

## INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES PROVIDING SAFE AND CARING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

### Background

Nothing in this policy is to be interpreted so as to limit or be a waiver of Holy Family Catholic Regional School Division's rights and powers pursuant the Constitution Act, 1867 and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to maintain the denominational character of Catholic schools. If any of the provisions in this policy conflict with the Holy Family Catholic Regional School Division's rights and powers pursuant to the Constitution Act, 1867 and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to maintain the denominational character of Catholic schools, the Holy Family Catholic Regional School Division's rights and powers pursuant the Constitution Act, 1867 and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to maintain the denominational character of Catholic schools will govern.

The mission of the Division speaks to students and staff being provided every opportunity to experience success in a Catholic community guided by Christ. Catholic schools exist to serve the needs of God's children. Accordingly, the interests and wellbeing of students must always remain at the forefront of our operations. As further outlined in Board Policy 1, every effort to realize this mission is guided by beliefs and values that place the well-being of students as being at the forefront of the operation of our schools. Most importantly, our passion in this regard is motivated by our core belief that all students are "gifts from God". For this reason, the Division will ensure that each student enrolled in our schools is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe and Catholic environment that promotes the well-being of all students and fosters community support for achieving this goal. All efforts to further the safe and caring environment of a school must be in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The Division's goal is to develop responsible, caring and respectful members of a just, peaceful and democratic society. School staff, under the direction of the Principal, are to maintain order and discipline in the school, on school grounds and during Division-sponsored activities. School staff must operate in a loco parentis role whereby they act in relation to students as responsible caring parents. As well, in exercising their authority under the School Act, staff must always consider the best educational interests and fundamental rights of all students.

Appendix A and B provides guidelines and the School Act sets the legal expectations for our responsibility to our students and the community.

### Definitions

*Bullying* is hereby defined to respond to the Board's responsibility to Section 45(8) of the *School Act*, which stipulates that it must provide a safe and caring environment for all students. Bullying means repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by a student where the behaviour is intended by the student to cause harm, fear or distress to another individual in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to the individual's reputation. Bullying often occurs in circumstances where one party endeavors to maintain power and control over

another based upon systemic inequalities within a social setting. Parameters for addressing bullying are outlined within this procedure.

*Catholic Teaching on Social Relationships* recognizes all those called to a life with Christ as, simply and completely, children of God. Christians afford no other title to that giftedness other than to be called by name to a life of love and to be compelled, through discipleship, to share it abundantly with others. As St. Paul reminds us, “For in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God, through faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ” (Galations 3:27-28).”

Our students must respect the unique differences of every person, extending understanding and compassion to others. We do not limit or narrow our understanding of each other to specific traits that make us different. This would be a reductionist view of the human person. Rather, each of us is recognized for the entirety of our gifts and is called forth to contribute these gifts for the betterment of creation and the building of God’s kingdom. This understanding of the human person and God’s plan for each of us defines all of our social relationships. Our relationships, therefore, are characterized by generosity of self, mutual respect, and a desire for the good of the other.

The Alberta Bishops’ “A Resource for an Inclusive Community (2001)” remains an instructive pastoral resource for teachers and counselors in our ministry to students experiencing same-sex attractions. The Canadian Catholic Bishops’ *Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity* summarizes the importance of this resource by stating: “Persons who experience attraction to those of the same sex are also called to chastity. They too can grow in Christian holiness through a life of self-control, prayer, and the reception of the sacraments.”

*Conflict in Relationship* occurs through single episodic acts of breakdowns in relationship between students. Conflict is an inevitable component of students learning to grow within social relationships. Disagreement and misunderstanding between parties is at the heart of conflict. However, conflict does not constitute premeditated efforts to cause harm, fear, or distress.

