans for student behaviour that outline actions to ensure staff safety.

Training

The department provides training for staff to learn how to manage and de-escalate challenging student behaviour. The department makes modules available in its online eLearning system and uses an external provider to deliver protective intervention training face-to-face. Staff can access face-to-face training through an expression of interest.

The department says it is developing a new protective intervention training program that will focus on limiting personal injury and how to safely restrain students. The department told us it will then replace the current protective intervention training delivered through external providers.

Requests for support by recording incidents

Incident recording in eduSafe Plus is a key step to trigger supports to schools after an incident.

Regional support teams receive incident notifications, work with other staff to triage the response, and reach out to principals depending on incident severity.

Regional support teams

The department encourages staff and principals to request help from regional support teams who provide resources and tools for managing student behaviour risks.

Teams that help principals and school staff to manage OHS responsibilities and student behaviour include:

- Student Support Services, who provide support to students through an allied health professionals team
- the Employee Wellbeing Response Team, who provides advice on complex health, safety and wellbeing matters, for example, risks to staff from student behaviour
- the OHS services team, who respond to OHS questions and complex matters' referrals and ensure principals meet OHS requirements.

Student Support Services and the Employee Wellbeing Response teams work together to help schools develop and implement behaviour support and risk management plans.

Regional leadership staff

The department has staff who coordinate incident responses and provide guidance about managing risks.

- The Health and Wellbeing Key Contact meets regularly with schools to identify trends in wellbeing needs and plan to improve outcomes and manage risk.
- The Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL) coordinates multi-disciplinary teams and supports principals.

Working well: The SEIL provides proactive support to principals

The SEIL is in regular contact with principals and is their primary support. Principals can request help from the SEIL at any time. SEILs also refer principals to other teams as needed.

The SEIL is a critical leadership position within each region. The SEIL provides local leadership to coordinate incident responses, identifying school support needs and guiding evidence-based improvement approaches.

After an incident, the SEIL contacts principals to assess the school's immediate and long-term support needs. The SEIL also monitors professional development for principals and provides onboarding support for new and acting principals, so they know when to seek help and record incidents.

5.

Appendices

There are 3 appendices covering responses from the audited agency and information about how we perform our work.

Appendix A: Submissions and comments

Appendix B: Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary

Appendix C: Audit scope and method

Appendix A:

Submissions and comments

We consulted with the Department of Education and WorkSafe Victoria and considered their views when reaching our audit conclusions. As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, we gave a draft copy of this report, or relevant extracts, to those agencies and asked for their submissions and comments.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of those comments rests solely with the relevant agency head.

Responses received

Agency	Page
Department of Education	A-2
WorkSafe Victoria	A-5



Department of Education

Secretary

2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne Victoria 3002
Telephone +61 3 9637 2000

COR25160450

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor-General's Office
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr Greaves

Proposed report: Work-related violence in government schools

Thank you for your letter of 15 April 2025 and the opportunity to comment on the proposed report.

The safety and wellbeing of school staff, students and members of the school community are of paramount importance to the department. The department is committed to supporting schools to maintain positive school cultures that are safe places to work and to learn.

The management of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour is highly complex. Student behaviour can be influenced by multiple factors including influences outside of the school environment. Schools must balance a range of competing legal obligations to support students to attend school, encourage inclusion and protect the safety of staff. The department notes VAGO's findings regarding the provision of staff resources and training to manage work-related violence resulting from student behaviour.

Reporting of hazards and incidents is important and as part of the department's systems for keeping school staff safe, school staff are encouraged to report work-related violence hazards and incidents. The department has a comprehensive system for measuring and responding to all matters relating to staff safety, including work-related violence and is confident in the mechanisms we use to understand staff experiences and continuously improve policies and procedures while minimising administrative burden. The department will assess changes to our data reporting structures to align with VAGO's recommendations.

The department has reviewed the proposed report and accepts 2 recommendations in full. The remaining 2 recommendations are accepted in principle as the department will need to assess the feasibility, costs and workload burden of the change, associated risks and business requirements. The action plan to address the recommendations in the report is attached.



