
BULLYING POLICY

ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

Toronto, Ontario

**Approved by the St. Michael's College School Board
June 15/10**

ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

BULLYING POLICY

A. POLICY STATEMENT

St. Michael's College School ("St. Michael's") is committed to providing and maintaining a learning environment where each student's worth and dignity is affirmed. Bullying undermines this goal and prevents students reaching their maximum potential. It is divisive and harmful to St. Michael's school atmosphere. Students are entitled to receive their education free from humiliation, oppression and abuse. Bullying in any form is contrary to the standards of St. Michael's as an educational institution and will not be tolerated. St. Michael's will respond to any Bullying in a swift and compassionate manner in accordance with the terms and provisions of this Policy.

B. DEFINITIONS

1. For the purposes of this Policy, the following terms shall have the following meanings:
 - (a) **Bully** shall mean a person who uses strength or power to coerce others by fear or intimidation or engages in any of the conduct discussed as Bullying and specifically enumerated at 1(b) of this Policy;
 - (b) **Bullying** may include, but is not limited to, any of the following inappropriate and harmful conduct:
 - (i) physical violence, attacks and punitive behavior;
 - (ii) verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs;
 - (iii) threats and intimidation;
 - (iv) extortion or stealing of money or possessions;
 - (v) exclusion and isolation from peer groups and group activities;
 - (vi) religious, racial or ethnic-based verbal abuse;

- (vii) sarcasm, shouting or coercion;
- (viii) gender or sexual orientation-based putdowns;
- (ix) “ganging up”;
- (x) derogatory comments or actions regarding a person’s appearance and/or clothing;
- (xi) damaging, stealing or extorting possessions;
- (xii) pressuring others to behave in a particular way; and/or
- (xiii) cyber bullying.

Bullying can be committed by a group or a single individual. It can involve repeated and systematic harassment and attacks, or a single incident of inappropriate conduct designed to harass or intimidate a victim. Bullying can be perpetrated against an individual or an identifiable group.

Bullying can take many different forms. All of them are unacceptable.

- (c) **Cyber bullying** shall mean the use of electronic information and communication devices, to include but not be limited to, e-mail messages, instant messaging, text messaging, cellular telephone communications, internet blogs, internet chat rooms, internet postings, and defamatory websites, that:
 - (i) Threatens, harasses, intimidates an individual or group of individuals; or
 - (ii) Places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual or damage to the individual’s property; or
 - (iii) Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of St. Michael’s.

For greater certainty, all references to “Bullying” herein shall include “Cyber bullying”.

- (d) **Member** shall mean the directors, officers, administrators, teachers, teacher assistants, school counselors, employees, volunteers and/or any other persons who perform duties, either on a paid or volunteer basis, or on a full-time or part-time basis, for St. Michael’s;

- (e) **Parents** shall mean the natural or adoptive Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of a student of St. Michael's;
- (f) **Principal** shall mean the Principal of St. Michael's and/or his designate(s);
- (g) **Student** shall mean any person who is enrolled at St. Michael's regardless of their age;
- (h) **Victim** shall mean any Student(s) who suffers Bullying.

C. GENERAL POLICY GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES

1. St. Michael's will not tolerate Bullying by, between or against its Students in any of its forms.
2. St. Michael's is committed to providing a learning environment free of Bullying. Students have a right to learn in an environment free from humiliation, oppression and abuse. Bullying in any form is contrary to the standards of St. Michael's as an educational institution.
3. St. Michael's will respond to any Bullying in a swift and compassionate manner in accordance with the terms and provisions of this Policy.
4. The aim of this Policy shall be:
 - (a) to counter views that Bullying is an inevitable part of school life;
 - (b) to provide a safe, secure learning environment for the Students of St. Michael's;
 - (c) to create a supportive climate and break down the "school yard code of secrecy";
 - (d) to provide an environment where a Victim of Bullying can turn to St. Michael's for support and safety;
 - (e) to provide suitable counseling services for the Bully; and
 - (f) to provide a physical environment which engenders good behavioral patterns in Students;

D. PROCEDURES

1. Members

Members should understand that there are no certain ways of spotting a Student who is suffering Bullying. Such things as a change in attitude, attire, personal hygiene, an unexplained illness or absences, a Student not wanting to go to school or participate in activities at St. Michael's, or bruising or torn clothing may all point to Bullying, or may be innocently explained away.

