

Combating bullying in New Zealand

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Victoria University of Wellington's Accent Learning is rolling out a new bullying prevention programme for schools—a first for the Southern Hemisphere.

The programme originated in Finland and is called KiVa, which means 'kiusaamista vastaan' or 'against [bullying](#)'.

It has proven successful in many schools across Northern Europe where they have seen both a reduction in bullying and an increase in learning achievements. In New Zealand it will initially be offered to [primary schools](#).

Designed for year two to ten students, KiVa is based on current evidence around what works in preventing bullying, and offers a continuing [education](#) programme to school principals and [teachers](#).

The programme focuses on three distinct groups: the bully, the victim and bystanders. It also involves a commitment from the wider [school](#) community.

"The beauty of this programme is that it focuses heavily on prevention," says Deidre Vercauteren, Education Manager at Accent Learning.

"It's not just a reaction to problems—it works in the background to reduce the number of bullying incidents."

Accent Learning provides support and professional development to

primary and secondary teachers in the lower North Island.

Professor Christina Salmivalli and Dr Virpi Pöyhönen from Finland's University of Turku, were commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Education to develop KiVa, spent a week with Accent Learning staff training them to implement the programme in New Zealand classrooms.

Victoria's School of Education will complement the introduction of KiVa into New Zealand schools by conducting evaluation studies to measure its effectiveness.

The School's research has already revealed that 94 percent of New Zealand teachers and principals recognise that bullying is a serious problem and that we need to do something about it, says Professor Vanessa Green from Victoria's School of Education.

"It has also shown that most teachers have not been trained in how to deal with bullying."

"The KiVa programme provides schools with a systematic method for dealing with bullying issues as they arise and, most importantly, a step-by-step process to follow in order to prevent bullying."

Provided by Victoria University

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