



SAFE AND CARING POLICY

Revised and Updated January 2020

The Purpose

Every member of the St. Michael's School learning community should feel safe and cared for when they enter the school. They should also be treated with respect by all the members of our community. As a Catholic school how we treat each other has been prescribed to us by the teachings of our master teacher, Jesus Christ, who stated that we should love one another. At his installation Mass, Pope Francis, also asked us to do the following:

I want to ask you a favour...I want to ask you to walk together and take care of one another.

While the new Education Act asks every school to have an anti-bullying policy, a Catholic school should go much deeper to an authentic expression of love, respect and nurturing of everyone within our building. Every day we should strive to live and practice the words of our Lord and those of our Pope, the leader of our faith.

● Definitions of Terms and Their Descriptions

Conflict:

A conflict is a disagreement between students or an adult in the building. It can be a falling out between friends, a dispute between students and/or an adult over a rule, a decision, a perception of a situation or an argument. There is relative equality of power and mutual distress. It can include a random act of aggression such as a physical altercation or fight. Both parties are seeking a solution to the problem.

Threats:

Threats come in two forms: the use of **words** to intimidate or coerce someone and /or the use of **actions** to intimidate or coerce someone. Threats can take place at school or through the use of social media. Types of threats include, but are not limited to:

- Manipulating students into a physical fight.
- Using words to suggest bodily harm or death.
- Being in possession of a weapon and/or threatening to use a weapon.
- Using inappropriate words, gestures, or actions towards a person(s) of

a particular racial or ethnic background, sexual persuasion, gender, or physical disability/learning challenge.

Words That Hurt:

Certain words are unacceptable because they are disrespectful and do not respect the dignity of a human being. They can be spoken, written, drawn, or appear on clothing. We are an inclusive and diverse community and must honour that within our school. Examples of words that are unacceptable include, but are not limited to:

- Any word that demeans a person's intellectual ability.
- Any word that demeans a person's sexual orientation.
- Any slang word referring to human sexual anatomy.
- Any racial, religious and ethnic slurs or jokes.
- Any word that demeans a person's gender.
- Any profanity.

Social Isolation:

Social exclusion occurs when a student is not allowed to be part of a group because of a negative perception of the student or because of a strong bonding between students in a group which discourages new members. The intention may not be to necessarily distress the excluded student.

Bullying and Harassment:

"A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself."

This definition includes three important components:

1. Bullying is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions.
2. Bullying involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time.
3. Bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength.

Types of bullying include:

1. Verbal bullying including derogatory comments and bad names
2. Bullying through social exclusion or isolation
3. Physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting
4. Bullying through lies and false rumors
5. Having money or other things taken or damaged by students who bully
6. Being threatened or being forced to do things by students who bully
7. Racial bullying
8. Sexual bullying

Cyberbullying:

Cyberbullying is bullying through email, instant messaging, chat rooms, web site posts, social media or digital messages/images sent to a cellular phone or posted on the internet. Cyberbullying involves an imbalance of power, aggression and a negative action that is often repeated. Cyberbullying has some unique characteristics that are different from traditional bullying:

1. Anonymity- the victim is left wondering who the cyber bully is which can cause a great deal of stress.
2. Accessibility- cyber bullies can wreak havoc any time of the day or night in a multitude of ways.
3. Punitive Fears - students are reluctant to report for fear of losing access and privileges with their device.
4. Bystanders - Most traditional bullying occurs in the presence of others who assume the role or witnesses. Being a bystander in the cyber world is different in that they may receive and forward emails, view web pages, forward images sent to cell phones, like or dislike social media threads, etc. The number of bystanders in the cyber world can reach into the millions.
5. Disinhibition - the anonymity of the internet can lead children to engage in behaviours that they might not do face-to-face.

Dating Violence:

Dating violence is a pattern of behaviors used to exert power or control over a dating partner. Dating violence includes any behavior by a dating partner that

- is used to manipulate
- is used to gain control
- is used to gain power over someone
- makes a person feel bad about himself or herself or other people who are close to this person (such as friends or family)
- makes a person afraid of her or his boyfriend or girlfriend

Dating violence happens to boys and girls and can involve physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

It's important to realize that an abusive boyfriend or girlfriend can use physical or emotional attacks and that emotional abuse can be as serious as physical abuse.

● Responses and Procedures

When any of the above actions are reported by a student and/or parent/adult, the following process will take place:

1. The formal complaint will be written detailing the time, place, description of the event, and a list of persons involved.
2. An investigation will take place to determine the severity of the complaint. A written record of the investigation will be kept on file. Minor consequences such as, but not limited to, warning, detention, loss of privileges, and/or written apologies may be imposed at this time.
3. If the complaint is about a physical fight between two students, those students will be suspended from school.
4. If the complaint is determined to be a bullying issue or one of dating violence, a meeting will take place between administration, the bully, the parents of the bully, and the Family School Liaison Counsellor to determine the course of action which could include loss of privileges, restitution, suspension and/or counselling. If complaints continue to be received about the bully on a repeated basis a VTRA will be undertaken, the bully will be suspended from school, and the police and Child and Family Services **may** become involved. A meeting will also take place between the bullied student, his/her parents, school administration, and the Family Liaison Counsellor to determine a support plan for the student.
5. Bystanders have an obligation to stop or immediately report a bullying incident or act of violence. By saying nothing, they are complicit with the bully or the persons fighting. Depending on the situation, they will have a minor or severe consequence.
6. If a threat involves a weapon and/or the use of language which is intended to harm the victim, the student making the threat will be suspended from school and a VTRA will be undertaken. Being in possession of a weapon at school is against both school district and school policies and results in confiscation of the weapon and suspension from school. The police will be involved immediately in such cases.
7. In a case of cyberbullying, the bully will further lose computer privileges at school and will not be allowed access to electronic devices while at school.

