



EES Policy: Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Management

Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Management Policy Vancouver Island School of Innovation and Inquiry May, 2021

RATIONALE

Harassment and bullying have a negative impact on the learning environment, and can leave individuals with long-lasting scars. The Vancouver Island School of Innovation and Inquiry (“VISII”) therefore takes a firm and intentional position in addressing all forms of harassment, intimidation, and violence, including and especially those forms that target race.

At VISII, the safety and wellbeing of children is of paramount consideration. We value respect for each other. This value allows students, staff, and society members to feel safe, to develop a sense of belonging, to forge friendships with peers, and maintain respectful relationships. This sense of community enables learners and teachers to thrive.

Children deserve to be protected from abuse, neglect, bullying, harm, or threat of harm. Therefore, VISII will ensure that children attending the school enjoy a safe, caring, and orderly learning environment where each child feels safe, accepted, and respected.

POLICY

The Epiphyte Education Society (“EES” or “the board”) expects all students, staff, and other members of VISII to be treated with respect and courtesy, in accordance with the *Code of Conduct*.

VISII will continuously develop strategies to make students feel valued, respected, and connected within our school community. This will include the protection of the students’ physical safety, social connectedness, inclusiveness as well as protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of their gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression.

Any incident of harassment or bullying that comes to the attention of staff or administration will be actively addressed, with the intent of pursuing healing and justice for the victim/target,

healing and accountability for the aggressor, and a restoration of positive relationships among all members of the school community.

VISII will take all reasonable steps to prevent retaliation by a person against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of this policy.

PROCEDURES

Purpose

Our policy models a respectful environment that prevents harassment and bullying from occurring and, in the event that it occurs, promotes healing and justice for the victim/target, and healing and accountability for the harasser/bully.

Awareness

There are many underlying causes of bullying. Harassment and bullying can be blunt or subtle, and may continue undetected by anyone other than the victim/target. Myths about harassment and bullying often make it difficult to address the underlying issues.

Examples of myths that must be debunked are:

- "Bullying or harassment is 'no big deal.'"
- "We all survived it, so..."
- "It doesn't happen because kids come from good homes."
- "Racist or sexually inappropriate jokes are not harassment or bullying; they are just a little off."
- "Name-calling and verbal aggression is not bullying, because 'sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.'"
- "Power struggles and pecking order issues are not important as they've always been in schools."
- "Kids can work it out on their own."
- "Teachers, parents/caregivers, and administrators understand what is really going on in the school all the time."
- "Teaching conflict resolution or anti-bullying in the curriculum alone resolves the problem. Students excluded from social groups are not the school's concern."

Prevention

Our staff are leaders who nurture and model a school climate that fosters community, prevents harassment and bullying, and works for forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation should harassment or bullying occur.

- Each teacher will follow the principles of restorative practice.
- Staff shall make students aware that they can safely (and confidentially) communicate complaints about harassment and bullying (and any other matter) to any staff member and that they will be protected from retribution.

Acceptable Conduct

A student who attends VISII will:

- be cooperative, courteous, and respectful in dealings with school staff, other students, and school guests.
- respect the rights of others.
- demonstrate the highest standards of conduct, personal responsibility, and good judgment when involved in school sponsored events.

- act as responsible members of the school neighbourhood by being courteous to people in the area, and respecting their property.
- adhere to this Code of Conduct while traveling to and from school and while off the school premises during the lunch hour and at other times during the school day.

Unacceptable Conduct

A student who attends Vancouver Island School of Innovation and Inquiry will not, while at school, at a school-related activity, or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school environment, do any of the following:

- bully, harass, or intimidate.
- be racially, ethnically, or sexually prejudiced.
- engage in cyberbullying.
- intimidate or threaten.
- be physically aggressive.
- engage in violent actions.
- seek retribution against a person who has reported incidents.

Intervention

Staff may exercise their judgment to choose, depending on circumstances, whether to start intervention at Stage 1, or to go directly to Stage 2 or Stage 3 (see below for description of stages).

