

## **ANTI-BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY**

### **Rationale**

St. Matthew's recognizes that every student has a right to be in a school environment free from bullying, discrimination, harassment, abuse and violence; one in which the dignity of every individual is upheld. Every child has a right to be in a community that strives to provide a safe, caring and orderly environment. Bullying/harassment/personal grudges will not be tolerated on or off school premises.

### **Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is a repeated act of aggression, causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to someone. It can take a number of forms; physical, verbal, making gestures, extortion, using digital media and exclusion. It is an abuse of power. It can be planned and organized, or it may be unintentional. It may be perpetrated by individuals or by groups of students.

### **Principles**

- Students have a right to learn free from intimidation and fear
- The needs of the victim are paramount
- St. Matthew's Elementary School will not tolerate bullying behaviour
- Bullied students will be listened to by staff members or a peer mediator
- Reported incidents will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated

### **Forms of Bullying include:**

- Physical violence such as: hitting, pushing, hair pulling, spitting, unwanted touching
- Interfering with another student's property, by stealing, hiding or damaging it
- Using offensive names when addressing another student
- Using racial or cultural slurs, threats, inappropriate jokes
- Teasing or spreading rumours about another student or his/her family
- Belittling another student's abilities and achievements
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about another student
- Excluding another student from a group activity
- Ridiculing another student's appearance, way of speaking or personal mannerisms
- Misusing technology (internet or digital devices) to hurt or humiliate another person

### **Responsibilities of Stakeholders**

Our staff will:

- Foster in our students: self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our students
- Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every student learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the bully and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens

- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying
- Listen to children who have been bullied, and take what they say seriously
- Report suspected cases of bullying to administration (principal/head teacher)
- Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying
- Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively

### **The Responsibilities of Students**

We expect our students to:

- Adhere to the student code of conduct
- Refrain from becoming involved
- Intervene to protect the student who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe
- Report to a staff member any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying
- Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should:
  - Speak to a staff member immediately

### **The Responsibilities of Parents**

We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:

- Adhering to the Parent Code of Conduct
- Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children
- Advising their children not to retaliate but to instead report any bullying to a staff member
- Co-operating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying

### **Procedures for dealing with Incidents of Bullying Behaviour**

- All instances of reported bullying will be investigated and documented by school administration
- The parents/guardians of all parties concerned in the bullying incident will be contacted by administration
- If, after the investigation, bullying has been confirmed then the Principal will assign consequences and create an Action Plan for corrective, educational and/or disciplinary purposes.
- All parties will be informed of the Action Plan
- At the Principal's discretion, the Action Plan may be reviewed.
- Relevant professionals (counsellors, behaviour consultants) may be recommended to the individuals involved