

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy¹

Preamble

John Knox Christian School (the “School”) is not exempt from student behaviour which could undermine a positive school climate of respect and understanding for all persons. The School believes in promoting Christ-honouring self-control, and acceptable behaviour in respect to God, each other, and the rest of God’s creation. When students flourish in these areas, they will contribute to a thriving Christian school community. When students flounder in these areas, they will need to become aware of their behaviour, take corrective action, and seek to be reconciled. Reconciliation includes experiencing forgiveness and learning to forgive – it points to restoration in the Christian school community.

The purpose of this Policy is to promote the School’s mission and to provide a framework to support and maintain a positive school climate that is God honouring.

The School also believes that a healthy, safe and inclusive learning environment where all students feel accepted is a necessary condition for student success.

The School understands that students cannot be expected to reach their full potential in an environment where they feel insecure or intimidated.

The School recognizes that a whole-school approach is required, and that everyone – educators, School staff, parents, students and the wider community – has a role to play in creating a positive school climate and preventing inappropriate behaviour such as bullying, hazing, sexual assault, and gender-based incidents.

The School acknowledges that an open and ongoing dialogue among the Head of School, School staff, parents, and students is an important component of creating a positive school climate in which everyone feels safe and respected.

Bullying, including cyber-bullying, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated at the School. This Policy applies to all members of the School community, including students, staff, coaches, and anyone who performs duties, either on a paid or volunteer basis, or on a full-time or part-time basis for the School.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the *Code of Conduct Policy*, *Progressive Discipline Policy*, *Sexual Harassment-Students Policy* and any other policy that deals with behaviour.

¹ This policy is based on the policy template created by Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, modified by Ted Postma, Consultant, with significant updates in 2024. Appendix A adapted from Calvin Christian School (Hamilton, ON) with permission.

Other sources:

- <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-40/session-1/bill-14>
- <https://www.prevnet.ca/resources/policy-and-legislation/ontario/for-parents>
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/144.pdf>

Definitions

Bullying is behaviour that can be repeated or occur one time and can be carried out by an individual or group of individuals.

In the Education Act, bullying means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a student where:

- (a) the behaviour is intended by the student to have the effect of, or the student ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of:
 - 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
 - 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 student and the individual based on a variety of factors, including, and not limited to, size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, and factors related to the *Human Rights Code*.

This behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written, or other means. It includes cyberbullying, defined below.

Cyberbullying means bullying by electronic means, 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;
- (c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

Hazing is a type of bullying that involves humiliating and sometimes dangerous initiation rituals. Hazing is most often done by a group as a rite of admission into a group, club, or team; however, it can also be done by individuals. Hazing can be extreme, but it can also be more subtle. All forms of hazing are unacceptable at the School.

As examples, and without limiting the generality of the above definitions, bullying and hazing can involve any of the following forms:

- Physical bullying:
 - when someone hits, shoves, kicks, spits at, or beats up others.
- Verbal bullying:
 - name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing;
 - humiliating or threatening someone;
 - making people do things they do not want to do.
- Social bullying:
 - excluding others from the group;
 - gossiping or spreading rumours about others;

- setting others up to look foolish;
- making sure others do not associate with a person.
- Electronic bullying:
 - using a computer or phone text messages, or pictures to:
 - threaten or hurt someone's feelings;
 - single out, embarrass, or make someone look bad;
 - spread rumours or reveal secrets about someone.
- Other examples of electronic or cyberbullying include:
 - sending mean texts or instant messages to someone;
 - hacking into someone's social networking or gaming profile;
 - being rude or mean to someone, harassing or threatening someone, sending mean messages, or spreading secrets, gossip, or rumours about people online (including through instant messages, texts, emails, and social media);
 - pretending to be someone else to spread hurtful messages online;
 - creating fake social media accounts, or creating blogs or websites, that ridicule someone;
 - taking someone's password and impersonating them online, or breaking into an email account and sending hurtful materials to others under an assumed identity;
 - posting private or embarrassing photos online or sending them to others;
 - engaging someone in instant messaging and tricking them into revealing personal information or images, and then forwarding it to others.
- Racial or Religious bullying:
 - treating people badly because of their racial, ethnic or religious background;
 - saying negative things about a cultural or religious background;
 - calling someone racist names;
 - telling racist or inappropriate religious jokes.
- Sexual bullying:
 - unwanted and unwelcome behaviour about sex or gender that interferes with someone's life and makes them feel uncomfortable;
 - touching, pinching or grabbing someone in a sexual way;
 - making crude comments about someone's sexual behaviour;
 - spreading a sexual rumour about someone;
 - calling someone "gay", a "fag", or something similar.
- Disability bullying:
 - leaving someone out or treating them badly because of a disability (e.g., learning, physical, speech);
 - making someone feel uncomfortable because of a disability;

- making comments or jokes to hurt someone with a disability.

