



Promoting Positive School  
Climate and Well-being



## **Preamble**

The ALCDSB is dedicated to creating and promoting positive school climate and well-being in all of our schools. Respecting the dignity of all persons by fostering trusting relationships through policies and practices that promote equity, inclusion and diversity are at the core of our Catholic values, the Board's spiritual theme of *Faith in Action* and our provincial *Catholic Graduate Expectations*. A positive school climate is directly linked to student success and well-being ensuring students are motivated to do well and will realize their full potential. We are committed to sustaining healthy and nurturing communities of belonging that are safe, caring and respectful and built on the principles of restorative practice and progressive discipline.

The ALCDSB and its school communities engage in a whole school approach in putting prevention and intervention strategies in place to facilitate a positive relationship between students, staff, parents and community partners.

## **I. Education, Awareness, and Outreach**

St. Martha Catholic School proclaims that all people are created in the image and likeness of God and, as such, have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. The school further recognizes that a whole-school approach to engaging the school community will help the School's efforts to address inappropriate behaviour.

To these ends, the School will utilise the Ministry of Education definition of bullying in communications with the school community:

In its communication efforts, the School will:

- Make known that a positive school climate is essential for student achievement and well-being
- Identify the factors that contribute to a safe, inclusive caring and accepting school climate
- Support relationship building and focus on promoting healthy relationships using a variety of strategies
- Educate parents and students regarding the differences between bullying, conflict, aggression and teasing
- Explore and identify the underlying factors that contribute to conflict and/or bullying
- Work in partnership with parents and the broader school community to build awareness about the resources and pathways available
- Be responsive to parental concerns and continue to build relationships and resiliency

St. Martha Catholic School will communicate and share with the school community, policies and procedures including the Board/school Code of Conduct, equity and inclusive education policy and guidelines for religious accommodations, procedures to address incidents of discrimination, progressive discipline approach, and promoting positive school climate and well-being.”

1. The School will endeavour to increase education, awareness and outreach by using the following best practices:
  - A whole-school approach to creating a safe and caring school
  - Religious and Family Life Education curriculum focused on building relationships
  - Open and effective communication with all members of the school community
  - Emphasis on activities that build a culture of compassion and acceptance, like Roots of Empathy
  
2. The School has identified the following strategies to engage parents in conversations about promoting a positive school climate:
  - Parent representation on Caring and Safe Catholic Schools Team
  - Monthly updates to Parent Council about events happening in the school that support wellness, positive mental health, and accepting school cultures
  - Building relationships with agencies that support this work and inviting them in to offer workshops and programs that target parents

## **II. Evaluation of Evidence**

St. Martha Catholic School recognizes that effective prevention strategies must be evidence-based.

The School will base its interventions, strategies, practices and programs on evidence from the school climate surveys and other relevant information. The school will take the following steps to assess prevention initiatives and strategies:

- Evaluate the evidence to determine the main areas of concern, and identify issues in the physical environment, determine current procedures, and assess the strategies in place based on results of the school climate surveys and other relevant information
  
- Identify children and youth involved in bullying (including the bully, the person being bullied, and those who may have witnessed or been affected by the bullying). The School will consider using a risk assessment approach in this process

- Review and update the School's strategies as a result of gathering new information.
- Share the updated strategies with the school community.
- Placing an emphasis on developing strategies, based on the collected data that are proactive in nature and that focus on the enhancing and development of strengths

### **Pre-evaluation strategy**

1. The School's main issues of concern raised by students, staff and parents in the school climate surveys and based on other relevant information are the following:
  - Ensuring that students can report incidents of bullying safely and in a way that minimizes the possibility of reprisal.
  - Indirect supervision times such as recess, washroom breaks and dismissal.
  - The impact of social media on student relationships and on conflict.
  - The increase in cases of anxiety amongst students and the severity of these incidences.
2. The School's areas of focus with respect to the physical environment are:
  - Ensuring supervision of students inside the school and on school property
  - Limiting student access to areas out of the line of sight of supervisors
  - Ensuring that kindergarten students have the use of an enclosed yard with a dedicated supervisor
  - Creating plans for equal access to fields, equipment, and play structures to limit the potential for conflict
3. The School's current processes for reporting on, responding to, supporting, and following up on issues are as follows:
  - Use of the Board's *Caring and Safe Catholic School Administrative Procedures*;
  - In school incident referral to the Principal

4. Based on a review of the school climate survey results and other relevant information, the following areas have shown success/improvement:

- Feeling safe at school
- The incidents of bullying inside the school have decreased considerably

5. Based on the school climate survey and other relevant data, the School proposes the following action plan to address areas requiring improvement:

Based on information from staff, parents, and students, the school has instituted staggered recess times and more clearly defined the divisional yards. The school has also created a fenced yard directly connected to the Kindergarten classes for their use.

### **Post-evaluation Strategy**

The School will reassess the results of subsequent school climate surveys to verify the efficacy of the positive initiatives implemented. The “post-evaluation phase gathers evidence to test the efficacy of the prevention, responses, interventions or supports provided in order for changes to be made, where necessary.”