*Cyber-Bullying* refers to any harassment that occurs via the internet, cell phones, or other devices. Communication technology is used to intentionally harm others through hostile behavior such as sending text messages and posting ugly comments on the internet. The National Crime Prevention Council defines cyber-bullying as “the process of using the Internet, cell phones or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.” Cyber-bullying could be limited to posting rumors or gossips about a person in the internet bringing about hatred in other’s minds; or it may go to the extent of personally identifying victims and publishing materials severely defaming and humiliating to them.

*Hazing* Subtle hazing acts include ridicule, humiliating, embarrassment or ostracizing a student. Harassment-hazing acts include verbal abuse, wearing ridiculous clothing, committing lewd or crude acts or answering questions while in a sexual stance with another student. Bodily harm-hazing includes physical punishment, inappropriate touching and taking a student’s clothing off.

*In loco parentis* is a legal doctrine describing a relationship similar to that of a parent to a child. It refers to an individual who assumes parental status and responsibilities for another individual, usually a young person, without formally adopting that person.

*Intimate Images* is defined by the Criminal Code of Canada as being one in which the subject is nude, partially nude, or engaged in explicit sexual activity. In cases where the intimate image depicts a person under the age of 18 the image could constitute child pornography and could be considered a criminal offence. The distribution of intimate images without the consent of the individual could also lead to a criminal offence.

*Personal Harassment* - The Division will not tolerate harassment, whether engaged in by employees, volunteers or students. The Division acknowledges its responsibility to support and assist any employee, student or volunteer who is subjected to harassment as per [Administrative Procedure 170 Harassment](#).

Related to students, personal harassment refers to unwelcome and vexatious conduct or comment which is known or ought reasonably to be known to cause offense to the student at whom it is directed. It is not a relationship of mutual consent.

Related to staff, personal harassment is any behaviour by any person in the workplace that is directed at, and is offensive to any employee or volunteer and undermines the performance of that person. Personal harassment occurs when an individual uses his/her authority or position with its implicit power to undermine, sabotage or otherwise interfere with or influence the career of another employee.

Personal harassment also includes repeated, intentional, offensive comments and/or actions deliberately designed to demean and belittle an individual and/or cause personal humiliation.

*Respect for the Human Person* – Social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of all.

*Restorative Discipline* adds to the current discipline framework of schools. It promotes values and principles that use inclusive, collaborative approaches between students, home, church and school for being in community. These approaches validate the experiences and needs of everyone within the community, particularly those who have been marginalized, oppressed, or harmed. These approaches allow schools to act and respond in ways that are healing, rather than alienating or coercive. Restorative discipline is a strategy that a Principal may use to address bullying within a school.

*Sanctity of Human Life* – Foundational principles of all Catholic social teaching is the sanctity of human life. Recognizing each human person as the image and likeness of God, the Catholic Church believes that the inherent dignity of the human person starts with conception and extends until natural death. The value of human life is valued above all material possessions in the world. This is the lens through which the Division advocates for the safety and well-being of students within our schools.

Sexual Harassment is any unwelcome behaviour that is sexual in nature. Sexual advances, requests for sexual acts, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when such conduct undermines another individual's personal dignity by causing embarrassment, discomfort, humiliation or offence; or such conduct interferes with an individual's performance by creating an intimidating or hostile environment;

Related to employees, submission to such is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; or submission to or rejection of such conduct affects decisions regarding that individual's employment or educational advancement including matters such as promotion, salary, benefits, job security, grades, or employment references.

Sexual harassment includes unwanted touching, leering, sexist jokes, the display of sexually suggestive material, derogatory or degrading comments, sexually suggestive gestures, and unwelcome propositions, innuendos, demands or inquiries of a sexual nature.

Supporting Positive Behaviours is a strategy for schools to further the social responsibility and responsiveness of students in meeting behavioural expectations in a school. Within this model, pre-determined levels of support and intervention are established to enhance a positive climate of school engagement for all students. While the support model may look different at each school, three levels may be clearly identified:

- **Basic/Universal Support:**

Systemic teaching that produces a clear understanding of expectations is developed in a collaborative and respectful culture.

