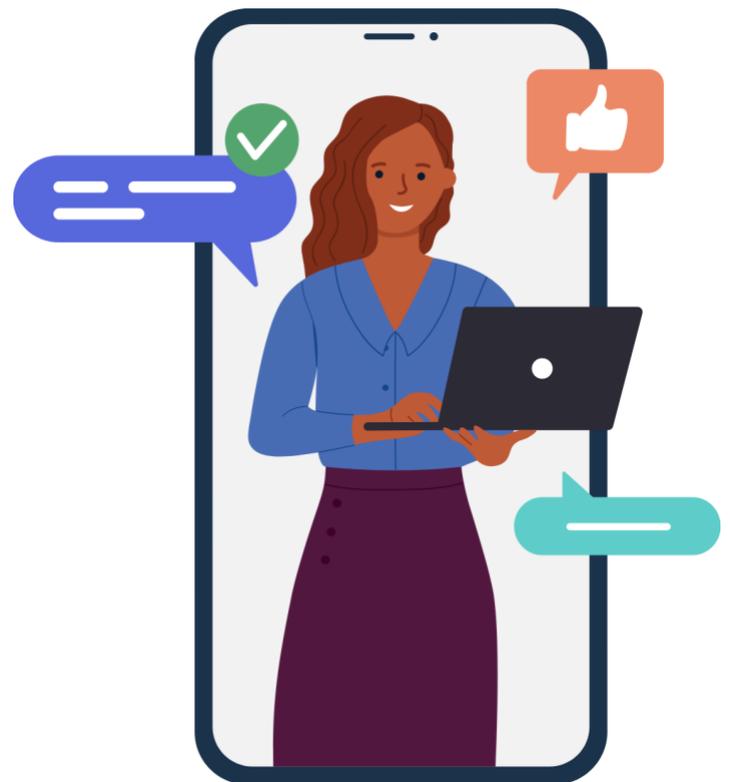




# Post-incident checklist

Creating safer online environments



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## Why has this guide been produced?

This resource provides a series of guiding questions to help schools to assess incident responses, as well as providing suggestions for improved practice. Schools are encouraged to undertake post-incident reviews after critical online incidents and have plans in place to respond to ongoing issues. The depth and breadth of review will depend on the severity and impact of the incident.

This post-incident checklist should be used alongside school and/or education sector policies, procedures, and risk management tools.

## Post incident checklist

Immediate response	Yes
<p><b>1. Did the students involved in the incident know who to ask for advice and/or know how to report the incident?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish specific roles and responsibilities among school staff (for example, an online safety team, including the school's <a href="#">eSafety Champion</a>) so that all members in the school community know who to ask for guidance, who they can report to, and how to escalate concerns.</li><li>• Make incident response procedures clear and publicly available. Schools can display these on electronic noticeboards, in high-traffic areas, on their website, and in communications with parents and carers. See eSafety's parent/carer <a href="#">social media kit, newsletter and website kit</a>, and <a href="#">posters</a>.</li><li>• Schools can invite student suggestions for how to make the reporting process student-centred, and should consider having multiple reporting pathways available, such as anonymous online reporting mechanisms and access to student wellbeing and counselling support staff.</li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>2. Did the staff member/s responding to the incident try to understand the context to accurately assess its severity and impact?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schools are encouraged to provide training for all staff in responding to critical online incidents. eSafety's <b>Responding and reporting online incidents in schools</b> is a 10-minute video that can be provided to education sectors by written agreement with eSafety. Education sectors typically host the video on their in-house learning management systems for flexible delivery. For further information, contact <a href="mailto:educationsectors@esafety.gov.au">educationsectors@esafety.gov.au</a>.</li><li>• Promote staff use of eSafety's <a href="#">Respond 1 – Guide to assessing online safety incidents</a> which can support good practice and provides <a href="#">links directly to resources</a>, guidance and advice.</li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Supporting wellbeing	Yes
<p><b>3. Was support provided to all students involved in the incident (that is, the target, instigator, and bystanders)?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer support to students throughout the incident response process and help them to seek support if and when they need it. Provide support for peers, bystanders, and siblings as part of this process.</li> <li>• Engage with student wellbeing and mental health support staff (for example, school counsellors, nurses, pastoral care workers, chaplains) as early as possible to develop an appropriate support plan.</li> <li>• eSafety’s <a href="#">Respond 5 - Tips for supporting students involved in an online incident</a> resource can help to support good practice.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>4. Have follow-up wellbeing checks been scheduled with all students involved in the incident (that is, target, instigator and bystanders)?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule wellbeing checks as part of any response and assign actions to relevant school staff to ensure follow-through.</li> <li>• Involve parents/carers in the process and keep them up to date, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Consider whether the students involved are likely to need or want ongoing support. This might include support that you can provide internally, or with external support services.</li> <li>• Adjust your response if, during a well-being check, you identify that a student requires additional support or is experiencing unanticipated negative consequences from the incident.</li> <li>• Refer to eSafety’s list of <a href="#">counselling and support services</a> to help those involved in an online safety incident. This list can be filtered by audience, the type of support required, issue, and state/territory.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>5. Were all parties involved in the incident — target, instigator, bystanders/upstanders, parents/carers and staff — debriefed and made aware of the resolution?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debriefing with students, parents/carers and staff shortly after an incident can provide clarity on the steps taken to resolve an issue and aid resolution.</li> <li>• Parents/carers who are concerned about their children can feel frustrated by a lack of communication from schools following an incident. Debriefing provides an opportunity to make them aware of what has happened, have their voices heard during the resolution process, and make referrals to external support services where required.</li> <li>• Debriefing can support students to regain a sense of safety and wellbeing, enabling them to re-engage and help develop their sense of belonging within the school.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If the incident occurred outside school hours, and was managed by the school, schools should work in partnership with parents/carers to resolve the issue. eSafety’s [Prepare 5 - Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours](#) and [Respond 6 - Tips for supporting parents and carers after an online incident](#) resources can support good practice.
- Remind school staff that they have access to employee assistance programs, wellbeing representatives and external agencies that can provide additional support when responding to online safety issues. Model and normalise help and advice seeking from qualified practitioners in these agencies.

