



Harassment and Bullying Prevention

Rationale

The foundation of Catholic teaching about life and relationships is respect for the human person. “The quality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1935). For this reason, all persons must be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, bullying, harm or threat of harm. Sacred Heart School is committed to providing and promoting a learning environment that enables every student to feel safe, accepted and respected.

Sacred Heart School works continuously to develop strategies that make students feel valued, respected and connected within their school community while remaining consistent with the teaching of the Catholic Church. This includes the protection of a student’s physical safety, social connectedness, and inclusiveness as well as protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of their gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

Definition

Bullying is a pattern of repeated actions targeted at a person deliberately, intended to reduce the perceived power that person has over the situation or to harm that person. All acts of bullying have the characteristics of being dehumanizing, intimidating, humiliating, and threatening, and evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress in the person being targeted.

Bullying encompasses a wide range of behaviours in a relationship between a dominant and a less dominant person or group where:

- an imbalance of the perceived power is manifest through aggressive actions
- physical or psychological (verbal and social) abuse occurs
- negative interactions occur directly (face-to-face) or indirectly (gossip, exclusion)
- negative actions occur with intent to harm, which can include some or all of the following:
 - a. physical actions such as punching, kicking, biting and initiating unwanted sexual touching, can hurt the person’s body, damage belongings or make the person feel bad about himself or herself;
 - b. verbal actions such as threats, name-calling, insults, racial and cultural slurs or inappropriate jokes and/or comments; this includes sexual harassment; that is, when a person or group hurts another person by taunting or discussing sensitive sexual issues, creating sexual rumours or messages, and making derogatory comments on a person’s perceived sexual identity;
 - c. social exclusion such as spreading rumours, ignoring, gossiping, excluding.
- negative actions are repeated and/or the intensity or the duration of the actions establishes the bully’s dominance over the person. The person thus becomes a victim of injustice.
- information and communication technologies are used physically to threaten, verbally harass or socially exclude an individual or group.



GUIDELINES (Roles and Responsibilities)

Students are expected to:

- promote a positive and caring environment
- refuse to bully others or to be a bystander to acts of bullying
- actively participate in school-wide and classroom anti-bullying initiatives and social skills programs
- report all acts of bullying they may experience or observe to appropriate school personnel

Sacred Heart School Staff are expected to:

- provide a supportive environment that upholds Gospel values and encourages positive relationships between students, staff, and parents/guardians
- address bullying behaviour in an age-appropriate manner;
- implement a comprehensive anti-bullying strategy comprised of anti-bullying prevention programs, investigation of reports of bullying, intervention and follow-up;
- keep lines of communication open between home and school;
- encourage and teach students to report incidents of bullying behaviour;
- conduct themselves in a manner consistent with Gospel values and the teachings of Jesus Christ

Parents, Guardians, Parish, and Community Members are expected to:

- contribute to a safe, caring and respectful school community;
- learn about bullying behaviour and related issues;
- inform the school if bullying is suspected;
- work with the school to resolve identified incidents of bullying

PROCEDURES

Prevention

Prevention of bullying behaviour is the ultimate goal. Prevention strategies are ongoing and should include: a broad-range of educational experiences for students; staff, parents/guardians; and community; a common language and understanding of bullying; open communication and collaboration.

Investigation of Reported Bullying Behaviour

The safety and well-being of all students involved shall be of primary concern. The student(s) allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour shall be separated, given the opportunity to speak, and dealt with individually. Information related to bullying behaviours shall be gathered and documented from all students involved, including any witnesses.

Actions if Bullying Behaviour is Evident

Actions to address incidents of bullying behaviour shall take into account:

- a. the developmental and maturity levels of the students involved;
- b. the levels of harm that have occurred;
- c. the surrounding circumstances and the context in which the incidents occurred;



- d. the nature of behaviours in the past related to similar incidents or continuing patterns of behaviour; and
- e. the relationships among the parties involved.

All those involved will be informed individually that there will be follow-up of the incident. The behaviour of each student involved (regardless of role) is to be monitored to determine further actions.

The school administration or the classroom teacher(s) shall determine whether it is appropriate to contact the parents/guardians of the students involved in the incident. The school administration may request assistance from CISVA personnel, the Police Resource Officer, or other appropriate resources.

Intentionally and falsely accusing another student of bullying behaviour shall be considered bullying behaviour and dealt with as such.

If efforts expended by the staff with the students involved are unsuccessful and further bullying behaviours are found to occur, the formal procedures detailed below shall be followed:

In cases where it is determined that bullying behaviour has occurred and is part of a continuing pattern, the Appointed School Official (Mr. Kozack, Principal) or the Alternate ASO (Mr. Maxwell, Vice-Principal) shall complete a Bullying Incident Report.

The school administration shall contact the parents/guardians of each student involved and invite them to participate in meetings to discuss their child's involvement in the incident(s). In most instances, separate meetings shall be arranged for the parents/guardians of each student involved. A written record shall be kept of the plan of action and strategies to be undertaken by the school, parents/guardians, and students involved. Such records shall be kept in a confidential file by the Appointed School Official (Mr. Kozack, Principal) or the Alternate ASO (Mr. Maxwell, Vice-Principal) and reviewed annually.

If the plan involves suspensions or expulsions the CISVA policy will be referenced.

Sacred Heart School remains committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent retaliation by a person(s) against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of policy.

In keeping with the teachings of Christ, Sacred Heart School will strive to create a safe, caring and supportive school environment, free of bullying for all members of the school community.

**Blessed are the peacemakers; For they shall be called children of God.
Matthew 5:9**