- **Targeted Support:**

Additional support is provided for those students who have not yet internalized appropriate responses to the expectations that they have been expected to follow.

- **Individual/Intensive Support:**

Highly focused support is established for those students who require ongoing adult monitoring in order to engage in appropriate behaviours.

Supporting Positive Behaviors is based upon a belief that teaching and nourishing appropriate behaviours has a far greater success than relying upon a model of consequences and punishment. This model is applied according to the age and stage of development of the learner and is a strategy that a Principal may also use to address bullying within a school.

## **Procedures**

1. The Division shall:

- 1.1 Ensure that interests of students are the paramount consideration in the exercise of their authority;
- 1.2 Ensure that all schools are safe and caring;
- 1.3 Develop, implement and continually evaluate policy, programs and practices to prevent and respond to incidents that disrupt teaching and learning;

- 1.4 Act in a manner that is legally, professionally, educationally sound and consistent with the Gospel values;
- 1.5 Model beliefs, principles, values and intellectual characteristics consistent with our Catholic philosophy and encourage students to do the same;
- 1.6 Promote the use of inclusive and respectful language and behaviour throughout the Division;
- 1.7 Promote the development of a Divisional culture that is welcoming and supports parents and families as valued and active members of the educational community;
- 1.8 Uphold staff and student rights under the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
- 1.9 Not discriminate against staff or students as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
- 1.10 Any employee or volunteer who believes that a colleague has experienced or is experiencing harassment or retaliation, is encouraged to notify the principal or the Superintendent. In the case of a student being the alleged harasser, employees must always be aware that they stand “in loco parentis” to all students.

### **Procedures Specific to Students**

#### **2. The Principal shall:**

- 2.1 The Principal must develop and communicate school based practices to support safe and caring schools. These practices will be developed in consultation with students, staff, School Council and other stakeholders;
  - 2.2 Model beliefs, principles, values and intellectual characteristics consistent with our Catholic philosophy and encourage students to do the same;
  - 2.3 Work collegially with parents/guardians to ensure students are safe and cared for and involve key advisors as needed, on a case-by-case basis, to program for students who need special considerations. Such special considerations will be provided for students in a manner that is caring and pastoral and upholds the student’s sacredness and dignity as taught by the Catholic Church.
3. Students and staff are expected to model and reinforce socially responsible and respectful behaviors so that teaching and learning can take place in a safe and caring environment.

### **Bullying in Respect to Students**

4. All Principals, in consultation with staff, must enact procedures that support the following expectations with respect to bullying.

- 4.1 No action toward another student, regardless of the intent of that action, will cause harm, fear, or distress to that student.
- 4.2 No action toward another student within the school community will diminish the student's reputation within the school community.
- 4.3 Any action that contributes to a perception of bullying, whether it occurs during school time or after school hours, or whether by electronic or other means, will be addressed by the Principal or designate if it is determined that the actions impact the well-being of the alleged victim within the school community.
- 4.4 Any action that humiliates or contributes to diminishing the reputation of a student because of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry, place of origin, marital status of parents, source of income of parents, family circumstances, or sexual orientation of a student is deemed to be an act of bullying.
- 4.5 No report by a student that is being "bullied" will be ignored by a staff member. The staff member will respond as if an incident has happened and report the incident to a teacher or Principal.
- 4.6 The Principal will distinguish between those matters of bullying that will be addressed by teachers, and those to be addressed by the Principal.
- 4.7 Students who are bystanders to an act of bullying have a responsibility to report observed incidences to school staff. Students are expected to either exercise communication dedicated to prevent bullying behaviour or, failing this, immediately report such incidences to school staff.
- 4.8 Students do not have a role in disciplining other students who have allegedly participated in bullying behaviour. They are encouraged to discourage these actions by labeling the behaviour through communication to others as bullying, requesting that the behaviour cease, and report the incident to a staff member.
- 4.9 In establishing consequences for bullying, teachers and Principals will use corrective interventions that consider the context of the circumstance, the behavioural history of the students involved, and the age/stage of development of the student.
- 4.10 If in the opinion of the teacher or Principal an act of bullying has occurred, interventions will be applied dedicated to stopping the behaviour in the future, and educating the student victimized about how to address the issue in the future. Those disciplined for their involvement in bullying will be communicated what to "stop" doing, and "start" doing in order to further a safe and caring culture within the school.
- 4.11 Parents/Guardians play a primary role in assisting with the resolution of matters pertaining to bullying. Apprising them of issues in this area as they have impacted their children should occur at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.12 A Principal may use a Restorative Discipline or Positive Behavioural Support model to address matters of discipline.
- 4.13 Incidents of bullying that adversely impact the safety of individuals or compromises the common good of the school community may be addressed through application of Sections 24 Suspension or 25 Expulsion of the *School Act*.

