



# Policy

Title: <b>Bullying Prevention and Intervention</b>	Policy #: <b>PO612</b>
Policy Area: Student Conduct and Safety	
Source: Superintendent of Education – Safe Schools	
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## 1.0 Introduction

Providing students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate is a shared responsibility in which the Durham Catholic District School Board and its schools play an important role. Schools that have bullying prevention and intervention plans foster a positive learning and teaching environment that supports student achievement and well-being and helps students reach their full potential.

A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education as well as our Catholic Graduate Expectations and Catholic Social Teachings are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is a crucial component of bullying prevention.

Building and sustaining a positive school climate is a complex challenge requiring evidence-informed solutions. A whole-school approach involving all education and community partners is needed to bring about necessary systemic change.

## 2.0 Definitions

**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

## 2.0 **Definitions (cont'd)**

- (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; and
- (c) bullying behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.
- (d) Cyber-bullying –bullying includes bullying by electronic means (commonly known as cyber-bullying), including:
  - (i) creating any social media site in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or an institution;
  - (ii) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and
  - (iii) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

Aggressive behaviour may be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect. It can take many forms, including physical, verbal, and social. If aggressive behaviour is physical, it may include hitting, pushing, slapping, and tripping. If it is verbal, it may include name calling, mocking, insults, threats, and sexist, racist, homophobic, or transphobic comments. If it is social, or relational, aggression, it is more subtle and may involve such behaviours as gossiping, spreading rumours, excluding others from a group, humiliating others with public gestures or graffiti, and shunning or ignoring. Social aggression may also occur through the use of technology (e.g., spreading rumours, images, or hurtful comments through the use of e-mail, cell phones, text messaging, internet websites, social networking, or other technology).

**Harassment** is a form of discrimination. It can include sexually explicit or other inappropriate comments, questions, jokes, name-calling, images, email and social media, transphobic, homophobic or other bullying, sexual advances, touching and other unwelcome and ongoing behaviour that insults, demeans, harms or threatens a person in some way. Assault or other violent behaviour is also a criminal matter.

**Harm** – can be experienced in a number of ways, including physical, mental, emotional and psychological.

**Impact of School Climate** - an incident or activity which has a negative impact on the school community.

## 2.0 **Definitions (cont'd)**

**Individual Education Plan (IEP)** – a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student. It identifies learning expectations that are modified from or alternative to the expectations given in the curriculum policy document for the appropriate grade and subject or course, and/or any accommodations and special education services needed to assist the student in achieving his or her learning expectations.

- For students with the possibility of unsafe behaviours, an IEP should include:
  - Program modifications and/or accommodations that support proactive strategies.
  - Alternative learning expectations outlining skills the student will learn which are more socially acceptable. The learning expectations will be found in one more of the areas of social skills, self-regulation and social communication.
  - Appropriate teaching strategies, behaviour management strategies and assessment/evaluation methods related to each behavioural learning expectation.

**Mitigating and Other Factors** – circumstances that must be considered by the board and school administrators in situations involving suspension and/or expulsion of a student, as required by the *Education Act* and as set out in Ontario Regulation 472/07.

(a) *Mitigating Factors*

- i) The pupil does not have the ability to control his or her behaviour.
- ii) The pupil does not have the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of his or her behaviour.

(b) *Other Factors*

- i) The pupil's history.
- ii) Whether a progressive discipline approach has been used with the pupil.
- iii) Whether the activity for which the pupil may be or is being suspended or expelled was related to any harassment of the pupil because of his or her race, ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation or to any other harassment.
- iv) How the suspension or expulsion would affect the pupil's ongoing education.
- v) The age of the pupil.
- vi) In the case of a pupil for whom an individual education plan has been developed:
  - i. Whether the behaviour was a manifestation of a disability identified in the pupil's individual education plan;
  - ii. Whether appropriate individualized accommodation has been provided, and
  - iii. Whether the suspension or expulsion is likely to result in an aggravation or worsening of the pupil's behaviour or conduct.

**Positive Practices** - the Board supports the use of positive practices such as: program modifications or accommodations; class placement; positive encouragement and reinforcement; individual peer and group counselling; conflict resolution; anti-bullying and violence prevention programs; sensitivity programs; and School, Board, and Community Support Programs.