Should your office wish to discuss the department's response, please contact [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] on [REDACTED] or
[REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Tony Bates PSM
A/Secretary
09 / 05 / 2025

Encl.: The department's action plan

DE action plan: Work related violence in government schools

#	Recommendations: That DE:	Response	#	The Department will:	By:
1	Establish a mechanism to better estimate under-reporting of work-related violence resulting from student behaviour.	Accept	1.1	introduce data references from existing surveys to validate the measure of work-related violence and demonstrate the extent of under-reporting by schools. The department will reference the available data references when reporting on work-related violence to executive governance groups.	30 Nov 2026
			1.2	continue to promote the importance of schools reporting incidents and hazards on eduSafe Plus through communications and school visits by the OHS Service Officers.	30 March 2026
2	Review and fix data issues to ensure incidents are reported completely to the department's executive leadership.	Accept in principle	2.1	include incidents of sexual harassment, bullying and psychological stress recorded by staff and contractors in reports to executive governance groups such as the Culture, People and Integrity Committee (CPIC) and Executive Board.	30 May 2026
			2.2	develop a paper that describes the options for system enhancements to ensure consistent reporting of work-related violence, whether they are reports made by principals relating to impact on school operations, or hazard or incident reports made by staff. The paper will consider the consistency of mandatory fields between different types of reports, and the costs and workload burden of this change. The outcome of the paper will be actioned through the necessary approvals.	30 June 2026
3	Strengthen the approach to reviewing and updating all policies and procedures for managing work-related violence as an OHS issue.	Accept	3.1	develop a plan for endorsement by CPIC to guide the review of the OHS Management System policies.	30 Nov 2025
4	Ensure there is consistent criteria on when to conduct post-incident reviews and incorporate the lessons learned into policy reviews.	Accept in principle	4.1	develop an options paper, with recommendations, taking a risk-based approach, for the relevant department governance body to decide when and how post-incident reviews should be undertaken to enable consistency across the system with clear criteria. The paper should explore the benefits, costs, administrative burden and workload for schools and the department of each option.	30 June 2026
			4.2	develop a mechanism by which lessons learned from post-incident reviews data informs policy reviews.	30 June 2026



**Reducing
workplace
harm.**

**Improving
outcomes for
injured workers.**

WorkSafe Ref: CEO25-2730

29 April 2025

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

By email: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Greaves

Thank you for your letter of 15 April 2025 regarding the Victorian Auditor-General's proposed report for its audit into work-related violence in government schools.

We have reviewed the redacted proposed report and WorkSafe has no further feedback.

If you wish to discuss this further, please contact [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

We thank VAGO for the ongoing engagement throughout this audit.

Yours sincerely



Ashley West
Chief Executive Officer
WorkSafe Victoria

Appendix B:

Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary

Abbreviations We use the following abbreviations in this report:

Abbreviation	Full spelling
the department	Department of Education
the Framework	<i>Safe and Well in Education Framework</i>
OHS Act	<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)</i>
OHSWM in schools policy	<i>Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management in Schools</i> policy
OHS update report	OHS and Workers Compensation Biannual Performance Update
the Strategy	<i>Safe and Well in Education Strategy 2019–2024</i>
WorkSafe	WorkSafe Victoria

Acronyms We use the following acronyms in this report:

Acronym	Full spelling
DE	Department of Education
MARSI	<i>Managing and Reporting School Incidents (Including Emergencies)</i>
OHS	occupational health and safety
SEIL	Senior Education Improvement Leader
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Glossary

The following terms are included in or relevant to this report

Term	Explanation
Level of assurance	<p>This is a measure of the confidence we have in our conclusions. The quality and quantity of evidence we obtain affects our level of assurance.</p> <p>We design our work programs with the information needs of our report users in mind. We consider if we need to provide them with reasonable assurance or if a lower level of assurance may be appropriate.</p>
Limited assurance	<p>We obtain less assurance when we rely primarily on an agency's representations and other evidence generated by that agency. However, we aim to have enough confidence in our conclusion for it to be meaningful. We call these types of engagements assurance reviews and typically express our opinions in negative terms. For example, 'nothing has come to our attention to indicate there is a problem'.</p> <p>See our assurance services fact sheet for more information.</p>
Reasonable assurance	<p>We achieve reasonable assurance by obtaining and verifying direct evidence from a variety of internal and external sources about an agency's performance. This enables us to draw a conclusion against an objective with a high level of assurance. We call these performance audits.</p> <p>See our assurance services fact sheet for more information.</p>

Appendix C:

Audit scope and method

Scope of this audit

Who we examined

We examined the following agencies:

Agency	Their key responsibilities
Department of Education	Operates government schools in Victoria and employs school staff.
WorkSafe Victoria	Monitors and enforces compliance with the <i>Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004</i> and <i>Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017</i> (Vic), promotes public awareness about occupational health and safety (OHS) issues and responds to OHS incidents notifications.

Our audit objective

To determine whether the Department of Education provides and maintains a work environment that is safe from violent student behaviour.