● Proactive Strategies

In an endeavor to foster a safe and caring school environment the community of St. Michael's School, which includes staff, parents, students, and parish will:

1. Review the Safe and Caring Policy every year.
2. Teach students about digital citizenship and responsibility.
3. Incorporate discussions about safe and caring actions into the curriculum.
4. Host events, retreats, presentations, assemblies to promote positive, caring attitudes amongst the members of our learning community.
5. Honour students, staff and parents who promote safe and caring actions and attitudes within our community.

● Roles and Responsibilities

School Staff

1. To teach and model appropriate behaviours.
2. To teach and clarify for students the terms, meanings and distinct differences between bullying and conflict, and to teach, identify and clarify threatening behaviour, words that hurt, and dating violence.
3. To teach and promote resilience.
4. To keep up to date and maintain classroom records of incidents.
5. To teach and model active listening so that all incidents are treated seriously.
6. To recognize and value the partnership between home and school. It is the school's responsibility to contact parents of students when incidents happen. It is the parent's responsibility to care for and support his or her own children.

School Administration and Support Staff (Family School Liaison Counsellor):

1. To promote the Safe and Caring Policy, procedures and concepts involved.
2. To teach and model appropriate behaviours.
3. To teach and clarify for students the terms, meanings and distinct differences between bullying and conflict, and to teach, identify and clarify threatening behaviour, words that hurt, and dating violence
4. To teach and promote resilience.
5. To keep up to date and maintain records of incidents.
6. To teach and model active listening so that all incidents are treated seriously.
7. To initiate and arrange meetings with stakeholders at all stages and to maintain open communication between those involved.
8. To recognize and value the partnership between home and school. It is the school's responsibility to contact parents of students when incidents happen. It is the parent's responsibility to care for and support their children.

Parents:

1. To remain calm ...to act not react.
2. To be aware of the Safe and Caring Policy, procedures, and concepts involved and to discuss those with their children.
3. To teach and model appropriate behaviours.
4. To encourage their children to have and to access a support network at school.
5. To encourage their children to speak openly with them and to look at positive strategies to deal with their feelings.
6. To recognize and value the partnership between home and school. It is the school's responsibility to contact parents of students when incidents happen. It is the parent's responsibility to care for and support his or her own children.
7. To support their children in the knowledge that the resolution of the situation may take some time.
8. To help their children to identify their situation of concern using the definitions and the model from Appendix A.

Students:

1. To model acceptable behaviour to others.
2. To be a responsible bystander and taking appropriate action.
3. To identify a network of trusted adults that they can talk to for support.
4. To let an adult know what is happening.
5. To keep on telling until the bullying stops.
6. To say no to bullying behaviours.
7. To use positive language and behaviour towards all others.

Appendix A

Identifying Behaviours	
ISOLATION (Social Isolation and/or Rejection)	CONFLICT
<p>Social exclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -intention is not necessarily to distress -choosing not to play with or be with another student <p>Occurs because of a negative perception of a student or strong bonding between students of a group which discourages others from joining.</p>	<p>A disagreement between students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -falling out between friends -dispute between students over a rule, decision, perception of a situation or an argument <p>Relative equality of power and mutual distress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -mutual accusations and claims in regard to a problem, -both parties are seeking a solution to the problem.
RANDOM ACTS OF AGGRESSION, INTIMIDATION OR MEANNESS	BULLYING, OR HARASSMENT
<p>Action taken with intention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to harm or distress another student -to force someone to do something <p>Targets of aggression are random, aggressor often claims to be provoked by the behaviour of the target.</p>	<p>Pattern of aggression directed towards one student on a regular and predictable basis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -intention is to harm or distress -imbalance of power (student selected is less powerful in some way at the time (ie. more isolated, less aggressive, smaller, younger, or vulnerable in some way) <p>Only the targeted student is seeking a solution to the problem</p>
THREATS	CYBERBULLYING
<p>The use of words or actions to intimidate or coerce someone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -inciting an escalation of violent behaviour -using words, graphics or gestures to promote the potential of harm to others -being in possession of a weapon while on school property. <p>The intent is to intimidate or cause harm</p>	<p>The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sending mean or threatening messages by email, text or through comments on a social networking page -spreading embarrassing rumours, secrets or gossip about another person through social networking sites, emails or texts -posting online with the intent to embarrass or humiliate -hacking someone's email or online account -creating online polls and rating people in negative ways <p>The intent is to intimidate, threaten, defame or humiliate others.</p>

Appendix B

BULLYING RECORD

DATE RECORDED	Recorded By:
THE REPORTING PERSON(S) WAS:	
WHAT HAPPENED? <i>(Include time, date, place and event, persons involved)</i>	
Signature:	
Time:	Date:
Actions Taken:	

Appendix C

Incident Details:

Date:

Teacher/Supervisor:

- Teasing/Persistently bothering others /Gestures Rough Play Inappropriate Language
- Physical Aggression Destroying/Damaging Property Defiance
- Disrespectful Behaviour

Supporting Details:

Signature:

Time:

Date:

Actions Taken: