

Schools have a legal responsibility to keep students safe. Incidents of violence require different responses depending on the nature and severity of the harm suffered and the context in which the incident took place.

What process is most effective for responding to school violence?

	1	Have well accepted school rules, guidelines, policies and procedures for appropriate behaviour that include specific references to different types of		Developing rules around violence should include: consultation with parents, ensuring they are reasonable, relevant to students and their educational needs; and legally enforceable – with procedures in place if the rules are broken.
		violent behaviours.		Establish a confidential reporting system to encourage a safe environment for confidential disclosure of violent incidents. Establish a safety web and appoint safety advocates
	2	Respond quickly and consistently to violent incidents.	→	Act immediately to secure students' safety. Complete an Incident Report Form (that can be used in court as evidence for either side).
-[3	Support victims.	->	Provide students with victim support, counselling and advocacy options. Information on the impact of Police laying charges may be helpful for victims and witnesses to prepare for what to expect in the legal system's response.
	4	Support perpetrators throughout any consequential procedures.	•	For lower level breaches of the school's anti-violence code of conduct, the offending student could be required to participate in a restorative conference or attend a special programme offered by the school, e.g., conflict resolution, anger management, communication, or other interpersonal skill development. In-school suspension may also be appropriate. This type of response is consistent with a non-violent supportive school climate and is appropriate for minor incidents.
				Serious incidents (e.g., assaults causing bodily harm, sexual assaults, robbery and extortion, hate-motivated violence, or vandalism causing property damage) require Police intervention. Students need information on what the victim, any witnesses, and the perpetrator can expect if criminal charges are laid. The Police will decide on whether the students involved are dealt with differently according to their age.
				Throughout any consequential procedures, e.g., SAT/CAT protocols, Police prosecution, Family Group Conferences, Board of Trustees hearing, and the school's restorative conference, the school should remain involved and supportive of the victim and the perpetrator. Ensure the views of the victim and their parents are heard, if that is their wish.
	5	Provide violence prevention programmes.	•	Choose programmes that address the problems of violence and aggression in schools by attempting to alter the school environment rather than focusing on the perpetrators and victims alone.
	6	In the event of a serious traumatic incident contact the Traumatic Incident Coordinator at the Ministry of Education: toll free phone 0800 848 326.	•	 Traumatic incidents are events that: cause sudden and/or significant disruption to the operation, or effective operation, of a school, early childhood education service and/or community; have the potential to affect a large number of children and young people and/or staff; create significant dangers or risks to the physical and emotional wellbeing of children, young people, or the community; attract media attention or a public profile as a result.

Figure 3: Suggested action to take for incidents involving violence