

## **SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS**

### **Background**

The mission of our school division speaks to educating in an atmosphere of faith, hope, and love and to preparing our students to live as compassionate, confident and contributing citizens. In order to bring this mission to life, we are committed to promoting a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe Catholic learning environment that promotes the well-being of all students and staff, and requires that every person be treated with dignity and respect. Our schools are committed to supporting inclusive communities that teach care and compassion for every person, regardless of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, sexual orientation and/or any ground protected by the *Human Rights Act* or the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. One of our division's goals is to develop responsible, compassionate and respectful members of a just, peaceful and democratic society. All efforts to further the caring and safe environment of a school will be in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church. This requires the support and assistance of all members of the school community.

A positive school climate contributes to the prevention and reduction of misbehaviors in school. School staff, under the direction of the principal, are to maintain order and discipline in the school, on school grounds and during division-sponsored activities. School staff must operate in loco parentis, that is to say, as responsible caring parents in relation to students. In exercising their authority under the School Act, staff must always consider the educational interests and fundamental rights of all students. Students and staff are expected to model and reinforce socially responsible and respectful behaviors so teaching and learning can take place in a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe Catholic environment.

### **Definitions**

1. Bullying is hereby defined to respond to the Board's responsibility to uphold

Section 45.1 (1) of the School Act, which stipulates that it must provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all students and staff. Bullying means repeated and hostile or demeaning behavior by a student where the behavior is intended by the student to cause harm, fear or distress to another individual in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to the individual's reputation. Bullying often occurs in circumstances where one party endeavors to maintain power and control over another based upon systemic inequalities within a social setting. Parameters for addressing bullying are outlined within this policy.

2. Conflict in Relationship occurs through single episodic acts of breakdown in relationships between students. Conflict is an inevitable component of students learning to grow within social relationships. Disagreement and misunderstanding between parties is at the heart of conflict. However, conflict does not necessarily constitute premeditated efforts to cause harm, fear, or distress. Parameters for addressing conflict in relationships between students may be dealt with through counseling and the division's Student Conduct Policy.
3. Personal Harassment refers to unwelcome, discriminatory conduct or behavior which is known or ought to be known to cause offense to another person. It does not reflect a relationship of mutual consent.
4. Sexual Harassment refers to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which is known or ought to be known to impact the well-being of another person.

Harassment represents more than conflict in relationship and is a serious form of bullying that will be addressed through the division's Administrative Procedure on Harassment.

5. Sanctity of Human Life – A foundational principle of Catholic social teaching is the sanctity of human life. Recognizing each human person as having been created in the image and likeness of God, the Catholic Church believes that the inherent dignity of the human person begins at conception and extends until natural death. Human life is valued above all material possessions in the world.

This is the lens through which the division views all students and advocates for their safety and well-being within our schools.<sup>1</sup>

6. Catholic teaching on social relationships recognizes all those called to a life with Christ as, simply and completely, children of God. Christians afford no other title to that giftedness other than to be called by name to a life of love and to be compelled, through discipleship, to share it abundantly with others. As St. Paul reminds us, “For in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God, through faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ (Galatians 3: 27-28).”

It is the responsibility of our students to respect the unique differences of every person, extending understanding and compassion to others. We do not limit or narrow our understanding of each other to specific traits that make us different. This would be a reductionist view of the human person. Rather, each of us is recognized for the entirety of our gifts and is called forth to contribute these gifts for the betterment of creation and the building of God’s kingdom. This understanding of the human person and God’s plan for each of us defines all of our social relationships. Our relationships, therefore, are characterized by generosity of self, mutual respect, and a desire for the good of the other.

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CCCB (1994). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Ottawa, Ontario: CCCB Publishing, 2273, p. 465.

## Procedures

1. The Division shall:
  - 1.1 Ensure the best educational interests of the student are the paramount consideration in the exercise of their authority;

- 1.2 Ensure all schools foster welcoming, caring, respectful and safe Catholic environments;
- 1.3 Develop, implement and continually evaluate procedures, programs and practices to prevent and respond to incidents that disrupt teaching and learning;
- 1.4 Act in manner that is legally, professionally and educationally sound.

2. The Principal shall:

- 2.1 Ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister;
- 2.2 Develop an action plan in consultation with students, staff, school council, police, community representatives and parents, that:
  - 2.2.1 Provides data management and internal/external communications system;
  - 2.2.2 Clarifies roles and responsibilities of students, school staff, parents/guardians and community agencies to support welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments;
  - 2.2.3 Establishes procedures for developing, implementing and evaluating violence prevention;
  - 2.2.4 Provides crisis management and school disaster plans;
  - 2.2.5 Provides staff with professional development on safe and caring schools;
- 2.3 Ensure a system of monitoring student attendance is in place.
  - 2.3.1 Follow-up phone calls shall be made for unaccounted student

absences;

2.3.2 Unaccounted morning absences shall be followed up as soon as possible no later than noon (12:00 p.m.). Unaccounted afternoon absences shall be followed up as soon as possible, not later than the end of the school day.

3. Teachers shall:

- 3.1 Create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning;
- 3.2 Establish learning environments wherein students feel physically, psychologically, socially and culturally secure;
- 3.3 Be respectful of students' human dignity;
- 3.4 Establish a positive, professional relationship with each student that is characterized by mutual respect, trust and harmony;
- 3.5 Model beliefs, principles, values and intellectual characteristics outlined in the Guide to Education, ECS to grade 12.

4. School Council members and/or parent/guardians shall:

- 4.1 Have a right and responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children;
- 4.2 Consult with the Principal to ensure students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister;
- 4.3 Advise and consult with the Principal on matters related to student conduct, discipline and consequences.

