



DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying including cyber-bullying is behaviour that can be repeated or occur one time and can be carried out by an individual or group of individuals. It may be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect. It can take many forms including physical (pushing, tripping), verbal (name calling, insults, threats, sexist/racist/transphobic comments), social, also known as relational (spreading rumours, intentionally excluding others, humiliating others with public gestures) and causing harm to one's property.

Bullying can occur in situations where there are real or perceived power imbalances between individuals or groups, and may be a symptom of racism, classism, homophobia, sexism, religious discrimination, ethnic discrimination or other forms of bias and discrimination. Bullying can also be based on, but not limited to, body size, appearance, abilities, or other real or perceived factors. Perceptions about differences are often based on stereotypes perpetuated in broader society.

Harm to an individual can be experienced in a number of ways, including physical, mental, emotional and psychological.

In accordance with subsection 1(1) of the *Education Act*;

“Bullying” means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where,

- (a) the behaviour is intended by the pupil to have the effect of, or the pupil ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of,
 - (i) causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual's reputation or harm to the individual's property, or
 - (ii) creating a negative environment at a school for another individual, and
- (b) the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group, power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is the act of engaging in bullying behaviours through electronic means such as social media platforms, email, text or direct messaging, digital gaming and/or communication applications.

Examples of cyber-bullying may include:

- sending or sharing hateful, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating electronic communication or images via text messages, emails, direct messages
- revealing information considered to be personal, private, and sensitive without consent
- making and/or engaging, and/or participating in fake accounts on social networking sites to impersonate, humiliate and/or exclude others
- excluding or disrupting access to, a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts and during digital gaming sessions

Bullying, including cyber-bullying, may intersect with other forms of sexual exploitation including, but not limited to, sextortion and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Traffickers and other sexual predators are increasingly using fake accounts to pose as acquaintances or friends of children and youth to lure, groom and recruit them into engaging in sexual acts or services. Children and youth who experience bullying are at increased risk for being sex trafficked.

In accordance with subsection 1(1) of the *Education Act*;

Cyber-bullying (1.0.0.2)

Bullying includes bullying by electronic means (cyber-bullying) including:

- (a) creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
- (b) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and
- (c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

ENGAGING PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Parents/Guardians play an important role in the education of their child(ren) and can support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe, inclusive accepting, and respectful learning environment for all students.

- Parents/guardians who become aware of bullying including cyber-bully are encouraged to address their concerns directly to the school principal.
- The principal will investigate the report, and if applicable, invite the parent/guardian to have a discussion about the supports that will be provided for their student.
- Parents/guardians who are not satisfied with the school's response will follow the [Complaint Resolution Governance Policy \(800.3\)](#) and [Administrative Operational Procedures](#).

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Bullying prevention is a whole school approach supporting expectations for a safe, caring, inclusive, and accepting school climate. It includes a shared understanding about the nature and underlying causes of bullying and its impact on the lives of individual students and the school community.

The following are some characteristics of a positive school climate:

- Students, staff members, and parents/guardians feel safe, and are safe, included, accepted and experience a sense of belonging in their community.
- All members of the school community demonstrate respect, fairness, and kindness in their interactions, building healthy relationships free from discrimination and harassment.
- Students are encouraged and given support to be positive leaders and role models in their school community.
- Open and ongoing dialogue takes place between the Principal, staff members, parents/guardians, and students with all partners actively engaged.
- The learning environment, instructional materials, and teaching and assessment strategies reflect the diversity of all learners.
- Every student is inspired and given support to succeed in an environment of high expectations.
- Bullying prevention and awareness-raising strategies for students and staff are reinforced through curriculum-linked programs.
- Students, staff members, parents/guardians, visitors and community members are responsible for promoting a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate by developing an awareness of bullying, reporting incidents of bullying, supporting the school through Catholic School Council bullying prevention initiatives, and communicating an understanding of the factors that contribute to a safe, inclusive, and accepting school climate.

BULLYING AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS

The Board provides preventative programs, interventions, and other supports for students who have experienced any form of bullying, students who have witnessed incidents of bullying and for students who have engaged in bullying. Board staff, community agencies, or other professionals may provide bullying prevention and intervention programs and supports that include:

- early intervention for both the student who is a victim of bullying, and the student is responsible for the bullying;
- a safe and positive learning environment that is supportive of student achievement and well-being; and,
- the development of positive relationships among staff, among students, and between staff and students to promote a safe environment and positive school climate.

STRATEGIES

Taking action against bullying including cyber-bullying requires school staff to consider the root cause(s) and identify the most effective interventions. Proactive intervention coupled with coaching and support can help all students develop the skills and understanding needed to build and maintain positive relationships.

