Strengthening Community Harmony
Advice and resources for schools
Second edition - revised
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Introduction

Australia today is one of the world’s most culturally diverse nations with a strong commitment at all levels of government to maintaining community harmony and social cohesion.

New South Wales government schools reflect the social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the state. Almost one third of students come from language backgrounds other than English, including overseas and Australian born, and approximately 8 per cent of students are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Students are from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, come from homes where over 200 different languages are spoken and hold a range of religious and spiritual beliefs.

In such a diverse society schools have an important role to play in building community harmony through acknowledging and respecting the cultural diversity of their school communities and developing students’ intercultural understanding and sense of identity as Australians.

Schools fulfill this role by reflecting and teaching the core values of our community. These core values (integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, cooperation, participation, care, fairness and democracy) are set out in Values in NSW Public Schools Policy. These values underpin teaching and learning programs and are consistent with the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools.

Schools also contribute to the building of a democratic, just and equitable society by assisting students to become active and informed citizens who are able to appreciate diverse perspectives and think deeply and logically about contemporary national and international world issues.
In addition to moral and educational imperatives for enabling students to contribute to the maintenance of a just and harmonious Australian society, there are significant legal and policy responsibilities for schools in ensuring that the learning and working environment is inclusive and free from racism and discrimination. Commonwealth and State laws protect individuals from discrimination on a number of grounds including race, while a range of federal and NSW policies promote social inclusion and multiculturalism. These laws and policies provide the context for related Department policies and have implications for practices and provisions in NSW government schools.

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* acknowledges global challenges for Australian education. In particular, it highlights the critical role that Australian governments and school sectors play in ensuring social cohesion and inclusion:

**Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence**
All Australian governments and school sectors must ensure that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity.

**Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens**
Australian governments commit to working in collaboration with all school sectors to support young Australians to become:
- Successful learners who are able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
- Confident and creative individuals who relate well to others and maintain healthy relationships
- Active and informed citizens who are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia’s civic life.

**Using these materials**
Building community harmony involves action at a number of levels, through: whole school policies and programs; inclusive teaching and learning programs; and collaboration with students, parents and community members.

The information here has been produced and adapted from a variety of sources reflecting work undertaken by individual schools as well as across the NSW public education system. It draws upon and reflects the excellent work being carried out in the areas of student wellbeing as well as within values, anti-racism, Aboriginal and multicultural education.

These materials provide advice to schools on how to build and maintain school community harmony and enhance greater social cohesion. They also provide advice on appropriate actions to take if community disharmony occurs including how to support students who may be directly or indirectly affected. Use of these materials is a matter for individual schools and advice provided should be adapted by schools to suit their local context.
Ensuring a harmonious school community is an essential prerequisite for teaching and learning to take place. School community harmony is created by establishing a culture of inclusion, an environment where all students and their families feel welcome and accepted and where all students are able to work and learn to achieve their potential.

School community harmony is based on the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and values that promote positive relationships and lessen the likelihood of discord developing. A cohesive school community is built through whole school programs that promote respect and create a sense of community within and beyond the school as well as teaching activities that develop intercultural understanding, challenge prejudice, teach critical thinking, enhance resilience and develop help seeking skills as well as personal responsibility.

Fostering student leadership and parent engagement is also critical in creating a sense of ownership and responsibility for the school community among students and their parents.

In considering their approach to building community harmony, schools should refer to the following key policies which outline strategic directions and the responsibilities of schools, available at https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies:

- Aboriginal Education
- Anti-Racism
- Bullying of Students – Prevention and Response
- Complaints Handling
- Controversial Issues in Schools
- Multicultural Education
- Child Protection – Responding to and from reporting students at risk of harm
• Religious Education
• Student Discipline in Government Schools
• Student Welfare
• Values in NSW Public Schools.

From time to time these policies will be updated and schools should keep abreast of these developments by regularly visiting the policies website.