Examples of hazing include:

- Subtle hazing:
 - excluding or ignoring someone;
 - calling someone demeaning names;
 - requiring someone to carry certain things around with them at all times, memorize certain things, or do things exclusively for one's entertainment;
 - withholding certain information from someone, or deception as to that information;
 - engaging in contests (athletic or otherwise) between groups of students (e.g. new students or team members vs. existing students or team members), which are purposefully unfair and do not promote friendly competition;
- Harassment hazing:
 - preventing someone from attending class, or engaging them with lengthy work sessions that do not allow adequate time for academic work and studies;
 - requiring someone to perform ridiculous work assignments or personal service acts such as carrying books, running errands, performing maid duties, late night food runs, etc.;
 - subjecting someone to deliberately uncomfortable conditions (such as a hot or small room; extremely loud or repeated music; wearing unusual, embarrassing, or uncomfortable clothing or costumes; requiring roundabout entrance to buildings; imposing silence periods; preventing or impeding personal hygiene practices);
 - conducting any type of activity to falsely create respect and trust through trickery;
 - verbal abuse (yelling, taunting, getting "in their face," etc.);
 - nudity at any time, causing indecent exposure or embarrassment;
- Violent hazing:
 - forced consumption or ingestion of any substance (including alcohol, food, or other substances), or preventing eating, drinking water, or sleeping;
 - sexual violation or unwarranted touching of the body;
 - physical assault, including pushing, shoving, tackling, paddling, beating, striking, hitting, burning, branding, tattooing, and marking;
 - throwing anything at or onto someone;
 - physical or mental shocks, regardless of degree or nature, and any form of forced physical activities and exercise, whether extreme or not;
 - forcing someone to participate in any activity or become involved in any situation that is in violation of law; contrary to the person's genuine moral or religious beliefs; or contrary to School rules.

Bullying prevention is a whole-school approach that heightens expectations for a safe, caring, and inclusive school climate. 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 the 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, intervention for the student who was bullying, and strategies for responding to students who were directly observing the bullying incident.

Harm can be experienced in a number of ways, including physical, mental, emotional, and psychological.

A **positive school climate** is a crucial component of prevention; it may be defined as the sum total of all of the personal relationships within a school. When these relationships are founded on mutual acceptance and inclusion, and modelled by all, a culture of respect becomes the norm.² A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions.

Principles

The School recognizes that bullying, including cyber-bullying:

- adversely affects a student's well-being and ability to learn;
- adversely affects the school climate, including healthy relationships;
- is a serious issue and is not acceptable in the school environment (including virtual), in school-related activity, on school buses, or in any other circumstance that will have an impact on the school climate.

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.

Bullying, including cyber-bullying, may be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect. It can take many forms, including physical (e.g., pushing, tripping), verbal (e.g., name calling, insults, threats, sexist, racist, or other discriminatory comments), social, also known as relational (for example, spreading rumours, intentionally excluding others, humiliating others with public gestures), and causing harm to one's property.

Taking action against bullying requires school staff to consider the root cause(s) and identify the most effective interventions. Proactive intervention coupled with coaching and support can help all students develop the skills and understanding needed to build and maintain positive relationships.

Cyber-bullying

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. See

² *Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action*, Report of the Safe Schools Action Team (Toronto: June 2006), p. 8.

the Definitions section for examples of cyber-bullying. Increasing the use of digital platforms enhances the threat of cyber-bullying as well as other safety risks.

While a Christian school has minimal obligations to the *Education Act*, the School aligns itself with the *Act* in matters of discipline. Heads of Schools and teachers have an obligation to maintain order and discipline in the classroom and on school grounds. Additionally, teachers and all School employees are required to report any serious incidents or behaviour for which a suspension must be considered, which includes bullying to their Head of School. The Ontario College of Teachers advises that the responsibility of Ontario certified teachers for student safety extends to the treatment of students during daily interactions. The Ontario Principals Council advises that principals have an obligation to investigate all reported bullying incidents and follow all additional and required protocols when dealing with these incidents. This can include speaking with the parents of involved students, implementing progressive discipline measures from verbal warnings to possible suspension, or involving the police when required.³