## 2.0 **Definitions (cont'd)**

**Progressive Discipline** - Progressive Discipline is a whole school approach that utilizes a continuum of interventions, supports and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour and to build upon strategies that promote positive behaviours. Progressive Discipline may include, but not limited to, consultation; school community service; withdrawal of privileges; withdrawal from class; detention; restitution for damages; peer mediation; restorative practice; suspension; and/or expulsion.

**School Activity** - any Board or school sponsored activity, included but not limited to field trips, bus trips, sporting activities and dances.

**School Climate** is the sum total of all of the personal relationships within a school. When these personal relationships are founded in mutual acceptance and inclusion, and modeled by all, a culture of respect becomes the norm. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. A positive school climate is a crucial component of bullying prevention

**School Community** - the school community is composed of staff, pupils and parents of the school, and associate schools, as well as the community of people and businesses that are served by or located in the greater neighbourhood of the school.

## 3.0 **Purpose**

3.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:

- 3.1.1 ensure that all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity;
- 3.1.2 ensure that the school environment is one of respect, dignity and trust, consistent with the Gospel Values;
- 3.1.3 to develop and implement comprehensive board-wide bullying prevention strategies;
- 3.1.4 to develop and implement comprehensive board-wide intervention strategies to address incidents of bullying; and
- 3.1.5 to empower all students and entire school community to create schools free from bullying.

3.2 Research and experience show that bullying is a serious issue that has far-reaching consequences for individuals, their families and peers, and the community at large. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, one third of students are being bullied at school and almost a third of students report having bullied someone else.

3.3 Bullying adversely affects students' ability to learn.

3.4 Bullying adversely affects healthy relationships and the school climate.

3.5 Bullying adversely affects a school's ability to educate its students.

### **3.0 Purpose (cont'd)**

- 3.6 Bullying will not be accepted on school property, at school-related activities, on school buses, or in any other circumstances (e.g., online) where engaging in bullying will have a negative impact on the school climate.
- 3.7 This policy provides direction for Durham Catholic District School Board to assist and ensure that every elementary and secondary school develops, implements and maintains a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. This policy emphasizes the importance of addressing bullying, which can have a significant impact on student safety, learning and school climate.

### **4.0 Application/Scope**

- 4.1 This policy is commensurate with the Education Act, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Provincial and Board Code of Conduct, and the Board Student Discipline Policy which creates expectations for behaviour for all persons on school property, during a school related activity or event, and/or in circumstances where a behaviour has an impact on the school climate. The policy supports that Ministry of Education Well-Being Strategy which places an emphasis on prevention strategies that promote and support positive student behaviour and early and ongoing intervention.

### **5.0 Principles**

- 5.1 The Board recognizes and accepts the authority of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church in respect of matters of faith and morals, as it is entitled to do under section 93(1) of the Constitution Act, 1867 and sections 52 and 247.52.1a of the Education Act. The teachings of the Church will be taken into account in the interpretation of this policy and any subsequent procedures emanating from it.
- 5.2 The Board recognizes the behaviour within our school communities should be in accordance with the Gospel values of Jesus Christ, the Board's Mission Statement, the Curriculum expectations, and the requirements set forth by the Education Act and the applicable regulations.
- 5.3 The Board recognizes that all forms of bullying are unacceptable behaviours.
- 5.4 The Board recognizes that bullying adversely affects a student's well-being and ability to learn.
- 5.5 The Board recognizes that bullying adversely affects the school climate, including healthy relationships.
- 5.6 The Board recognizes that bullying will not be accepted on school property, at school-related activities, on school buses, or in any other circumstances (e.g., online) where engaging in bullying will have a negative impact on the school climate.

## 5.0 **Principles (cont'd)**

- 5.7 The Board recognizes that in some circumstances, bullying prevention practices might not be effective or sufficient to address inappropriate behaviour. In such circumstances, the Board supports the use of the full continuum of progressive discipline consequences as referred to in the Board's Student Discipline Policy be applied, if appropriate.
- 5.8 The Board recognizes and supports the use of suspension for bullying, as outlined in the Education Act, where a pupil has persistently committed one or more bullying infractions on school property, during a school related event and/or in circumstances where the infraction has had an impact on the school climate. The Board recognizes the importance of consistency across the system in disciplining students for serious breaches of conduct.
- 5.9 The Board recognizes the authority of the principal and the teaching staff in discharging their powers and duties as defined by the Education Act and Regulations and respective Board Policies and Procedures.
- 5.10 The Board recognizes that the school community is comprised of students, parents or guardians, teachers, other staff members, volunteers, visitors and that all should be involved in the development of the Bullying Prevention and Implementation in cooperation with the Catholic School Council.