Following are some suggested actions that schools can take to assist in building and maintaining school community harmony in the areas of:

• Whole school programs and initiatives
• Teaching and learning programs
• Engaging parents and community members
• Involving and supporting students.
Whole school programs and initiatives

Suggested actions:

- profile the nature of the school community, including students from diverse socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds and ensure that all staff are aware of this profile
- ensure accurate enrolment data is collected and maintained for each student, including language/s spoken at home, country of birth of student and parents, religious affiliation, proficiency in English language as well as visa sub-class and date of entry for new arrivals
- be aware of changing patterns of school enrolments including backgrounds and needs of recently arrived students
- acknowledge and respect the cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds of students and their families
- establish partnerships with communities represented in the school including links with relevant community organisations and representative bodies
- recognise and use the cultural knowledge of the school community to determine culturally appropriate and relevant whole school responses for building community harmony
- be aware of global tensions and incidents of disharmony reported in the media and monitor school community relations for potential impact.
Promoting inclusion and belonging

Suggested actions:

- implement strategies that promote the core values of NSW Public Schools, in particular the values of respect, responsibility, cooperation and care
- include strategies for multicultural and Aboriginal education in the school plan
- ensure the school implements the Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country: Guidelines and Protocols for NSW Public Schools and TAFE NSW Institutes
- fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in conjunction with the Australian flag where appropriate and in accordance with government protocols
- encourage staff to undertake professional learning in multicultural and Aboriginal education including intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication
- promote school community harmony on Harmony Day (21 March) and through other events which promote peace and positive community relations
- promote national events which encourage Reconciliation and develop an understanding of Australian Indigenous histories and cultures including:
  - National Sorry Day (26 May)
  - National Reconciliation Week in May/June
  - NAIDOC Week in July/September
- recognise and support events of cultural and religious significance to groups represented in the school community as well as Easter and Christmas
- implement whole school programs which promote intercultural understanding such as a cultural exchange program with another school
- build understanding of the refugee experience by promoting World Refugee Day (20 June) and National Refugee Week in October.
Suggested actions:

- review the school’s student wellbeing programs to ensure that they reflect the *Student Welfare Policy* and the diverse nature of the school’s population

- consult with the whole school community to develop strategies for countering racist attitudes and behaviours

- ensure all members of the school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Anti-Racism Policy and anti-discrimination legislation

- ensure that an Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO) is appointed and trained and that the whole school community is aware of the ARCO’s role

- include strategies for anti-racism education, community harmony and social inclusion in the school plan

- monitor the number of complaints of racism received and their resolution

- ensure that the school has an anti-bullying plan, consistent with the Bullying of Students Policy—Prevention and Response, and with identified strategies for dealing with incidents of bullying

- develop and implement a school discipline policy in line with the *Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy* and in consultation with the communities represented in the school

- consult with all members of the school community when developing canteen and uniform policies to ensure that they are inclusive of the cultural and religious practices observed by students.
Teaching and learning programs

Suggested actions:

- review current teaching practice to assess whether it is inclusive and relevant to the school community
- encourage teachers to use resources and activities that reflect diverse perspectives; encourage critical thinking and empathy; and build on students’ life and learning experiences
- provide professional learning for teachers that develops their knowledge of culture and diversity and skills in culturally inclusive pedagogy and differentiating the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students
- recognise cultural and religious events of significance to students and take these into account when planning teaching and learning activities
- model behaviour which shows respect for diversity and promotes a sense of belonging and shared identity amongst students
- maintain high expectations in relation to all students’ capabilities
- build a culture of respect and encourage positive interactions between students, addressing prejudice and racism if it occurs
- provide explicit support to accommodate the particular needs of students such as English language and literacy support.
Strengthening Community Harmony

Building and maintaining school community harmony

**Anti-racism education**

*Suggested actions:*

- provide professional learning for all staff in relation to racial discrimination and addressing racism in the learning environment
- provide all teachers with information on available resources that support anti-racism education
- encourage the use of a range of strategies, including drama techniques and peer teaching, to develop students’ abilities to recognise and appropriately deal with conflict
- implement explicit teaching and learning programs that develop understandings of racism and its effects.

**Intercultural understanding**

*Suggested actions:*

- integrate intercultural understanding across all curriculum areas, where possible providing opportunities for students to explore Australian diversity and identities
- encourage teachers to use resources available to support the teaching of democracy, civics and citizenship, global citizenship, Aboriginal and multicultural education
- provide opportunities for students to explore Australian Indigenous histories and cultures; and Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia as cross-curriculum priorities
- encourage interfaith understanding within relevant subject areas by providing opportunities for students to explore the diversity of spiritual traditions, practices and expressions within the school community
- promote the teaching of community languages including Aboriginal languages
- invite community leaders from a range of backgrounds to speak to students in class, assemblies or in other forums
- encourage teachers to promote values that underpin and support community harmony across curriculum areas and through whole school activities
- provide staff with information on available values education teaching resources.
Engaging parents and community members

Suggested actions:

- Promote democratic and inclusive practices across the school and in classrooms, including consultation, collaboration, representation, appropriate decision making processes and a focus on core values.