Bullying Prevention, Intervention and Support Strategies

Prevention and Awareness

- The School Board and administration will develop a bullying policy in collaboration with various stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers, and special education staff. This policy shall include definitions, responsibilities, reporting mechanisms, training, and procedures for responding to allegations including the range of disciplinary measures.
- All employees of the School must take seriously all allegations of bullying behaviour and shall act in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner when responding to students who disclose or report bullying incidents.
- School employees and volunteers who work directly with students – including administrators, teachers, and non-teaching staff (including staff in social work, child and youth work, psychology, and related areas, and educational assistants) – shall respond to any student behaviour that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate. Such behaviour includes all inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour, including bullying, at any time, at the School and at any school-related event if, in the employee’s opinion, it is safe to respond to the behaviour.
- Bullying in any form will not be tolerated at the School. Reports of circumstances or actions that represent bullying or may constitute bullying will be addressed in any age-appropriate manner in accordance with the circumstances of each individual case. All students and other members of the School community are encouraged to report any incidences of bullying, physical aggression, intimidation or threats, including suspected incidents and related conduct to a staff member immediately. The staff member will be responsible to ensure that the School’s procedures are followed.
- The School will put in place procedures:
 - to allow students to report bullying incidents in a safe and welcoming environment and in a way that will minimize the possibility of reprisal;
 - that encourage parents and other persons, including teachers, coaches and other staff, to report incidents of bullying, and will facilitate such reporting;
 - to address when and how to report to police, and how to work with police on an ongoing basis to promote the safety and security of students while not prejudicing ongoing criminal proceedings.

³ <https://www.oct.ca/Home/Resources/Advisories/Bullying>

- Students are encouraged to use a reporting form if so preferred and place their report in a special box established for such purposes and placed at rather inconspicuous location. (See Appendix A)

(Note: for older students, see the *Progressive Discipline Policy* for a more age-appropriate form.)

- The School will implement programs, intervention, and other resources and supports for students who have been bullied, students who have witnessed incidents of bullying, and students who have engaged in bullying. Such programs can include counselling sessions with a designated staff member or contracted person.
- The School recognizes the proactive value in ensuring there is timely adult supervision, a well understood code of conduct, appropriate devotions and planned values instruction, peer conflict tutoring, police officer presentations, an active co-curricular program, an active student council, and fulfilling service projects, etc., which all serve to direct the student away from disrespectful behaviour towards others.

The School's bullying prevention and intervention strategy will include ongoing effective, interactive education for all students, on at least an annual basis, respecting bullying, hazing and analogous conduct, and on strategies to prevent or address such conduct. It will also include special, but not exclusive attention, to sports activities, including specific strategies to reduce the likelihood of bullying, hazing, and other undesirable initiation rites within a sports-related environment. Students will have opportunities to participate in equity and inclusive education, bullying prevention and leadership initiatives within the School.

Programs, interventions, and other supports

- The School will ensure that all their employees take all allegations of bullying, including cyber-bullying, seriously and act in a timely, sensitive and supportive manner when responding to students who disclose or report bullying incidents.
- The School will ensure that all of its employees who work directly with students, including administrators, teachers and other school staff, respond to any student behaviour that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate if, in the employee's opinion, it is safe to respond to it. Such behaviour includes bullying and all inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour that occurs at any time at school and at any school-related event, including virtual learning environments.
- The School will ensure that for students with special needs, interventions, supports and consequences are consistent with the child's strengths and needs, as well as the program goals and learning expectations documented in their individual learning plan. Ongoing intervention and support may be necessary to promote and sustain positive student behaviour.

Professional development strategies for administrators, teachers, and other school staff

The School will:

- establish and provide annual professional development programs to educate teachers and other staff about bullying prevention and strategies to promote a positive school climate; and
- put in place curriculum-linked culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy training strategies on bully prevention and intervention to provide administrators, teachers and other school staff with the resources and support they need to address all forms of bullying.

The School may also make training available to other adults who have significant contact with students (e.g., school bus operators/drivers, volunteers), and will recognize the ongoing need to support training for new teachers.

Communication and Outreach

The School will actively communicate its policies and procedures on bullying prevention and intervention, as well as the definitions of bullying and cyber-bullying, to students, parents, teachers, other School staff, volunteers, and school bus operators/drivers.

The School should also provide this information to relevant parent committees and other appropriate community partners. It is important that the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community (such as the Head of School, teachers, other school staff, students, and parents) be clearly articulated and understood.

Notifying Parents

Following a serious incident, the Head of School or designate must notify parents of the involved students, except in certain circumstances, and must invite the parents to discuss supports for their child. With respect to notifying the parents of students who have been harmed as a result of a serious student incident, the Head of School or designate 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.

With respect to notifying the parents of students who engaged in serious student incidents, the Head of School or designate 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 their engagement in the activity.

When notifying parents of these incidents, the Head of School or designate should invite parents to have a discussion with them about the supports that will be provided to their child.

The Head of School or designate will not notify a parent of a student if, in the opinion of the Head of School or designate, doing so would put the student at risk of harm from a parent of the student, such that notification is not in the student's best interest. When a Head of School or designate has decided not to notify the parents that their child was involved in a serious incident, they should document the rationale for this decision and notify the teacher who reported the incident. In addition, the Head of School or

designate should refer students to school resources or to a community-based service provider that can provide the appropriate type of confidential support when the students' parents are not called.