## 6.0 **Requirements**

- 6.1 The Director of Education shall:
- 6.1.1 issue an administrative procedure to support the implementation of this Policy.
- 6.1.2 ensure that the Board establishes a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan for the schools of the Board, which all schools must implement.
- 6.1.3 ensure that in establishing the plan or revising the plan, the Board:
- 6.1.3.1 solicit the views of students, teachers, principals, and other staff of the board, volunteers working in the schools, parents of the students, school councils, and the public;
- 6.1.3.2 consult with the Special Education Advisory Committee, the Indigenous Education Advisory Council, social service agencies, mental health agencies, and other appropriate community partners;
- 6.1.3.3 consult with the Durham Catholic Parent Involvement Committee;
- 6.1.3.4 make the plan available to the public on the board's website and on the school websites; and
- 6.1.3.5 review the bullying prevention and intervention plan at least once every two years.

## 6.0 **Requirements (cont'd)**

- 6.1.4 ensure that a comprehensive bullying prevention strategy is developed and implemented that includes expectations for appropriate student behaviour;
- 6.1.5 ensure that a comprehensive intervention strategy is developed and implemented to address incidents of bullying, including appropriate and timely responses. Intervention should be done in ways that are consistent with a progressive discipline approach as set out within Board Policy Student Discipline;
- 6.1.6 ensure that procedures are developed and implemented that allow students to report bullying incidents safely and in a way that will minimize the possibility of reprisal;
- 6.1.7 ensure that support is provided for students who have been bullied, for students who have bullied others, and for students who have been affected by observing bullying;
- 6.1.8 put in place training strategies for members of the school community, including all administrators, teachers, and educational assistants on bullying prevention and intervention, including training on cultural sensitivity and on respect for diversity and special education needs;
- 6.1.9 recognize the ongoing need to support training for new teachers;
- 6.1.10 actively communicate this policy and procedure on bullying prevention and intervention to students, parents, teachers and other school staff, school councils, volunteers, and school bus operators/drivers; and
- 6.1.11 determine the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community to be clearly articulated and understood.

## 6.2 **Monitoring and Review Process**

- 6.2.1 The Durham Catholic District School Board has established a monitoring and review process to determine the effectiveness of our bullying prevention and intervention policies and procedures. This process includes the following:
  - 6.2.1.1 Every two years, an analysis of the school climate through anonymous surveys of students, staff members, and parents shall be conducted to:
    - 6.2.1.1.1 **assess** the current extent and nature of bullying and the perceptions around the issue
    - 6.2.1.1.2 **determine** the effectiveness of existing practices
    - 6.2.1.1.3 **identify** needs
    - 6.2.1.1.4 **prioritize** goals and create a bullying prevention action plan
    - 6.2.1.1.5 **evaluate** progress and celebrate successes

## 6.0 **Requirements (cont'd)**

6.2.1.2 Use of established performance indicators for monitoring reviewing, and evaluating the effectiveness of the board's bullying prevention and intervention policies.

### 6.3 **Safe School Teams**

6.3.1 Each school in the Durham Catholic District School Board must have in place a Safe Schools Team responsible for school safety that is composed of at least one student (where appropriate), one parent, one teacher, one support staff member, one community partner, and the Principal. The Team must have a staff chair. An existing school committee (e.g., Healthy Schools Committee) can assume this role.

## 7.0 **Sources**

- Education Act
- Safe and Accepting Schools Act, 2012
- Ontario Regulation 472/07 Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils
- PPM 128 - Provincial Code of Conduct
- PPM 144 - Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy
- PPM 145 – Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour Policy
- Ontario Human Rights Code

## 8.0 **Related Policies and Administrative Procedures**

- Code of Conduct Administrative Procedure (AP610-1)
- Student Discipline Administrative Procedure (AP611-1)
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention Administrative Procedure (AP612-1)