- Investigate level of engagement in school activities and decision making processes by parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and develop strategies to encourage greater participation and collaboration where necessary.

- Encourage collaboration with parents and community members from different cultural backgrounds in school planning and evaluation processes.

- Encourage parents from all backgrounds and communities to become involved in school-based and other parent consultative forums and committees including the P&C and AECG.

- Provide interpreters where required to facilitate the participation of parents with limited English proficiency in consultative decision making processes.

- Provide opportunities for the capacity of the whole school community to be enhanced and utilised in community harmony building activities and to promote the school.
**Encouraging participation**

**Suggested actions:**

- Encourage staff to interact positively with parents and community members from all cultural backgrounds and provide opportunities for professional learning in positive client engagement.

- Create a welcoming environment for parents and community members from all cultural backgrounds through the use of multilingual signs, regular meetings and allocation of parent meeting spaces.

- Nominate staff to be responsible for leading whole school community harmony and engagement strategies.

- Provide parent information sessions, including targeted workshops, on key educational issues and strategies for supporting student’s learning, using interpreters if required.

- Provide additional support for newly arrived parents and families including information on schooling in NSW public schools and links with settlement and other support services.

- Draw upon the expertise of parents and community members to support student learning.

**Effective communication**

**Suggested actions:**

- Initiate regular communication with parent/carers.

- Provide professional learning for staff on communicating with parents and community members from language backgrounds other than English, including the use of interpreters and translated material.

- Ensure that interpreters are used for interviews and meetings with parents when required.

- Provide translations of key Department documents in relevant languages, available on Department websites.

- Apply for the Community Language Scheme payment for front office staff who use their community language skills to provide information to parents.
Involving and supporting students

Suggested actions:

- help students to successfully manage transitions, including making transitions to and between schools as well as from school to work or to further education

- encourage student participation in activities which promote intercultural understanding and community harmony such as the Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition and the NAIDOC Public Speaking and Debating Challenge

- promote an ethos of community service and civic responsibility among the student body and through links to the wider community

- ensure that student support networks are in place and known by all students and make this information available in community languages

- monitor students for signs of unhappiness, social isolation, withdrawal, or emotional distress and take the initiative in offering assistance and involving parents/carers as required

- provide support strategies which address the specific needs of individual students that may arise from living arrangements, family circumstance, cultural, linguistic or religious background, disability status or health care

- develop mentoring initiatives that support students from diverse backgrounds to participate successfully at school and in broader society

- implement strategies for the anonymous disclosure of information on disharmony within the school or broader community

- establish links with youth workers and community liaison officers to support students at risk, including bilingual and bicultural workers where appropriate

- provide specialised, early intervention programs for newly arrived migrant and refugee students where required.
Suggested actions:

- involve students in appropriate decision making about their education and welfare and encourage student input into school planning and evaluation processes
- provide opportunities for students from all backgrounds to take part in leadership development programs and demonstrate leadership in school activities
- ensure processes for appointing students to leadership roles, including SRC positions, are inclusive and enable equitable participation by all students
- establish buddy and peer support systems to assist newly arrived migrant and refugee students in their transition to Australian schooling
- develop student leadership activities that promote anti-racism, social inclusion and community harmony
- provide opportunities for students to identify and respond to issues of local, national and global concern including community harmony, human rights and humanitarian affairs.
In times of community discord students will be affected to varying degrees and in different ways. How they are affected will depend on their emotional and community ties to the groups involved in the disharmony, their personal beliefs about the issues raised by the disharmony as well as their own strengths and support networks. They will also be affected by the community’s reaction and media reports.

Differing opinions about the causes of such discord, personal concerns about persecution and injustice, and fears of physical and verbal violence can promote strong emotional reactions among staff and students in our schools. This can have a significant impact on the learning and wellbeing of students and staff.

It is important to pay special attention to students who may feel anxious or isolated, including those who are new to the school, have limited social networks, or are members of particular cultural, religious and linguistic groups within the school which may have been involved in the discord. Similarly, attention should be paid to other groups within the school community, including staff and parents/carers, who may be feeling alienated or vulnerable in response to community events.