5. Students shall:

- 5.1 Demonstrate desirable personal characteristics, such as respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, caring, loyalty and commitment to democratic ideals;
- 5.2 Conduct themselves in accordance with the code of conduct established in the School Act and comply with the following code of conduct:
  - 5.2.1 be diligent in pursuing the student's studies;
  - 5.2.2 attend school regularly and punctually;
  - 5.2.3 co-operate fully with everyone authorized by the board to provide education programs and other services;
  - 5.2.4 comply with rules of the school;
  - 5.2.5 account to the student's teachers for the student's conduct;
  - 5.2.6 respect the rights of others,
  - 5.2.7 ensure that the student's conduct contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging,
  - 5.2.8 refrain from, report and not tolerate bullying or bullying behavior directed toward others in the school, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means,
  - 5.2.9 positively contribute to the student's school and community.
6. All actions by students that impact the safety and well-being of students or staff or call into question a student's success in being accountable for his/her conduct to the successful operation of the school will be addressed through the division's administrative procedure on Student Conduct.
7. All schools and classrooms must enact procedures that support the

following expectations with respect to bullying:

- 7.1 No action toward another student, regardless of the intent of that action, will cause harm, fear, or distress to that student.
- 7.2 No action toward another student within the school community will diminish the student's reputation within the school community.
- 7.3 Any action that contributes to a perception of bullying, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means, will be addressed by the school if it is determined that the actions impact the well-being of the alleged victim within the school community.
- 7.4 Any action that humiliates or contributes to diminishing the reputation of a student because of race, religious beliefs, color, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, sexual orientation is deemed to be an act of bullying.
- 7.5 No report by a student that he/or she is being "bullied" will be ignored by a school official. The official will respond as if an incident has happened and report the incident to a teacher or principal.
- 7.6 The principal will establish a distinction between those matters of bullying that will be addressed by teachers, and those to be addressed by the school administrator.
- 7.7 Students who are bystanders to an act of bullying have a responsibility to report observed incidents to school staff. Students are expected to either exercise communication dedicated to prevent bullying behavior, or failing this, to immediately report such incidents to school staff.
- 7.8 Students do not have a role in disciplining other students who have allegedly participated in bullying behavior. They are encouraged to discourage these actions by labeling the behavior through communication

to others as bullying, requesting that the behavior cease, and report the incident to a school official.

- 7.9 In establishing consequences for bullying, teachers and principals will use corrective interventions that consider the context of the circumstance, the behavioral history of the students involved, and the age /stage of development of the student.
  - 7.10 If, in the opinion of the teacher or principal, an act of bullying has occurred, interventions dedicated to stopping future bullying behavior and educating bullied students about how to address the issue in the future will be applied. Those disciplined for their involvement in bullying will be clearly directed about what to “stop” doing and “start” doing in order to foster a safe and caring culture within the school.
  - 7.11 Parents play a primary role in assisting with the resolution of matters pertaining to bullying. Apprising them of incidents in this area that have impacted their child/children should occur at the earliest opportunity.
  - 7.12 Incidents of bullying that adversely impact the safety of individuals or are an affront to the common good of the school community may be addressed through the application of Sections 24 or 25 of the *School Act*.
8. Students will be afforded the following:
- 8.1 Inclusive communities which support welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that foster diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and positive sense of self.
  - 8.2 Opportunities to have access to meaningful and relevant learning experiences that include appropriate instructional supports, regardless of race, religious beliefs, color, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, sexual orientation or any other factor

- 8.2.1 Principals in consultation with the school learning team, specialists, parent(s), student and division staff will determine, on a case-by-case basis, accommodations and supports which are acceptable and emphasize a loving and pastoral response to gender diversity as well as requiring that persons who are gender diverse be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Therefore, the level of ongoing support and guidance required will vary, depending on individual need, Accommodations may include but not limited to, a change in common name, use of a suitable change room/bathroom, classroom adaptations and field trip accommodations.
    - 8.2.2 Principals will provide opportunities for staff to increase their knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes in promoting respect for human rights, respecting diversity and understanding issues related to gender identity and/or gender expression in relation to the Catholic faith as well as the greater society.
  - 8.3 Information on the code of conduct with which they are expected to comply and possible consequences for noncompliance;
  - 8.4 Opportunities to explain and present evidence with respect to incidents;
  - 8.5 Decisions made as objectively as possible and based on all the facts presented.
9. Consequences for inappropriate behavior will be determined by each school staff, in accordance with division procedures, to fit the unique circumstances of the school and student. Appropriate consequences will be based on helping the student(s) learn from the misbehavior. In establishing consequences, teachers and principals will use corrective interventions that consider the context of the circumstance, the behavioral history of the students involved, and the age/stage of development of the students, and consider supports for students impacted by

inappropriate behavior as well as students who engage in inappropriate behavior.

9.1 Consequences for noncompliance may include:

9.1.1 Verbal warning and/or reprimand

9.1.2 Removal of privileges;

9.1.3 Formal removal from class;

9.1.4 Minor or major detention;

9.1.5 Interview and/or contract with student;

9.1.6 Parent/guardian communication and/or meeting;

9.1.7 Temporary removal from class and/or restitution;

9.1.8 Counselling and/or referral for services;

9.1.9 Suspension and/or expulsion to alternative education program.

Reference: Section 1, 8, 12, 16,18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 45, 45.1(1), 60, 61, 113, 123, 124, 125 School Act  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Individual Rights Protection Act  
Alberta Human Rights Act  
An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our  
Children; School Act; Alberta Bill of Rights  
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act  
Supporting Safe, Secure and Caring Schools in Alberta (1999)