The Board and all employees of the Board are expected to:

- take seriously all allegations of bullying including cyber-bullying and act in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner when responding to students who disclose or report incidents of bullying, and recognize that some allegations may require more comprehensive intervention.
- respond to any student behaviour that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate.
- address behaviours that are contrary to the provincial Code of Conduct, which include, but are not limited to, inappropriate sexual behaviour, gender-based violence, and harassment on the basis of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, colour, ethnicity, culture, citizenship, ancestry, origin, religion, creed, family status, socio-economic status, disability and/or any other immutable characteristic or ground protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- address behaviours that are contrary to the Board Code of Conduct: Treat one another in a Christ-like manner with dignity and respect at all times, regardless of one's age, marital status, family status, disability, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression and/or identity, always respecting and upholding the values and teachings of our Catholic faith.
- encourage students to report incidents of bullying; and support, monitor and act upon all reported incidents, to ensure the safety of all students.
- consider interventions and, supports and consequences that align with the student's strengths and needs, as well as with the program goals and learning expectations as documented in an Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- model appropriate language and actions for students.
- increase awareness and understanding of the dynamics of bullying and develop a school-wide bullying prevention and intervention plan to incorporate in the School Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-Being.

SUPPORTS

The Board and all employees of the Board are expected to:

- provide a safe, caring, and supportive environment that upholds Catholic Gospel values and encourages positive relationships between students, staff and parents/guardians, and all members of the Catholic school community.
- consider that the programs, interventions, and other supports may be provided by social workers, psychologists, or other professionals who have training in similar fields, as determined by the Board that are curriculum-linked and consistent with a progressive discipline approach.
- use resources that will assist in developing age-appropriate conflict resolution skills, social skills, positive relationships, and acceptable behaviours.

- consider that a range of supports should be available from early prevention to more intensive interventions in cases of persistent bullying, with possible referral to community-based service providers and that ongoing intervention and support may be necessary to sustain and promote positive student behaviour.
- support students who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote a safe and inclusive learning environment, the acceptance of and respect for others and the creation of a positive school climate, including, but not limited to:
 - a) activities or organizations that promote gender equity;
 - b) activities or organizations that promote anti-racism;
 - c) activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people with disabilities; or
 - d) activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

The name of an activity or organization must be consistent with the promotion of a positive school climate as clarified in the *Education Act* that is inclusive and accepting of all students in consultation with the Principal of the school.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION FOR BULLYING INCLUDING CYBER-BULLYING

The Board recognizes the importance of dealing with bullying and any incident of bullying, which can have a significant impact on the safety of students, learning and school climate. As a result, bullying including cyber-bullying is one of the activities for which suspension must be considered. ([Student Suspension Administrative Operational Procedures 302.6.4](#) and [Student Expulsion Policy 302.6.5](#)).

Kindergarten to Grade 3

Incidents of bullying involving students from Kindergarten to Grade 3 should be addressed with the appropriate positive behaviour supports in the school setting.

Following an investigation, principals must suspend students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 for incidents if:

1. their continuing presence in the school creates an unacceptable risk of the safety of another person
2. the bullying is motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other similar factor (e.g., socio-economic status, appearance).

Grades 4 to 12

Following an investigation, principals must suspend a student in Grades 4 to 12 for bullying, and consider referring that student for expulsion if:

1. the student has previously been suspended for bullying, and
2. the student's continuing presence in the school creates, in the Principal's opinion, an unacceptable risk for the safety of another person.
3. the bullying, is motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other similar factor (e.g., socio-economic status, appearance).

PRINCIPAL NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Principals are required to notify parents/guardians of a student who has been harmed as a result of a serious student incident, including bullying/cyber-bullying. When notifying parents/guardians, a Principal must invite the parents/guardians to have a discussion about the supports that will be provided for their student.

Principals shall disclose the following information:

- the nature of the activity that resulted in harm to the student,
- the nature of the harm to the student,
- the steps taken to protect the student's safety, including the nature of any disciplinary measures taken in responses to the activity, and
- the supports that will be provided for the student in response to the harm that resulted from the activity.

Principals are required to notify the parents/guardians of students who have engaged in serious student incidents and shall disclose the following information:

- the nature of the activity that resulted in harm to the student,
- the nature of the harm to the student,
- the nature of any disciplinary measures taken in responses to the activity, and
- the supports that will be provided for the students in response to the harm that resulted from the activity.

The Principal shall not notify the parents/guardians of a student, if, in the opinion of the Principal, doing so would put the student at risk of harm from the parents/guardians of the student, such that notification is not in the best interests of the student. The Principal will document the rationale for this decision, and notify both the teacher who reported the incident and the appropriate Family of Schools' Superintendent.

In circumstances where Board employees have reason to believe that a student may be in need of protection, Board employees must call Family and Children's Services Niagara (FACS) in accordance to the requirements of the *Child and Family Service Act*.

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

All Board employees, student transportation and third parties who are under contract or agreement with the Board are required to report and/or respond to any student behaviour, on school property or during a school-related activity or event that is likely to have a negative impact on school climate.

In certain situations, members of the College of Psychologists of Ontario or the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers who engaged in a clinical relationship with a student shall report incidents of behaviour for which suspension/expulsion must be considered, to the Principal as soon as it is, in their professional opinion, reasonably possible to do so without having a negative impact on the nature of the clinical relationship, in accordance with section 300.2 of Part XIII of the *Education Act*. They shall also report, in a manner that is consistent with the code of ethics and the standards of practice of their respective professions matters that could result in the student doing physical, emotional, or psychological harm to themselves or to others.