**External involvement**

**Yes**

**6. If the incident involved harmful content circulating online, were the correct procedures followed to have the content removed?**

- It is important to recognise and respond to students engaging with harmful content. This may require school staff to engage in professional learning about a range of potential online harms. eSafety’s free [professional learning for educators](#) and professional learning for lower primary teachers can help.
- The first step can be to contact the platform to request that the content be removed. [The eSafety Guide](#) has links to the common games, apps and sites, including social media, with tips on how to contact a platform or website directly to request that content be removed when the content breaches the platform’s terms of service. However, some forms of serious harm, such as image-based abuse (including via AI deepfakes) and sexual extortion, require additional steps. See [Respond 3A – Guide to responding to image-based abuse, including sexual extortion](#) and [Respond 3B – Guide to responding to image-based abuse involving AI deepfakes](#).
- No matter how old your students are or which platforms they are using, if they experience this type of incident, they should reach out for support – even if they are under 16 and it happens on an age-restricted social media platform. Remember, if an under-16 has an account on an age-restricted social media platform, they are not breaking the law, and no criminal charges or fines apply to them or their family because of this. It’s only age-restricted social media platforms that face penalties if they fail to take reasonable steps to stop under-16s creating or having accounts.
- If the incident requires police involvement, schools should first seek advice from police about content removal, as the content may be considered as evidence.
- eSafety can investigate and direct a platform to remove harmful content when it reaches a legal threshold. This means it must be serious enough to be covered by definitions in the Online Safety Act.
- It can further help with post-incident review if a sample of recent student concerns/complaints/reports are examined to reflect on whether correct escalation and reporting processes were followed.



<p><b>7. If there was media coverage of the incident, was the situation handled in a way that supported student safety and wellbeing?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media involvement in a school incident can be stressful for all parties involved. Having clear processes about how to manage this can help to alleviate stress and support student safety and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Depending on your school and/or education sector, there may be specific procedures you must follow for how schools engage with the media. Schools should contact the relevant critical incident response team and alert the relevant media unit/team/consultant according to their school and/or education sector protocols. eSafety’s <a href="#">Respond 7 - Guide to engaging with the media</a> resource can help.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>8. If police, child protection or other external agencies were involved, have the students, parents/carers and teachers involved in the incident been appropriately debriefed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External engagement in a school incident can be stressful, particularly if the external agency is managing the incident. Briefing and debriefing, where appropriate, and closing the loop with external agencies can help to alleviate this stress and support student safety and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Be aware that, if police are involved, they may be required to respond in different ways, depending on the type of incident. For example, in some cases, police may be in regular contact with students, parents/carers, and school staff or may offer through targeted sessions with another external service. In other cases, police may need to exclude the parents/carers and school staff from incident updates about the matter.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Finalising the response</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>9. Was a record of the incident collected and stored in a safe and secure location?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online safety incidents should be recorded in your school and/or education sector incident management system. Information should be captured, and records kept, with strict adherence to school and/or education sector protocols. When recording incidents remember that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Incident reports should be stored securely with restricted access and be consistent with Australian Privacy Principles.</li> <li>○ Detailed records can contribute to a robust and defensible approach to online incidents.</li> <li>○ Incident records may be used if police or other legal action is required. In these circumstances, schools, students and/or their parents/carers may need to seek legal advice.</li> <li>○ Collecting and reviewing incident data and feedback can help to identify trends, wider issues and behaviour patterns in a school. This data can be used to improve procedures and responses.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## 10. Has the inappropriate behaviour stopped?

- If an issue is recurring or is becoming widespread, more comprehensive and targeted online safety education could help. The eSafety website offers a range of [classroom resources](#), which can be filtered by year level and topic.
- Reflect on previous strategies that were used to address recurring issues. Identify what did and didn't work and discuss the strategies the school will implement to proactively address unresolved issues with parents/carers.
- Engaging parents/carers to help reinforce positive behaviours at home and guide their children to have safer online experiences may be useful if the issue has not been resolved appropriately. eSafety's [Respond 6 - Tips for supporting parents and carers after an online incident](#) can support good practice.
- Seeking external agencies to partner with the school can also assist with ongoing issues. The eSafety website includes a list of [counselling and support services](#) that can help those involved in an online safety incident. This list can be filtered by audience, issue, type of support required, and location.

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## 11. Are procedural or policy changes required to prevent this issue from recurring?

Record 'lessons learned' and use these to inform updates to school policies and procedures. Use these insights to brief the school leadership, wellbeing and teams involved in online safety, as appropriate, to support continuous improvement in responses.

- Encourage staff to undertake professional learning about how to respond to incidents. eSafety's [Educate 2 - Responding to online safety incidents – an eSafety professional learning presentation for schools](#) can support staff to hone their knowledge and skills.
- eSafety's [Prepare 1 - Online safety self-assessment tool](#) and [Prepare 2 - Checklist for developing effective online safety policies and procedures](#) can support good practice.
- The National Office for Child Safety has developed a [complaint handling guide](#) which provides advice about how to develop, implement and maintain a complaint-handling system. The guide can help organisations to build capacity in handling complaints and creating child safe cultures.