At monthly parent council meetings, and at staff meetings, the principal will discuss the effectiveness of the current supervision plan and make adjustments as needed.

## **III. Policies and Procedures**

St. Martha Catholic School recognizes that a whole school approach and the policies and procedures of ALCDSB are important for promoting positive school climate and well-being.

The School also recognizes that the goals of policy initiatives must address the areas of challenge identified in school/Board climate surveys and other relevant data.

1. The School will actively communicate its policies, procedures and guidelines to the school community (including involving the school community in the review and/or development of policies, procedures and guidelines relating to Caring and Safe Catholic Schools, by taking the following steps:

- Ministry of Education Provincial Parent Guide
- Student Agendas

- Electronic, print media and websites
  - Through parent council and parent information meetings
2. The roles/responsibilities of the school community (students, staff, parents, and community members) are as follows:
- To follow the standards of behaviour as outlined in the Code of Conduct. To participate in a whole-school approach to positive school climate in order to ensure that schools are safe, inclusive, and accepting. The Ministry of Education Provincial Parent Guide link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/code.pdf>.

## **IV. Prevention**

The School recognizes that fostering a positive learning environment will help to reduce possible bullying, harassment, and discrimination incidents. The School is committed to taking steps to strengthen prevention measures.

1. The roles and responsibilities of the Caring and Safe Catholic Schools Team (which will be communicated to the school community) are as follows:
  - Team members are responsible for addressing issues identified in the School Climate Surveys and other related data.
  - Team members will take a lead role in promoting the school theme of living in community.
  - Team members will take a lead role in coordinating special events to promote Caring and Safe Catholic Schools throughout the school year.
2. From its evidence-based analysis, the School has identified the following practices and initiatives for promoting positive school climate and well-being:
  - a) Bullying prevention and intervention programs or activities that are evidence-informed and that address the needs identified by the Board or the School:
    - Restorative Circles
    - Roots of Empathy
    - Zones of Regulation
    - Monthly Celebration of Catholic Graduate Expectations
    - Peer Leaders/Lunch Monitors
  - b) Relationship-building and community-building resources that are present in the school, classroom and in the larger community:
    - Promoting connections to caring adults
    - Peer assistance and mentoring programs
    - Pastoral ministry
    - Youth Workers
    - Mental Health and Addictions Nurse

- c) Activities that promote a positive school climate:
- School-wide focus on gospel values and Catholic Graduate Expectations
  - School-wide social justice and charity initiatives
  - Spirit Weeks/Days
  - Parent Information/Education Nights
  - Arts Festival
  - Faith Fair
  - Community Open House and BBQ
  - Student Leadership opportunities
  - Hockey Week Activities
- d) Awareness-raising strategies for students, e.g. social-emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills:
- Roots of Empathy
  - Restorative Circles
  - School Improvement Goals around “Community Focused”
  - Mindfulness training
- e) Awareness-raising strategies to engage community partners and parents in early and ongoing dialogue:
- Completion of community surveys during school year to request feedback and share information
  - Partnership with Community Policing Officer that includes parent and student presentations
  - Monthly letters home
  - Use of Social Media
- f) Strategies for linking curriculum and daily learning for promoting positive school climate and well-being:
- School-wide focus on restorative practice as a whole-school approach
  - School Improvement focus on positive relationships, understanding self, and living in community



- School-wide focus on mindfulness and regular daily practice
- g) Strategies to support and encourage role modeling by caring adults and student leaders within the School and school community:
- Student mentoring and peer helpers
  - Divisional Teams
3. The School has identified the following learning and training opportunities for school staff and the school community that are needed:
- Annual training promoting positive school climate and well-being:
  - Promoting Positive School Climate and Well-being pamphlet for parents (available at the Board's website [www.alcdsb.on.ca](http://www.alcdsb.on.ca));

## V. Interventions and Support Strategies

The School recognizes the importance of using timely interventions and supports with a school-wide approach.

1. To this end, the School will:
  - Use teachable moments within a progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate behaviour, and consider mitigating and other factors;
  - Have in place processes and strategies to identify and respond to bullying when it happens
  - Restorative Practices are in place to support prevention and intervention practices;
  - Communicate the progressive discipline approach to the school community and the procedures in place to support the student.
  
2. The School supports the use, in a timely manner and using a whole school approach, of the following evidence-informed interventions and support strategies:
  - Restorative practices
  - Discussion with Board Social Worker (Mental Health Leader);
  - Referral of students to school Youth Worker
  - Referral to external services (family physician).

**Bullying** - means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where,

- a) the behaviour is intended by the pupil to have the effect of, or the pupil ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of,
  - i) 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
  - ii) 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 pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education ("intimidation")

For the purposes of the definition of "bullying" above, behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.

**Cyber-bullying**

For the purposes of the definition of "bullying" above, bullying includes bullying by electronic means (commonly known as cyber-bullying), 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; and
- c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.