

Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan

Embracing diversity
and promoting equity, we
are guided by Catholic
social teachings to create
welcoming places for all.

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**OTTAWA
CATHOLIC
SCHOOL BOARD**



Purpose

The Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) proclaims that all people are created in the image and likeness of God and, as such, have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. The board further recognizes the importance of ensuring a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment, and that the most effective means to address bullying is through a comprehensive school-wide approach that engages all stakeholders in these efforts.

The purpose of this *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* is to develop, in consultation with students, principals, teachers and other staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, school councils and the public, a long-term school-wide approach regarding bullying prevention and intervention to be implemented by all schools of the OCSB. The plan will be reviewed at least every two years while seeking input from stakeholders. The OCSB further recognizes that a key factor in the development of a successful bullying prevention and intervention plan is the consistent use of research-approved best practices. The OCSB shall also strive to consider local needs (geographical, cultural, and demographics) and the availability of supports when developing and reviewing this plan.

This plan is based upon the Ministry of Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (the "Model Plan")¹ released January 29, 2013, and the requirements set out in this Plan have been taken directly from the Model Plan. As required by the Model Plan, when revising its plan, the OCSB will:

- review school climate surveys to identify concerns;
- identify best practices of evidence-informed programs currently used;
- consider what other evidence-based practices may help address concerns; and
- identify key collaborators with the Board in respect of its bullying initiatives, and others who could be included as possible collaborators.

As required under subsection 303.3(3) of the Education Act², each school is required to implement this plan, and to comply with the Board's policies and procedures regarding Bullying Prevention and Intervention. Through information gathered in the Board's K-12 Improvement Planning Assessment Tool, the Board will identify the most appropriate strategies to include in the bullying prevention and intervention plan.

¹ Ministry of Education, "Working Draft: Safe and Accepting Schools Model Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan" January 2013, Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2013, available online at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/BullyingPreventPlan.pdf

² *Education Act* (Ontario), R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2., as amended.

Education, awareness and outreach

The OCSB and each school will endeavour to increase education, awareness, and outreach. Through this approach, it will help to engage all members of the school community in supporting school and Board efforts to deal with inappropriate student behaviour, including bullying. Communications with the school community will include the following Ministry of Education definition of bullying as defined in section one of the Education Act:

Definition of 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 ("intimidation")

For the purposes of the definition of "bullying" above, behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.

Definition of Cyber-Bullying

For the purposes of the definition of "bullying" above, bullying includes bullying by electronic means (commonly known as 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.

The Ottawa Catholic School Board and its schools will strive to:

- “identify different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying
- understand the myths and realities of bullying behaviour
- identify bullying and differentiate bullying from conflict, aggression and teasing
- understand power and peer dynamics
- identify how biases, prejudice and hate can lead to bullying
- identify different manifestations and underlying factors of bullying, such as body image, racism, sexism, homophobia, disability, etc.”³

In addition, each school will take the following steps:

- “understand a whole school approach and the essential importance of a positive school climate for student achievement and well-being
- develop awareness and understanding of the factors that contribute to a safe, inclusive, caring and accepting school climate
- identify ways to make students aware of how they can help prevent and address bullying
- identify strategies to engage parents in conversations about bullying prevention and how to promote a positive school climate
- reach out to parents and the broader school community. In doing so, the following will be done:
 - reflect on relationships and interactions and focus on promoting healthy relationships using a variety of strategies
 - become knowledgeable about community partners and resources available in the community
- communicate and share with the school community policies and procedures including school board/school Code of Conduct, equity and inclusive education policy and guidelines for religious accommodations, procedures to address incidents of discrimination, progressive discipline approach, and bullying prevention and intervention plans and strategies.”⁴

³ *Supra* note 1, p. 2.

⁴ *Supra* note 1, pgs 2-3.