Students and staff should be encouraged to continue to focus on their core business of teaching and learning in a supportive educational environment.
Managing the school’s response - advice for principals

In the event of an incident of community disharmony, the response of a school will depend on its size, student composition and local context. Principals should consult with staff with expertise in student wellbeing. A staff meeting could be conducted at the beginning of the day to provide information on any planned school response.

Staff should systematically monitor students for signs of distress or sudden changes in behaviour.

The school may decide to conduct meetings with students in order to allow them to express their feelings and help them to understand the situation better. In deciding whether to hold meetings with students and how to handle discussions, schools should refer to the *Controversial Issues in Schools Policy* for advice on dealing with issues that may be extremely sensitive.

If meetings are conducted:

- appropriately trained staff should be involved where possible to support students and teachers
- groups should be as small as possible
- students should be reassured that the school is a safe environment and that all will be supported
- students should be allowed to ask questions and express their feelings. The emphasis at this time is to calm students. It is important that the teacher remains neutral but attempts to explain the facts simply (see suggested language for supporting students in the following pages)
- the teacher should explain what additional support structures are available for students including the school counsellor, Anti-Racism Contact Officer, and class teacher and how they can help. Outside agencies include Kids Helpline (phone 1800 55 1800) and ReachOut (http://au.reachout.com)
- teachers should notify the principal if any students are very distressed.

It may also be appropriate for schools to establish processes that allow students to anonymously or discretely express concerns to staff. This may include email correspondence as well as individual appointments with staff.


At the end of the day, the school may decide to hold a staff meeting to review the day and decide on a plan for the next day. Allow staff to share experiences and plan further action, for example, how to cater for absent students and ongoing management of issues.
It is important that schools maintain normal routines as much as possible.

Staff should be reminded that it is important to look after their own emotional wellbeing. Some may need to talk with a friend or a colleague. Support for staff is also available from the Employee Assistance Program.

**Supporting students**

Assumptions should not be made about the way any individual student or group of students will react to incidents of community disharmony. These events have the potential to impact on all students.

Staff should be sensitive to the feelings and reactions of all students and respond decisively to ensure that no student or staff member feels unsupported.

Some students may show the following behaviours as a result of distress arising from community disharmony:

- anxiety associated with a sense of loss of security and safety
- re-emergence of previous problems
- increased sensitivity to issues of justice and equity
- behaviour changes such as withdrawal or acting out
- conflict with peers
- feeling angry and expressions of anger.

Students need to feel supported and to be reassured that their school is a safe place to be. Schools that have put in place procedures and practices that support community harmony such as those described in section 1 can draw on these to remind students of the strengths of their school community. Other schools may decide to introduce new strategies for building and maintaining community harmony.

**Key messages about community harmony**

There are three key messages that need to be delivered to support students affected by community disharmony. These are:

- Discrimination and prejudice can be overcome
- Violence and harassment will not be tolerated in our school community
- The student has the emotional strength to handle the situation.

On the next page is a list of appropriate actions the school can take to reinforce these key messages.
### Key messages for students

#### Discrimination and prejudice can be overcome
- Maintaining harmony within a multicultural society is one of Australia’s greatest achievements.
- All members of Australian society, whatever their cultural or religious heritage, are affected by community disharmony – we are in this together – we all need to support one another.
- History shows that prejudice causes division, promotes fear and is harmful.

#### Violence and harassment will not be tolerated in our school community
- The school must be a safe place to carry out its core business of teaching and learning.
- Violence and harassment are illegal, contrary to school policy and will not be tolerated.
- Vengeance and justice are not the same.
- Anger is a normal reaction to conflict.
- Violence always generates resentment.
- All people should be treated with fairness, respect and dignity.
- Groups of people should not be judged by the actions of a few members of that group.

#### The student has the emotional strength to handle the situation
- Family members may be a source of support.
- Teachers may be a source of support.
- Friendship bonds are really important.
- Being actively involved in learning develops emotional strength.
- Prior experience in overcoming problem situations can be drawn on to assist in handling this situation.

### Suggested actions for school staff

#### Discrimination and prejudice can be overcome
- model acceptance, compassion and understanding
- provide accurate, relevant and useful information in developmentally appropriate language
- implement inclusive teaching practices
- avoid stereotyping of people or countries
- explore and discount fears in relation to other communities
- learn about diverse faiths and cultures
- promote critical assessment of facts and opinions in media reports
- include strategies for promoting community harmony and countering racism in the school plan.

