

BULLYING

The Division supports a secure school climate, conducive to teaching and learning, free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behaviour. The purpose of this policy is to promote consistency of approach and to help create a climate in which all types of bullying are regarded as unacceptable.

Bullying is a form of harassment and is prohibited in the school environment. Bullying generally involves repeated, hurtful, words or actions by an individual or group with intent to harm others. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following forms:

- Verbal Bullying: hurtful names and insults, cruel put-downs, false accusation, racial slurs, homophobic remarks, inappropriate comments about appearance, sarcasm, vicious rumours, and threats.
- Relational Bullying: excluding, isolating, ruining reputations, destroying friendships, ignoring, and glaring.
- Physical Bullying: extorting, pushing, punching, kicking, beating, spitting and pinching.
- Cyber Bullying: threatening emails, rumour spreading via text messaging, invasive pictures, and websites designed to criticize, threaten and/or harass.

For purposes of this policy, the school environment includes school buildings, grounds, vehicles, bus stops, the time going to and coming from school, and all school-related activities and events.

This policy also applies to students, who, by their indirect behaviour, condone or support another student's act of bullying.

This policy also applies to student behaviour that occurs off school property before or after school hours if the behaviour is of a serious nature which affects the school's reputation and has a negative impact on the school climate.

A student who engages in any act of bullying is subject to appropriate disciplinary action in keeping with the Division's Standard of Behaviour, including suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement

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authorities when deemed appropriate. The severity and pattern, if any, of the bullying behaviour shall be taken into consideration when disciplinary decisions are being made.

All teachers, administrators, volunteers and support staff shall take action when bullying is observed or a student informs an employee about a bullying event or situation. All complaints of bullying shall be reported to the Principal or designate who shall have the authority to take appropriate action against individuals who violate this policy.

Retaliation against a victim, an incident reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.

Intentional false accusations or false reports of bullying against another person are prohibited. If a student is unsure whether an event or situation is bullying, the student should consult with a teacher, counsellor, or other school employee. A person who engages in an act of bullying, reprisal, or false reporting of bullying or permits, condones, or tolerates bullying shall be subject to discipline under the Division's Standard of Behaviour.

Schools, with the assistance of their communities, will develop strategies to ensure that they quickly resume normal operation following a critical incident. These strategies will be designed to:

- assist the victim(s);
- re-integrate and support the ongoing education of the perpetrator and victim(s);
- ensure the well-being of witnesses to the incident; and
- address the underlying problems that have contributed to the incident using local agencies when appropriate.

The Division encourages the development and use of programs to address bullying at all school levels. Such programs shall be aimed toward accomplishing the following goals to:

1. send a clear message to students, staff, parents and community members that bullying will not be tolerated;
2. train staff and students in taking pro-active steps to prevent bullying from occurring;
3. implement procedures for immediate intervention, investigation, and confrontation of students engaging in bullying behaviour;
4. initiate efforts to change the behaviour of students engaging in bullying behaviours through re-education on acceptable behaviour, discussions, counselling, and appropriate negative consequences;

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5. foster a productive partnership with parents and community members in order to help maintain a bully-free environment;
6. support victims of bullying by means of individual and peer counseling;
7. help develop peer support networks, social skills and confidence for all students; and
8. recognize and praise positive and supportive behaviours of students toward one another on a regular basis.

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