5. Teachers shall:

- 5.1 Create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning;
- 5.2 Establish learning environments wherein students feel safe, welcomed, cared for and respected;
- 5.3 Uphold the student's sacredness and dignity as taught by the Catholic Church;
- 5.4 As circumstances allow, avail themselves of opportunities to access appropriate professional learning opportunities that build capacity in understanding of diverse students who may feel vulnerable or marginalized for reasons related, but not limited to, belonging to racial, ethnic, religious, socio-economic or sexual minorities.

6. Students shall:

- 6.1 Demonstrate desirable personal characteristics such as respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, caring, loyalty and commitment to democratic ideals; and
- 6.2 Comply with the Code of Conduct in order to promote and ensure a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment as outlined in [Administrative Procedure Student Conduct and Discipline 350](#), which outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours whether or not they occur within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means, as well as supports for students impacted by inappropriate behaviour and for students who engage in inappropriate behaviour.

7. Student Organizations:

- 7.1 If one or more students attending a school operated by a Board request a staff member employed by the Board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the Principal of the school shall:
  - 7.1.1 Immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and
  - 7.1.2 Within a reasonable time from the date that the Principal receives the request, designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation of the student organization or to assist in organizing the activity.
- 7.2 For the purposes of subsection 7.1, an organization or activity includes an organization or activity that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

- 7.3 The Principal shall immediately inform the Board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in 5.1.2, and if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.
- 7.4 The students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization or activity, including the name “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”, after consulting with the Principal.
- 7.5 For greater certainty, the Principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.
- 7.6 The Principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances
  - 7.6.1 is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity;
  - 7.6.2 is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities; and
  - 7.6.3 FOIP and the School Act shall govern the disclosure of personal information by the Board.
- 7.7 A Principal who carries out functions under section 16.1 of the School Act must also follow the CCSSA LIFE Framework as amended from time to time.
- 7.8 The Division may disclose personal information only if it is authorized to do so under legislation that governs such disclosure, which, depending on the circumstances, may include the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the School Act, the Children First Act, and the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

## **Procedures Specific to Employees**

### **8. Confidentiality**

- 8.1 The Division recognizes the difficulty of reporting harassing behaviour, and understands that confidentiality is important as per [Administrative Procedure 170 Harassment](#).
- 8.2 Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the complaint procedure. Information relating to the complaint will only be disclosed to the extent necessary to investigate the complaint.

References:



- 1) CCCB (1994). Catechism of the Catholic Church, Ottawa, Ontario: CCCB Publishing, 2273, p. 465.
- 2) Ibid. 1929, p. 401
- 3) Concacan Inc., p. 3
- 4) Episcopal Commission for Doctrine (2011). Pastoral Ministry to Young People with Same-Sex Attraction, Ottawa, Ontario: Concacan Inc., p. 2
- 5) The School Act
- 6) Board Policy Handbook
- 7) Alberta Education Policy: Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation
- 8) Teaching Quality Standard
- 9) ATA. Code of Professional Conduct
- 10) Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1
- 11) St. Thomas Aquinas R.C.S.R.D. No. 38