#### Violence and harassment will not be tolerated in our school community
- promotewhole school programs which promote inclusion and belonging
- ensure fair and consistent application of the school discipline code
- ensure all members of the school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Anti-Racism Policy and racial discrimination legislation
- identify positive role models from members of diverse cultural backgrounds
- ensure the school has a trained Anti-Racism Contact Officer and promote their role to the school community, using available translations where required.

#### The student has the emotional strength to handle the situation
- promote careful attention to family and friendship networks
- encourage students to talk to their families and friends
- maintain routine and predictability
- encourage students to maintain their normal range of recreational activities
- provide opportunities for positive interactions and experiences through peer support, mentoring and cultural exchange programs
- provide a stable environment with clear, expectations, rules and consequences.
Suggestions for handling student discussions

Following is some suggested dialogue which teachers may use should they decide to hold class discussion about community disharmony.

In all such discussions it is advisable to establish some rules for the group:

- all members of the group should be allowed to speak
- all members of the group should listen to the speaker with respect
- all members have a right to their own views and different and opposing views should be respected and acknowledged
- the discussion is the ‘property of the group’ and should not become playground ‘gossip’ (confidentiality)

In the event that the discussion results in an argument, members of the group feeling unsafe or anxious, or if members do not abide by the established rules, the discussion should be stopped.

Setting parameters and acknowledging distress

In setting parameters for discussion and acknowledging that their students may be feeling distressed, teachers might say:

“I understand that this is an issue that we all might feel very strongly about…”

“We might feel differently about it because we have different experiences of discrimination. This could be because we’ve had friends suffer discrimination or we’ve been the victim ourselves and weren’t able to stop it.”

“Our opinions about this issue are affected by our experiences, the reactions of our family and friends, and the media.”
Inappropriate disclosure

If a student starts to inappropriately disclose too much to the group a teacher may limit the disclosure by saying:

“What you’re saying is pretty personal to you, perhaps it would be better if you told me more about that later today” and then make a time with the student to carry on the conversation.

Or the teacher could say:

“This may not be the best time for us to pursue this issue. There are other people at school you can talk with…” and refer the student to the appropriate school based support person.

In this context it is important for teachers to be aware of their responsibilities under the Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People Policy, including the responsibility to report the risk of harm concerns about students.

Encouraging students to talk

Students can be encouraged to talk by reassuring them that they have a right to hold their own views while respecting those of others. This may be addressed by saying:

“Many of us find it difficult to talk about discrimination and what it’s like to be a member of a group being discriminated against or blamed for discriminating. We may be afraid that if we say something others may put us down or use what we say against us. It’s important that we listen and respect the right of others to hold different or opposing views, as one of the ways that discrimination keeps its power is by making us afraid to speak up against it.”

“We need to be careful that feelings are not being hurt by what we say here, so no blaming or accusing others.”
Encouraging students to challenge prejudice or walk away

During any discussion with students about community disharmony, teachers should emphasise that discrimination is not acceptable and won’t be tolerated in the school.

It’s important to encourage students not to participate in activities that could lead to community disharmony and to speak out against discrimination. Say:

“If you see someone stirring up trouble, you should not be part of it. You can challenge their prejudice and let everyone know you won’t be part of it. If you feel you can’t speak up and challenge them, then you should walk away and let someone in a position of authority know.”

Where to go for help

It is also helpful during any class discussion to make students aware that there are people within the school to whom they can go if they wish to discuss their feelings in more detail. Class discussion is likely to heighten already strong emotions for some students.

“We have talked about a lot of really emotional issues here today and I appreciate all your contributions and sharing. Remember that in the school you can go and speak with ... if you feel that you need to discuss these issues further.”

In all discussions, teachers should keep to the known facts.