The severity and frequency of unacceptable conduct as well as the age and maturity of students is considered in determining appropriate disciplinary action. As students get older, more mature, and progress through the grades, our expectations regarding their conduct increase.

- We expect an increase in personal responsibility, self-discipline, and acceptance of diversity.
- There may be greater consequences when inappropriate behaviours are repeated.

Stage 1

In this stage, the issue is **addressed by the parties and the first staff member that is aware of a problem.**

1. Staff shall, where appropriate, encourage and support students to work out issues among themselves with guidance in conflict resolution techniques.
2. Staff may inform parents/caregivers of student(s) involved.
3. Staff shall maintain confidentiality.
4. If the staff's guidance does not resolve the difficulty, the staff shall report the matter to the Principal.

Stage 2

In this stage, the issue is **addressed with the involvement of the Principal.**

1. The Principal shall investigate every complaint or staff report about harassment or bullying. The Principal shall interview participants and witnesses, and review evidence, as necessary.
2. The Principal shall assess if the harm is harassment, bullying, or child abuse. In the case of child abuse, the Principal will follow the *Child Abuse Policy*.
3. The Principal shall consider informing parents/caregivers of student(s) involved; should the Principal elect to involve the parents/caregivers, the Principal will involve them early in the discussion.
4. The Principal shall lead a reconciliation process that may include the following activities:

- a. Lead a session in which the specific impact of the harassment/bullying behaviour is understood by the parties involved (impact on individuals, groups, the school as a whole, etc.).
 - b. State the school's policy on harassment and bullying, and possible action or applied consequences.
 - c. Discuss expectations in a specific and concrete way.
 - d. Explain options and encourage student(s) to suggest remedies.
 - e. Indicate when the Principal will check back with the student(s), staff and parents/caregivers/guardians to see if the harassment/bullying has been resolved.
5. The Principal shall document these events in summary form, including names, times, and methods of communication, and retain a copy of the summary in administrative files.

Stage 3

In this stage, the issue is **addressed with a formal plan and may involve authorities outside the school**. The Principal shall take the following action:

1. Notify student(s) and parents/caregivers involved and the Board of Directors of the Epiphyte Education Society that action will be taken.
2. Assess the need to refer to the appropriate authorities.
3. Ensure that a formal plan is prepared to address healing for the victim/target and accountability for the harasser/bully. The plan shall include specific accountabilities for monitoring and follow-up.
4. Ensure that all steps in the plan are implemented in a timely manner.
5. Document these events in summary form, including names, times, and methods of communication, and retain a copy of the summary in the administrative files.

Process and Timelines

To enable timely responses to issues as they arise, the Principal may delegate his/her authority under this policy to another teacher or the Board (if no other teacher is available) for periods when the Principal is unavailable.

Time is of the essence in dealing with harassment/bullying, since the victim/target may continue to be subject to harassment/bullying while the interventions and planning are under way.

Stages 1 and 2:

Proceed in a timely manner at the discretion of staff and Principal.

Stage 3:

Once the Principal determines the matter requires a Stage 3 response, a plan shall be completed within 5 working days.

Appeals

Parties involved may consult the *Appeals Policy*.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are intended to enhance understanding of this policy. They are descriptive only and not intended to be used for any legal actions.

Abuse

As defined in the *Child Protection Policy*.

Bullying

The most widely accepted definition of bullying comes from the work of leading Norwegian researcher, Dr. Dan Olweus: "*Bullying...is a pattern of repeated aggressive behaviour, with negative intent, directed from one child to another where there is a power imbalance.*"

This aggressive behaviour includes physical or verbal behaviour, and is an intentional and purposeful act meant to inflict injury or discomfort on the other person. Olweus' definition identifies three critical conditions that distinguish bullying from other forms of aggressive behaviours, including:

- Power: Children who bully acquire their power through physical size and strength, by status within the peer group, and by recruiting support of the peer group.
- Frequency: Bullying is not a random act. Rather, bullying is characterized by frequent and repeated attacks. It is this factor that brings about the anticipatory terror in the mind of the child being bullied that can be so detrimental and have the most debilitating long-term effects.
- Intent to harm: Children who bully generally do so with the intent to harm the other child physically, emotionally, or both.

