

### **RATIONALE**

In November of 1998, the Ministry of Education announced a plan to help prevent bullying in BC schools. Students and parents expect schools to be safe where students can learn in a manner that promotes a safe, caring and orderly school environment. The Catholic Schools of Nelson Diocese (CISND) do not condone bullying in all its forms and will strive to protect students' physical safety, social connectedness, inclusiveness, and protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of their gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

### **POLICY**

Each school must develop its own anti-bullying action plan tailored to meet its specific needs. As such, the Diocesan directive includes:

- Awareness and involvement of administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and the student body
- Instruction to students that emphasizes respect and compassion for others and positive ways to resolve disagreements or conflicts
- Clear and logical consequences for those who bully
- Support for those students being bullied
- Intervention with students who are bullying.

#### Definitions:

**Bullying** is a pattern of repeated, aggressive behaviour meant to hurt or cause discomfort to another person; it involves an imbalance of power. It is different than normal peer conflict. Bullying may be verbal, physical or social, and is often based on another person's appearance, culture, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity. In fact, any repeated action that makes a student feel uncomfortable, insecure or threatened may be defined as bullying.

#### Types of Bullying

Physical - includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching, and pushing, or damaging property.

Verbal - includes name-calling, insults, teasing, and intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks.

Social and Emotional – includes behavioural actions designed to harm a child's reputation or cause humiliation, like lying and spreading rumours, negative facial gestures, playing mean jokes to embarrass or humiliate a child, mimicking the child in a mean way, encouraging social exclusion of a child etc.

Cyber – includes taunting or humiliation through social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) of the Internet, cruel websites targeting specific youth, humiliating others while playing online games, verbal or emotional bullying through chat rooms, instant message or texting, posting photos of other youths on rating websites etc.

Signs that bullying may be taking place include:

- Change of friendship groups
- Lack of friends
- School rejection
- "Illness" at certain times of the day
- Change in standard of work
- Withdrawal/sudden lack of confidence
- Severe case of depression
- Upset stomach
- Sleeplessness
- Missing or damaged possessions, ripped clothing
- Coming home dishevelled or hungry
- Bruises or injuries that cannot be explained
- Stays close to teachers or other adults
- Avoids isolated locations; i.e., bathrooms.

Although the above list is most likely to apply to victims, changes in behaviour could indicate that someone has developed anti-social traits and may be bullying.

The following signs may also indicate engagement in bullying behaviours:

- Drop in school performance
- Acquires possessions without explanation
- Disregard for the feelings of others
- Threatens to use violence.

## **PROCEDURES**

School staff cannot act if they are not aware of bullying situations. Home and school must work in partnership to address bullying situations. Addressing signs of bullying early before the behaviour and its impact get worse is important in creating a safe school.

### **1. Prevention Strategies**

Each school must establish an educational program for all students, staff and parents which includes:

- Definition of bullying behaviour and how it differs from normal peer conflict.
- Strategies students can use to prevent or respond to bullying behaviours.
- Specific roles for administrators, teachers, support staff, students and parents
- School-wide implementation of a code of conduct and strategies to teach social responsibility.

The whole school community must be promoted to approach the problem consistently. Any staff member approached on a bullying matter must not ignore it.

## **2. Response Strategies**

If a student is being bullied, it must be reported to school administration. A student or parent may report it. Classroom teachers and support staff must inform administration of observed or reported bullying situations. Each reported case of alleged bullying behaviour will be investigated. The following strategies will include:

- Administrator/counselor individually interviews the students involved
- Administrator informs parents of the students of the incident

Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the administrator may:

- Determine if further action is required
- Determine consequences for bullying behavior considering the following: age and maturity of individuals involved, special needs, the degree of harm done, incidences of past or continuing pattern(s) of (mis)behavior, relationship between parties involved and context in which the incident(s) occurred.
- Meet individually with parents of victim and bully
- Involve outside agencies on behalf of the victim and/or bully.

Report of the bullying investigation must be documented and records of the incident retained in accordance with *The Personal Information and Privacy Act*.

Some possible consequences that may be imposed on a bully are:

- Removal of privileges or activities
- Detentions
- Acts of restitution
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Expulsion.

Schools will make every effort to take reasonable steps to prevent retaliation by a person against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of this policy.

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