

Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Adopted:

April 15, 2008

Last Reviewed/Revised:

May 21, 2024

Next Scheduled Review: 2026-2027

Associated Policies & Procedures:

[**I-43** Use of Technology and Digital Citizenship](#)

[**VI-62** Use of Technology and Digital Citizenship](#)

[**VI-63** Social Media](#)

[**II-12** Management of Student Behaviours Posing Imminent Physical Risk](#)

[**II-39** Progressive Discipline and Safety in School Code of Conduct – Suspensions and Expulsions](#)

[**VI-44** Progressive Discipline and Safety in Schools](#)

[**II-45** Equity and Inclusive Education](#)

[**VI-54** Equity and Inclusive Education](#)

[**VI-60** Student Groups in Catholic Schools](#)

[**VI-102** Responding to Hate or Bias Motivated Incidents Involving or Impacting Students](#)

Purpose

To establish and promote a healthy, safe and inclusive school climate where every student feels a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging. These are necessary conditions for student achievement, wellbeing and faith formation. This policy supports and promotes a safe, welcoming, inclusive and accepting school environment through appropriate prevention and intervention practices. This is reinforced by the application of progressive discipline in compliance with the *Education Act*, *PPM 145 Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour (2018)*, *PPM 128 Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct (2019)*, *PPM 144 Bullying Prevention and Intervention (2021)*, the *Parent's Guide to the Provincial Code of Conduct (2019)* and *PPM 119 Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools (2013)*.

This policy authorizes the creation of procedures for implementation, specifically for Bullying Prevention and Intervention that shall be considered guidelines pursuant to the *Education Act*.

Application and Scope

This policy applies to every student of the Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB) on school property, at school or HCDSB authorized activities/events, while using school authorized transportation

services or in other venues or locations, including virtual spaces. This policy applies to each act and/or incident as it relates to the definition of bullying as described in this policy, and considered by the Principal to be detrimental to the physical, emotional, cultural, and/or mental well-being of students. Bullying impedes the development of a positive school climate. A whole-school approach involving all education and community members is required to prevent bullying.

References

[Bullying – We Can All Help Stop It](#)

[Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Needs through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12](#)

[Education Act](#)

[Municipal Freedom Information Protection and Privacy Act](#)

[Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan \(2017\)](#)

[Ontario First Nation, Metis and Inuit Education Policy Framework \(2007\)](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

[Ontario School Code of Conduct – Standards of Behaviour](#)

[The Parent's Guide to the Provincial Code of Conduct \(2019\)](#)

[PPM 119 Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools \(2013\)](#)

[PPM 128 Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct \(2024\)](#)

[PPM 144 Bullying Prevention and Intervention \(2021\)](#)

[PPM 145 Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour \(2018\)](#)

[School Climate Survey – Halton Catholic District School Board](#)

[Youth Criminal Justice Act](#)

Definitions

Bullying - Bullying is behaviour that makes the person being bullied feel afraid or uncomfortable. It can be in the form of unwanted repeated aggression or happen one time. It can be carried out by one person or a group of people.

Repeated bullying is persistent and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation.

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.

A power imbalance may occur between a student and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or receipt of special education.

People sometimes confuse conflict with bullying, but they are different. Conflict between students does not always mean it is bullying.

Conflict often occurs between people who:

- have a disagreement, a difference of opinion or different views
- have roughly the same amount of “social power”
- can go back to being friends

Conflict is usually an isolated incident. Conflict becomes negative when a person behaves aggressively, says or does hurtful things, or when the power dynamic shifts.

- Over time, a pattern of aggressive behaviour can emerge and become worse. If more people support one person, or if something happens to weaken one person's social status, the person who is on the receiving end of the aggressive conflict may feel less able to express their point of view and feel powerless. That is when negative conflict can turn into bullying.

Types of Bullying

Bullying can take different forms. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Physical:** for example, hitting, kicking, shoving, damaging, or stealing property
- **Verbal:** for example, name-calling, mocking, put-downs and shameful, threatening, humiliating or discriminatory comments
- **Social/Relational:** for example, damaging friendships, spreading gossip, rumours or excluding others from a group including teasing, threatening, and other hurtful acts
- **Written:** for example, writing notes and graffiti that are hurtful and insulting
- **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
- increasing the use of digital platforms enhances the threat of cyber-bullying as well as other safety risks

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.

Bullying Prevention: Is a whole school approach that heightens expectations for a safe, caring, equitable, inclusive and accepting learning environment. It includes a shared understanding about the nature and underlying causes of bullying and its effects on the lives of individual students and the school community.

Bullying Intervention: Is a comprehensive and effective response to a bullying incident that takes into consideration all parties involved in the bullying incident. It should provide specific supports for the student who has been bullied, interventions for the student who has bullied others and for the student who has been affected by witnessing the bullying.

Positive Learning Environment: Is the sum of all relationships found within the school and is a critical component of bullying prevention. A positive learning environment is accepting, equitable, and inclusive of all persons regardless of race, colour, culture, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, religion, family status, or disability. A positive learning environment engages the school community, including parents/guardians, as well as the broader community. A positive learning environment exists when all members of the school community feel safe, respected, and actively promote positive language, behaviours and interactions.