It is important to conclude the discussion with a positive message about the students’ safety, and the importance of working together to overcome any community division that may arise.
## Strategies for helping students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Suggested strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Routines</td>
<td>Try to maintain routines and predictability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement of the situation</td>
<td>Acknowledge that some students and/or staff may be feeling very distressed and worried.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ backgrounds</td>
<td>Be aware of, and sensitive, to students’ family, cultural, religious and language backgrounds as well as students’ individual circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>Be willing to listen to what students have to say. Opinions will be varied, so it is important not to take sides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Be understanding and flexible to accommodate the impact of the situation on individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcement of instructions</td>
<td>Check that classroom instructions are understood by students. Additional clarification may be necessary because some students may be distracted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School work</td>
<td>Completion of homework and assignments may need some negotiation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet time</td>
<td>Set up a safe place where students may go if they need some time out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reassurance</td>
<td>Assure students that schools are safe places and demonstrate this by taking action to redress any discrimination that occurs within the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO)</td>
<td>If a student discloses issues of racial harassment, bullying or discrimination, connect them with the ARCO in the school. Information on the role of the ARCO is available in translation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling support</td>
<td>If a student appears particularly distressed or you have concerns for a student, speak to the school counsellor to organise support which may include group work or referral to other agencies where appropriate. Staff needing support should be assisted to access information on the Employee Assistance Program or contact Health &amp; Wellbeing Unit on 1800 811 523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional support</td>
<td>A variety of people within and outside the school can offer support, including the school’s welfare team, Aboriginal Education Officers, school counsellors, educational services staff, youth workers, community organisations and other relevant government and non-government agencies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Re-engaging the school community

Following any incident of community disharmony that has affected the school, and after immediate action has been taken to support students as outlined previously, a school will need to take action to address the consequences of community conflict.

In the case of serious unrest, it is advisable to consult with the school and wider community to determine a plan of action to move the school forward. Schools should refer to the range of strategies suggested in section one to re-build community harmony. Activities could include peer mediation, conflict resolution, school community forums and restitution.

The impact of the community conflict on the school will need to be analysed carefully so that appropriate measures are put in place and further escalation of the impact is avoided. Should there be a need for restitution or reconciliation between members of the school community, this process should only be undertaken with the full co-operation and support of parents and any appropriate community leaders.

Schools will also need to demonstrate through their discipline policy that behaviours that disrupt their school community harmony will not be allowed and will be strongly addressed through a range of measures.

Re-engagement is a long term process. Sensitivities that have been heightened by the conflict may take a considerable time to resolve. Staff should be aware of any such sensitivities and be on the lookout for situations where they may rise again so they can address them in a timely and constructive fashion.
The following Department of Education and Communities policies and their support documents are available https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/:  

- Aboriginal Education  
- Anti-Racism  
- Bullying of Students – Prevention and Response  
- Complaints Handling  
- Controversial Issues in Schools  
- Multicultural Education  
- Child Protection – Responding to and from reporting students at risk of harm  
- Religious Education  
- Student Discipline in Government Schools  
- Student Welfare  
- Values in NSW Public Schools.  

From time to time these policies will be updated and schools should keep abreast of these developments by regularly visiting the policies website.
Websites

• All Together Now – http://alltogethernow.org.au
• Bullying. No Way! - http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

• Community Language Allowance Scheme Policy –
• Health And Safety –
  https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/workhealthandsafety/staff-wellbeing/eaps
• Harmony Day - http://www.harmony.gov.au
• Interpreting for NSW Public Schools –
• Kids Helpline –
• Racism. It Stops with Me – http://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au
• Reach Out -
• Reconciliation Australia - http://www.reconciliation.org.au
• Roads to Refuge – http://www.roads-to-refuge.com.au
• Together for Humanity Foundation – http://togetherforhumanity.org.au
• Translated Documents for NSW Public Schools –
• Values education for Australian schooling - http://www.valueseducation.edu.au
• Welcome to Country & Acknowledgment of Country: Guidelines and protocols for
  NSW Public Schools and TAFE NSW Institutes –
Interpreting and translations

Interpreting and translation services are provided for parents and carers who do not speak or understand English well and for deaf parents and carers who use sign language.

For information on how to access interpreters go to:

The Department also provides a large number of publications translated in up to 40 languages. To access the documents go to:

Sample note to parents

Dear parent/carer

In response to recent community events, the school today took the following steps.

Students were reassured that the school will continue to be a safe environment for all.
Students were reminded of the provisions of the student welfare and anti-racism policies which ensure that they will be supported if they experience any personal harassment.

Students were given the opportunity to talk about their feelings and were reminded that they can approach the school counsellor or other school staff if they are worried or upset. Ongoing support will be offered to any student who needs it.

It would be useful if you could talk with your children about these events and encourage them to continue to be tolerant and caring towards all people, both at school and in the broader community.

Maintaining normal routines and interests at home is helpful for children who are dealing with difficult situations.

Please contact the school if you have any particular concerns for your child and help will be made available.

Yours sincerely
Principal