Bullying can start out in seemingly playful ways, consisting of pranks, jokes, and some "roughhousing." The incidents soon become more hurtful, degenerating into name-calling, ridicule, personal attacks, and public embarrassment. Rough and tumble "play" gives way to punching, kicking, restraining, and beatings (Ross 1998).

Bullying often involves **physical and/or verbal aggression**. Physical aggression consists of open assault on another student, slapping, hitting, punching, kicking, throwing things, jostling, and/or poking (Ross 1998). Verbal aggression consists of verbal taunts or open and overt behaviour, and takes the form of teasing, criticism, gossiping, spreading malicious rumours, threatening to withdraw friendship, **social isolation**, or exclusion from the group.

See outlines below of various forms bullying can take. Please note that this information is not exhaustive. When determining whether a specific behaviour is bullying, consider whether or not it:

- is repeated over time
- is intended to hurt
- involves a power imbalance.

Adapted from the Ministry of Education programs, *Focus on Bullying* (1998) and *Focus on Harassment and Intimidation: Responding to Bullying in Secondary Schools* (2001).

Discrimination

Discrimination is unequal or unfair treatment based on one or more of the prohibited grounds enumerated in the *BC Human Rights Code*: race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age of that person. Discrimination includes racial slurs, imitation of accent, put downs about cultural differences, gender harassment, and insults about appearances (e.g., weight, glasses, hair colour).

Harassment

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, such behaviour that has the purpose or effect of offending or demeaning an individual or group of individuals on the basis of race, colour, size, ancestry, place of origin, nationality, religion, family status, physical or mental ability, age, gender, or sexual orientation.

A student is bullied and harassed when someone takes an action that he or she knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that student to be humiliated or intimidated.

Harassment can be a single incident or a series of incidents. Bullying is usually a series of such incidents. The unwelcome comment or conduct does not have to be directed at a specific person for harassment to occur. Bullying is usually directed at a particular individual. Comments or conduct that tend to ridicule or disparage a group may give rise to an offensive environment and thus to harassment. When it includes an individual who is targeted, then it can be bullying.

Intimidation

Intimidation includes, but is not limited to, stealing, extortion, prank, dares (e.g., a public challenge), bribery, threats, locking in a confined space, swarming, stalking, anonymous phone calls, gossip, and breaking confidence.

Non-verbal Body Language (inappropriate)

Inappropriate non-verbal body language includes, but is not limited to, glaring, snickering, gestures, ignoring (silent treatment), shunning, confining, surrounding, blocking, and unwelcome physical contact such as inappropriate touching or patting.

Physical Aggression

Physical aggression includes, but is not limited to, spitting, pushing, tripping, hitting, shoving, kicking, hair pulling, hiding personal possessions (e.g., lunch), damaging property, attacking family or friends, coercion, intimidation, threatening with a weapon, defacing property, and stealing.

Social Isolation and Alienation

Social isolation and alienation includes, but is not limited to, shunning; excluding from a group; public humiliation; undermining; embarrassing gossip; setting up a student to look foolish; spreading rumours; inciting hatred; racist, sexist or homophobic alienation; setting up someone to take the blame; and display of pornographic, racist, or other offensive or derogatory material.

Staff

Any individual who is employed by the EES, including an independent contractor who has entered into an agreement with the Society.

Verbal Aggression

Verbal aggression includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate teasing; name calling; offensive remarks, inappropriate jokes or innuendo; mocking; sarcasm; putdowns; whistling/catcalls; leaving nasty or threatening notes; threatening or intimidating phone calls; giving dirty looks; racist or sexist taunting; daring another to do something dangerous; verbal threats against property; verbal threats of violence or inflicting bodily harm; coercion; and extortion. Verbal aggression can occur in all forms of communication including, but not limited to, mail, e-mail,

text messages, social media platforms, shared documents (e.g., Google Drive files), fax, voice mail, notes, or yearbook journaling.

Epiphyte Educational Society

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