REPORTING SERIOUS STUDENT INCIDENTS

The purpose of reporting serious student incidents is to ensure that the Principal is aware of any activities taking place in the school for which suspension/expulsion must be considered and to help ensure a positive school climate.

An individual who becomes aware that a student may have engaged in a serious student incident shall report the matter to the Principal as soon as reasonably possible. In cases where immediate action is required, a verbal report to the Principal may be made. A written report must be made when it is safe to do so using the [Safe Schools Reporting Tool](#).

Safe Schools Reporting Tool

1. All incidents reports, including those made verbally must be confirmed in writing and submitted to the Principal through the [Safe Schools Reporting Tool](#) in a timely manner and no later than the end of the school day.
2. Where the Principal is the sole witness to a serious student incident, the Principal must complete a report through the [Safe Schools Reporting Tool](#).
3. Each incident report will be assigned a number for filing and retrieval purposes and investigated by the Principal.

Written Acknowledgement

The Principal must provide the person who reported the serious student incident with written acknowledgement, through the Safe Schools Reporting Tool and must specify whether the investigation has been completed or is still in progress. The Principal will not provide information that could identify the student(s) involved.

Once the investigation is complete, the Principal:

1. must communicate the results of the investigation to the teacher who submitted the incident report.
2. will communicate the results of the investigation to the individual who submitted the incident report, who is not teacher, only if the Principal considers it appropriate.
3. must not disclose more personal information than is reasonably necessary for the purpose of communicating the results of the investigation.

ONTARIO STUDENT RECORD (OSR)

If the Principal has decided that action must be taken as a result of an incident, the Principal will file a copy of the incident report that was submitted through the Safe Schools Reporting Tool along with documentation (e.g., suspension/expulsion letter, police report) in the Ontario Student Record (OSR) of the student whose behaviour was inappropriate.

1. Where the Principal has taken action in the case of more than one student, a copy of the incident report along with documentation indicating the action taken must be filed in the OSR of each student whose behaviour was inappropriate. The names of all other students that appear on the incident report must be removed before it is filed.
2. In the case of a student who has been harmed, no information about the incident must be placed in the OSR, unless that student's parents/guardians expressly request that it be placed in the OSR.
3. In situations where the student who has been harmed has also engaged in a serious student incident, information regarding the incident and the action taken will be placed in the student's OSR.
4. The incident report and documentation must be kept for a minimum of one year in the OSR.
5. In the case of a violent incident, the Principal must check the Violent Incident Box on the student's discipline tab in the Student Management System. A copy of the Violent Incident Form printed from the Student Management System and any other documentation (e.g., a copy of incident report that was submitted through the Safe Schools Reporting Tool, suspension/expulsion letter, police report) must be filed and retained in the student's OSR for:
 - one year, if the student's suspension was quashed or withdrawn and the record of suspension expunged;
 - three years, if the student was suspended for the violent incident;
 - five years, if the student was expelled for the violent incident.
6. For non-violent incidents, if no further action is taken by the Principal, the Principal is not required to retain the report.

MAINTENANCE OF THE ONTARIO STUDENT RECORD (OSR)

The contents of the Ontario Student Record (OSR) should be reviewed on a regular basis by the Principal for the removal of any material that is no longer required to be retained to ensure that they remain conducive to the improvement of the instruction of the student.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS AND OTHER SCHOOL STAFF

The Board will provide professional development for administrators, teachers and other school staff about bullying prevention and intervention strategies for promoting positive school climate. Training and resources may include but are not limited to, awareness of Board governance policies and administrative operational procedures, curriculum-linked culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy related to bullying prevention and intervention, social and emotional skills and critical and creative thinking skills to help students develop healthy relationships.

COMMUNICATION, MONITOR AND REVIEW

It is important that all members of the school community understand and support bullying prevention and intervention. To support a whole-school approach the Board will continue to communicate, monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of Board Governance Policies and Administrative Operational Procedures, in consultation with principals, staff, parents/guardians, students, the Indigenous Education Advisory Council, the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee, Catholic School Councils, the Special Education Advisory Committee, and community-based service providers.

At least once every two years the Board will conduct anonymous school climate surveys of students, staff and parents/guardians. The data collected will be analyzed to address barriers, and inform and support the development of Board governance policies and administrative operational procedures, and the Board and School Improvement and Equity Plans.

SAFE AND ACCEPTING SCHOOLS TEAMS (SASTS)

Under the leadership of Principals, teachers and other school staff members maintain order in the schools, and are expected to hold everyone to the highest standard of respectful and responsible behaviour. Each school must have a Safe and Accepting Schools Team responsible for fostering a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate that should include at least one student, at least one: parent/guardian, teacher, support staff member, community partner, and the Principal. The Chair of this team must be a staff member.

Safe and Accepting Schools Teams shall:

- review the results of the School Climate Surveys and identify areas to monitor.
- review the Board Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.
- monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and supports in the School Improvement and Equity Plan using the results from the School Climate Surveys.
- promote Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in the school through activities for students, staff, parents/guardians and members of the community.

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