

## B. Audit scope and methods

### Performance engagement

This audit has been performed in accordance with the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*, and the Australian Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements*, issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. This standard establishes mandatory requirements and provides explanatory guidance for undertaking and reporting on performance engagements.

The conclusions in our report provide reasonable assurance about the audited entities' performance against the identified criteria. Our objectives and criteria are set out below.

### Audit objective and criteria

The department is responsible for providing education to a child or young person in ways that:

- provide positive learning experiences
- promote a safe and supportive learning environment
- recognise the student's educational needs.

The objective of the audit was to examine whether the Department of Education's strategies were effective in supporting the protection of students from bullying.

#### Sub-objective 1: Has the Department of Education designed effective anti-bullying policies and strategies?

##### Criteria

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1.1 | The department understands the prevalence and nature of bullying in Queensland   |
| 1.2 | Strategies, policies, and approaches are effectively designed in line with better practice approaches to reducing bullying |

#### Sub-objective 2: Does the Department of Education monitor implementation and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies and policies?

##### Criteria

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|-----|--|
| 2.1 | The department monitors the implementation of anti-bullying policies and strategies by schools   |
| 2.2 | The department evaluates the effectiveness of its anti-bullying strategies and policies and adjusts where relevant to support continuous improvement and achievement of objectives |

### Scope exclusions and limitations

The audit did not:

- examine school-level implementation of policies or individual case management of bullying incidents
- specifically examine how the department is addressing recommendations from recent inquiries
- examine how the department responds to bullying of teachers
- examine how the department protects students from other cyber-related threats or criminal activities from adults.

## The entity we audited

The entity subject to this audit is the Department of Education. It is responsible for providing safe and supportive learning environments for all students.

## Audit methods and approach

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### Field interviews and site visits

We conducted interviews with a range of stakeholders from across the school education sector, including regional areas of Queensland. This included:

- the Department of Education
- 5 primary, secondary, and Prep to Year 10/12 state schools across the state (out of a total of 1,265 state schools in Queensland)
- members of the parents and citizens associations at the 5 visited schools – 3 accepted our invitation
- peak bodies for
  - primary and secondary principals
  - parents and citizens associations
  - child counsellors and guidance officers
- Queensland Teachers Union
- a student counselling service organisation.

### Document review

We obtained and reviewed relevant documents from the department involved in the audit. This included legislation, strategies, policies, guidelines, performance reports, reviews, and evaluations. We also considered research from other jurisdictions and academia.

### Data analysis

We analysed data from the Department of Education covering the period 2013 to 2023. This included incident reports from the department's student management database, OneSchool. The department's changes to the categories and new definitions for recoding behaviour incidents in OneSchool (in 2023) limited our analysis of trends in bullying. The key change to the way incidents were categorised was splitting the old category of 'bullying and harassment' into 2 separate categories. Comparing trends from 2013–22 to 2023 was not possible.

We validated our data methods and analysis progressively with the department.

### Subject matter experts

We engaged and sought advice from a university professor and researcher with extensive published research in the field of student bullying. They offered advice and validated facts and concepts related to specific aspects of the audit.