Violent student behaviour

In this audit, references to violent student behaviour mean work-related violence resulting from student behaviour.

What we examined





In this audit we examined:

- how the department collects and uses data on work-related violence
- whether policies and procedures about managing work-related violence resulting from student behaviour are comprehensive
- whether the available staff resources and training are effective.




Aspects of performance examined

Our mandate for performance audits and reviews includes the assessment of economy, effectiveness, efficiency and compliance (often referred to as the '3Es + C').

In this audit we focused on the following aspects:

Economy	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Compliance
			

Key:

-  Primary focus
-  Secondary focus
-  Not assessed

Conducting this audit

Assessing performance To form a conclusion against our objective we used the following lines of inquiry and associated evaluation criteria.

Line of inquiry	Criteria
1. Does the Department of Education (the department) have and maintain a system of work to protect staff from violent student behaviour?	1.1 The department's policies and procedures for managing violent student behaviour align with the Victorian <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004</i> (OHS Act) and WorkSafe Victoria (WorkSafe) guidelines.
	1.2 The department provides schools with resources, tools and training to manage violent student behaviour.
	1.3 The department has a system to measure violent student behaviour impacting staff.
	1.4 The department reviews and updates its system of work to protect staff from violent student behaviour.

Our methods In this audit we:

- reviewed the department’s strategies, policies and procedures covering occupational health and safety (OHS), work-related violence and student behaviour management
- reviewed agendas, minutes and papers from governance bodies, working groups and business units with responsibility for OHS
- analysed eduSafe Plus incident data from 2014–2024
- conducted workshops with departmental subject matter experts
- reviewed regulatory data from WorkSafe.

Level of assurance

In an assurance review, we primarily rely on the agency's representations and internally generated information to form our conclusions. By contrast, in a performance audit, we typically gather evidence from an array of internal and external sources, which we analyse and substantiate using various methods. Therefore, an assurance review obtains a lower level of assurance than a performance audit (meaning we have slightly less confidence in the accuracy of our conclusion).

Compliance We conducted our audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* and ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements to obtain reasonable assurance to provide a basis for our conclusion.

We complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements related to assurance engagements.

Unless otherwise indicated, any individuals named in this report are not the subject of adverse comment or opinion.

We also provided a copy of the report to the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance.

Cost and time The full cost of the audit and report preparation was \$635,000.

The duration of the audit was 9 months from initiation to tabling.

Auditor-General's reports tabled in 2024–25

Report title	Tabled
<i>Results of 2023 Audits: Technical and Further Education Institutes</i> (2024–25: 1)	July 2024
<i>Building a Capable and High-performing Public Service Workforce</i> (2024–25: 2)	August 2024
<i>Protecting the Biosecurity of Agricultural Plant Species</i> (2024–25: 3)	October 2024
<i>Responses to Performance Engagement Recommendations: Annual Status Update 2024</i> (2024–25: 4)	October 2024
<i>Auditor-General's Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria: 2023–24</i> (2024–25: 5)	November 2024
<i>Fair Presentation of Service Delivery Performance: 2025</i> (2024–25: 6)	November 2024
<i>Staff Wellbeing in Fire Rescue Victoria</i> (2024–25: 7)	November 2024
<i>Reporting on Local Government Performance: Follow-up</i> (2024–25: 8)	February 2025
<i>Major Projects Performance Reporting 2024</i> (2024–25: 9)	February 2025
<i>Managing Disruptions Affecting Victoria's Public Transport Network</i> (2024–25: 10)	March 2025
<i>State Trustees' Financial Administration Services</i> (2024–25: 11)	April 2025
<i>Recycling Resources from Waste</i> (2024–25: 12)	April 2025
<i>Results of 2023–24 Audits: Local Government</i> (2024–25: 13)	April 2025
<i>Domestic Building Insurance</i> (2024–25: 14)	May 2025
<i>Quality of Victoria's Critical Data Assets</i> (2024–25: 15)	May 2025
<i>The Orange Door: Follow-up</i> (2024–25: 16)	May 2025
<i>Work-related Violence in Government Schools</i> (2024–25: 17)	May 2025

All reports are available for download in PDF and HTML format on our website at <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au>

Our role and contact details

The Auditor-General's role

For information about the Auditor-General's role and VAGO's work, please see our online fact sheet [About VAGO](#).

Our assurance services

Our online fact sheet [Our assurance services](#) details the nature and levels of assurance that we provide to Parliament and public sector agencies through our work program.

Contact details

Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
AUSTRALIA

Phone +61 3 8601 7000
Email enquiries@audit.vic.gov.au