

# Better Buddies

## Fact sheet

The Alannah  
and Madeline  
Foundation



Keeping children safe from violence

### Our history

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating impact.

The Foundation was set up in memory of Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged six and three, who were tragically killed with their mother and 32 others at Port Arthur, Tasmania on 28 April 1996.

We care for children who have experienced or witnessed serious violence. We also run programs that prevent violence and advocate for children's safety and wellbeing. Our vision is that every child will live in a safe and supportive environment.

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AlannahandMadeline](https://www.facebook.com/AlannahandMadeline)

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### Helping younger students feel safe and cared for, and older students to feel valued and respected.

Bullying is a serious issue in Australia, with around one student in every four bullied over a period of several weeks<sup>1</sup>. Experiencing bullying can impact a child's self-esteem, behaviour, and their ability to concentrate and perform at school.

When students have the skills and understanding of how to engage in positive, respectful and inclusive relationships, then negative and violent behaviour – such as bullying – can be reduced.

Better Buddies, an initiative of The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, helps students entering their first year of primary school to feel safe, valued and connected to the school community. The school pairs new primary school students with an older buddy.

The Framework teaches students the values of caring for others, friendliness, respect, valuing difference, including others and responsibility. It aims to create positive behaviour, as well as build students' self-esteem, connectedness, social skills, trust and sense of community.

Launched in 2000, Better Buddies is now in almost 1,000 Australian schools, thanks to the support of NAB, trusts and foundations and other community partners. Today, more than 270,000 children are part of the Better Buddies network nationwide. Better Buddies has also been adopted in other countries, including Denmark, Singapore, Greenland, Ireland and Dubai.

Buddy Bear is the mascot of Better Buddies – a fun-loving and caring purple bear, who promotes care, security, warmth, comfort and the values of the Framework.

As part of the Better Buddies Framework, schools are encouraged to conduct regular buddy activities and run four key events throughout the year, including:

- Better Buddies Welcome (February)
- Better Buddies Games (May)
- Better Buddies Book Week (August)
- Better Buddies Celebration (November)

### Better Buddies makes a real difference in schools

Research has shown children benefit immensely from the Better Buddies Framework. An evaluation of Better Buddies conducted in 2011 found:

- The values in the Better Buddies Framework provide a structure and give direction to existing social skills programs and programs dealing with anti-bullying strategies.
- The training provided in the Better Buddies Framework creates an awareness of values and behaviours which contribute to a positive school culture.
- Students were more tolerant, respectful and understanding, particularly in the playground because of their involvement in the Better Buddies Framework.
- 98 per cent of principals perceive that the hours spent engaged in bullying issues has decreased for teachers and themselves since implementing Better Buddies.
- 95 per cent of principals believe that incorporating the Better Buddies Framework has benefitted the whole school community.
- 94 per cent of principals described various ways in which the Better Buddies Framework complemented other programs used within the school.
- 94 per cent of principals felt that the Better Buddies Framework complemented other anti-bullying programs in their school by use of multi-age approaches, a focus on resilience/cooperation/social competencies and their alignment with school goals and core values.
- The older buddies felt they knew more about bullying after being involved in student training.

Schools can apply for a sponsored position or purchase the Better Buddies Framework. For more information visit [betterbuddies.org.au](http://betterbuddies.org.au) or call 1300 720 747.

1. Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, I., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L. 2009. *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS)*. Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth.