Safe Schools Team: Each school 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 or designate. The team must have a staff chair. An existing school committee can assume this role.

The Safe Schools Team is responsible to develop a school-based Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan to guide the practices of the school staff and administration. This team is encouraged to plan activities and launch initiatives that heighten awareness of bullying and its impact on the learning environment. By organizing bullying prevention and intervention activities throughout the year, schools will affect positive change in student achievement and sense of belonging.

School Climate: The collective whole of the personal relationships within a school. A positive climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted.

Principles

- The HCDSB recognizes that student, staff, and community member conduct within our schools shall be rooted in the Gospel values and teachings of Jesus Christ, the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations, and the Board's Mission Statement and Governing Values.
- The HCDSB recognizes the importance of providing a caring, inclusive, and safe environment in which responses to behaviour issues are shaped by informed consideration of the individual needs and circumstances in each situation.
- The HCDSB recognizes that student, staff and community members have a responsibility to resolve conflict and differences in a respectful and civil manner with an equity and inclusion lens. The HCDSB recognizes that bullying of any type:
 - adversely affects students' ability to learn;
 - adversely affects healthy relationships and the learning environment for students, staff and community members;
 - adversely affects a school's ability to educate its students, and provide an equitable, safe and inclusive learning environment; and
 - will not be accepted on school property, at school or system-related activities/events, on school buses, or in any other circumstances (e.g. online/virtual space, off school property, or outside the regular school day hours) where engaging in bullying will have a negative impact on the learning environment.

The HCDSB acknowledges that open and ongoing dialogue among the principal, staff, parents/guardians and students is an essential component in creating a positive school climate in which everyone is safe and respected.

Requirements

Notifying Parents (as per PPM 145, s. 6)

- Section 300.3 of the Education Act specifies when principals are required to notify the parents/guardians of students who have been harmed as the result of a serious student incident. 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 response to the activity; and,
 - the supports that will be provided for the student in response to the harm that resulted from the activity.
- This section of the act also specifies that Principals are required to notify the parents/guardians of students who have engaged in serious student incidents, except in

certain circumstance where evidence suggests that the parents/guardians may further harm the health and safety of the student.

- The Principal shall invite the parents/guardians to discuss supports for their child.
Principals shall disclose the following information:
 - the nature of the activity that resulted in harm to the other student;
 - the nature of the harm to the other student;
 - the nature of any disciplinary measures taken in response to the activity; and,
 - the supports that will be provided for the student in response to engaging in the activity.
- When notifying parents/guardians of these incidents, the principal must invite parents to have a discussion with them about the supports that will be provided for their child.

Under the authority of the Education Act and the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and protected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom Information Protection and Privacy Act, the HCDSB or any of its employees will not disclose or provide access to information about a bullying incident unless authorized to do so by written consent or as required by law.

Establishing a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The HCDSB shall establish a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan for schools based on the model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan developed by the Ministry of Education. All schools shall implement the Board's plan in accordance with the *Education Act* and HCDSB policies and procedures. When establishing the plan, the Board will solicit the views of students, educators and staff of the Board, volunteers working in the schools, parents/guardians, Catholic School Councils, Safe Schools Teams, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (CPIC), the Indigenous Education Advisory Council, HCDSB Ad Hoc and Steering Committees, social service agencies, and community-based organizations and partners.

The plan shall include but not be limited to:

- A comprehensive prevention and awareness-raising strategy that includes expectations for appropriate student, staff and community member behaviour;
- Utilizing evidence-based strategies to support school-wide bullying prevention. This will focus on developing skills for healthy relationships by including bullying prevention strategies and highlighting equity and inclusive education principles in daily classroom teaching and/or school activities;
- Procedures to allow students, parents/guardians, staff and community members to report bullying incidents safely and in a way that discourages reprisal and threat thereof. These procedures will also define the rights, responsibilities, and roles of the principals, educators staff, students and parents/guardians;
- A comprehensive intervention strategy for principals and staff to address incidents of bullying, including appropriate and timely responses. Reporting methods include, but are not limited to, The

Safe School Incident Reporting Tool for school Administrators and all staff as well as Procedure VI-102 for each student, staff, volunteer, or parent/guardian to report bullying incidents.

Providing support for students who have been bullied, interventions for students who have bullied others, and for students who have been affected by witnessing bullying.

- The HCDSB will establish and provide annual professional development programs to educate staff of the Board about bullying prevention and strategies for promoting positive learning environments.
- The HCDSB will review its Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan according to the Board's regular policy review cycle and shall solicit the views of students, educators, HCDSB staff, volunteers working in the schools, parents/guardians, Catholic School Councils, Safe Schools Teams, SEAC, CPIC, the Indigenous Education Advisory Council, HCDSB Ad Hoc and Steering Committees, social service agencies, and community-based organizations and partners.
- The HCDSB will post its Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan on the HCDSB website.
- The Principal will post HCDSB's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and the school's own Bullying and Intervention Plan on the school's website.
- The Principal will post the member titles of the Safe Schools Team on the school's website.

APPROVED: Regular Meeting of the Board

AUTHORIZED BY: _____
Chair of the Board