Progressive Discipline

The School will put in place a comprehensive intervention strategy to address incidents of bullying, including appropriate and timely responses. Intervention and support should be consistent with a progressive discipline approach. The strategies could range from early interventions to more intensive interventions in cases of persistent bullying, with possible referral to community or social service agencies. Ongoing intervention and support may be necessary to sustain and promote positive student behaviour. For a student with special education needs, interventions, supports, and consequences will be consistent with the student's strengths, needs, goals, and expectations.

Monitoring and Review

The School will monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of its bullying prevention and intervention policies and procedures, using indicators established in consultation with teachers, other School staff, students, and parents.

To support this review process, the School should develop or enhance existing strategies and processes to track and monitor all instances of reported bullying, including cyberbullying, to guide and inform school strategic planning.

The School should evaluate the effectiveness of its safe school policies and programs through the use of anonymous school climate surveys of students, staff and parents which should be undertaken at least once every two years.

Specific Directions

The Head of School is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this policy.

This *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy* approved by the Board of **[Name of School], [date]**.

Appendix A – Bullying Incident Report

Please fill in this form and put into a **[Bystander]** Box

This information will be read by the principal and treated very confidentially.

Your Name (optional): _____ Your Teacher _____ :

Were you bullied? Yes No

Did you witness the bullying? Yes No

The name of the person who was being bullied is:

What kind of bullying was this? Physical (like hitting or kicking)

Verbal (like name calling)

Cyberbullying (using a cell phone to say or show things about someone in a bad way)

When did this happen? Date: _____

Time: _____

Name(s) of the Bully(ies):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Names of the Bystanders:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Where did the bullying happen? Check one:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> At school: | <input type="checkbox"/> In the bathroom | <input type="checkbox"/> In the hallway |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> In the classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> On the playground |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> In the change room | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at school (give location) | | |

Explain what happened:

Appendix B – Ideas for Bullying Prevention (for an elementary school)

Plan

Schools will develop their own plans. As a springboard consider finding anti-bullying curriculum material which could be used from time to time as part of a health class or ethics class or the regular curriculum.

Elementary schools in particular can establish a homeroom program to be implemented in the first three or four months of the school year. For example:

By the end of September:

- establish an anti-bullying slogan or motto (e.g., Care-full Zone; Love God, Love Others; Stand up, not around!)
- place posters on walls
- review the particulars of the bystander reporting boxes and form (see Appendix A – primarily for grades 4-8)
- provide suggestions for awards associated with good behaviour (e.g., classroom leadership award; good stuff tickets)
- provide suggestions to colleagues of good devotions or stories
- establish responsive classroom sessions and routines
- set up activities for non-structured time (e.g., *intramurals*, *classroom games*)

By the end of October:

- share students' description of a school free of bullying
- share ideas of what a victim/bystander/bully can do to help
- share students' designations of high-risk areas in your school (e.g., washrooms)
- share students' rewording of the student code of conduct with a positive framework

By the end of November:

- book a visit by the police officer to talk about bullying
- share suggestions for bully-busting strategies (e.g., have more equipment for the outdoors etc.)

Monitor and Correct

1. Supervise

- be on time in the classroom and for other activities
- be in the classroom/cafeteria during lunch time as assigned
- be aware of rules and procedures
- keep alert and avoid casual conversations with colleagues when students are to be supervised
- wear outdoor identity vest
- walk around

- attend to concerns immediately
- inform home room teacher or principal (or designate) if something needs to be addressed

2. Track

- document serious outdoor concerns
- home room or assigned teacher calls parents if repeated bullying type behaviour is noted; such calls should be documented
- home room or assigned teacher calls parents if repeated victim type behaviour is noted; such calls should be documented
- supervising teacher or home room teacher should be advising the principal of severe bullying concerns

3. Support

- bring needs and concerns to the Lord in prayer and through devotions
- contact special education department for further follow-up if students involved are special education students
- advise parents to contact Kids Help Phone, for confidential counseling service at 1-800-668-6868 or visit www.kidshelpphone.ca
- bring in the school's counselor to meet with bully(ies) and the victim; explore having parents meet with the counselor as well

4. Discipline and Reconciliation

- depending on the severity of the case, the home room teacher or assigned teacher should discipline the offending student(s) and advise the principal
- severe or unresolved cases brought to the principal's attention shall be dealt with in the spirit of correction and love where the principal takes into the consideration the victim, the bully, and the circumstances; this could still include suspending the bully for up to ____days
- a session of restorative justice may occur at any time (Note: this may take place before the principal considers suspension)
- if there is no reconciliation and ongoing issues, the Principal will follow the relevant procedures in the School's Progressive Discipline Policy and/or Suspension and Expulsion Policy

Approved by JKCS Board: September 14th, 2024