Evaluation of evidence

Pre-evaluation strategy

Each school will base its bullying interventions, strategies, practices and programs on evidence. Each school will take the following steps to assess their anti-bullying initiatives and strategies:

- “Identify the main issues of concern in a particular school raised by students, school staff, parents, as well as identify issues in the physical environment.
- Conduct a needs assessment, e.g., what are the current processes for reporting, response, support and follow up on issues.
- Develop a pre- and post-evaluation strategy. These should be informed by the results of school climate surveys and other relevant information which may include suspension and expulsion data, the board violent incident report, and reviews of programs and strategies. Steps in an evaluation strategy would include:
 - Creating a baseline and identifying areas of concern;
 - Measuring success;
 - Making changes where necessary; and
 - Creating an action plan to address areas of concern.
- Identify children and youth involved in bullying (including the bully, the person being bullied, and those who may have witnessed or been affected by the bullying). Consider a risk assessment approach in order to do this.
- Identify learning and training opportunities that are needed.
- Review and update the plan as a result of gathering new information.
- Share the plan with the school community.”⁵

Post-evaluation strategy

The school will reassess the results of the subsequent climate surveys to verify the efficacy of the anti-bullying initiatives implemented. “The post-evaluation phase gathers evidence to test the efficacy of the prevention, responses, interventions or supports provided in order for changes to be made where necessary.”⁶

⁵ *Supra* note 1, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Policies and procedures

Each school will:

- “Actively communicate policies, procedures & guidelines to the community.
- Review policies, procedures and guidelines and include the school community in this process in order to build upon and sustain a positive school climate.
- Review guidelines and procedures or develop new ones to address discrimination and harassment as they may apply to students, staff, parents and community members.
- Outline roles/responsibilities of the school community, including students, staff, parents, and community members.
- Ensure goals address areas of challenge, as identified in school climate surveys and other relevant data.”⁷

Prevention

Fostering a positive learning environment will help to reduce possible bullying, harassment, and discrimination incidents. Schools will take the following steps in order to strengthen prevention measures:

- “Describe the roles and responsibilities of safe and accepting school teams which will be communicated with the school community;
- Identify bullying prevention and intervention programs or activities that are evidence-informed and that address the needs identified by the board or a school. These should be addressed at the following levels:
 - individual student level
 - classroom level
 - school level
 - board level
 - parent/community level.
- Identify relationship-building and community-building programs that are present in the school, classroom and in the larger community.
- Identify and support:
 - Activities that promote a positive school climate.
 - Training strategies for school staff.
 - Awareness raising strategies for students, e.g., social-emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills.

⁷ *Supra* note 1, pgs. 3-4.

- Awareness raising strategies to engage community partners and parents in early and ongoing dialogue.
- Ways to make linkages to curriculum resources and day to day learning.
- Caring adults and student leaders within the school and school community.
- Provide opportunities for regular check-ins with students at risk of engaging in bullying, and those who have witnessed or been affected by bullying.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to develop effective classroom management strategies, incorporating progressive discipline.
- Establish and maintain respectful and caring classrooms, e.g., model equitable and inclusive behaviour and language.
- Align supervision plans to address where and when bullying happens.

Intervention and support strategies

Interventions and supports should be evidence-informed, timely and take a whole school approach. When implementing interventions and supports, schools should endeavour to:

- “Use “teachable moments” within a progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate behaviour.
- Consider mitigating factors like the student’s age, the circumstances of the behaviour, and the student’s history before determining the most appropriate way to respond to each situation. Consider a range of options to address the behaviour and help the student learn from his or her choices.
- Have in place processes and strategies to identify, and respond to bullying when it happens.
- Follow up after bullying incident(s) with students, parents, teachers and other school staff, where appropriate.
- Identify strategies for supporting students who engage in bullying, who have been bullied, and others who may have witnessed or been affected by bullying while respecting privacy. Strategies could include school based resources and/or referrals to community agencies, e.g., mental health services or public health.
- Communicate to the school community the progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate behaviour and the procedures that are in place to support students who have been harmed or who have engaged in serious behaviour incidents.” (Ref. The following Safe and Accepting Schools Policies: Code of Conduct: General Policy, Progressive Discipline, Equity and Inclusive Education, Student Expulsions, Student Suspensions, & Bullying Prevention and Intervention)