Members are directed to do the following in order to address Bullying at St. Michael's:

- (a) watch for early signs of distress in Students;
- (b) clearly record in writing all instances of Bullying that are observed or reported. The written record should set out all relevant information and action taken and then should be handed to the Principal and/or his designate(s) for thorough investigation. The written record should then be included in the school records of both the Bully and the Victim;
- (c) offer immediate support and help to the Victim;
- (d) use all Students under the Member's supervision as a positive resource in countering Bullying and incorporate discussions about Bullying into the Member's classroom curriculum;

Members also need to be aware that students may go to great lengths to hide the fact that they are suffering Bullying. They may be concerned about retaliation from the Bully if they disclose the Bullying. Alternatively, they may be trying to curry the favor of the Bully by suffering through the Bullying in silence. They may also be afraid that disclosing their suffering at the hands of the Bully will only increase their problems.

When approaching a possible Victim of Bullying you are directed to do the following:

- (i) be patient—take the time to listen;
- (ii) ask questions in a sensitive manner—do not interrogate;
- (iii) show the possible Victim that you care. Do not say anything which may only increase his or her suffering;

- (iv) do not take any action without first discussing the situation with the Principal of St. Michael's, unless a situation of urgency requires immediate intervention in order to protect the safety of a Student;
- (v) do not make promises you cannot keep. For example, if a Student is in real and imminent danger from a Bully, then you must take action even if the Student asks you not to;
- (vi) confirm to the Student that he has done the right thing in telling you about what he has been suffering through;
- (vii) confirm to the Student that Bullying is wrong and that it is not his fault;
- (viii) confirm to the Student that it is the Bully — and not the Student — who will have to change his ways.

If you witness Bullying, do not hesitate to intervene and take steps immediately to separate the Bully from the Victim. You should then report the occurrence of Bullying to the Principal of St. Michael's. If necessary, call the Police.

2. Parents

Often the first people to know or suspect that a Student is suffering from Bullying are the Parents of the Student. Parents are encouraged to assist St. Michael's in countering Bullying. To this end, Parents are encouraged to do the following:

- (a) watch for signs of distress in your child, including an unwillingness to go to school, a sudden change in attitude, attire or hygiene, despondency or lethargy, and/or torn clothing or bruising;
- (b) take an active interest in your child's social life — ask your child about school, his friends, and what is happening to him;
- (c) if you think that your child is suffering from Bullying at St. Michael's, then immediately contact the Principal of St. Michael's;
- (d) keep a written record of what your child tells you and the dates and times of any occurrences of Bullying against your child. This written record should be provided to the Principal of St. Michael's;
- (e) advise your child to disclose the Bullying to a trusted teacher;
- (f) tell your child that there is nothing wrong with him and that it is not his fault;

- (g) do not encourage your child to hit back or retaliate in any fashion;
- (h) contact the Police if you are concerned about the immediate physical or emotional safety of your child;

3. St. Michael's Response

In keeping with the terms of this Policy, St. Michael's will not tolerate Bullying in any form and will immediately respond to any Bullying in a swift and compassionate manner. The response of St. Michael's to Bullying may include, but not be limited to the following specific responses:

- (a) separating the Victim from the Bully. Such separation will involve the removal of the Bully from any possible contact with the Victim. All efforts will be made by St. Michael's to ensure that the Victim will not be inconvenienced by this separation;
- (b) the Principal of St. Michael's will speak to both the Victim and the Bully about the Bullying, but not at the same time. The Victim will be spoken to first and the Bully spoken to afterwards;
- (c) the Parents of the Victim and the Bully will be contacted and advised of the Bullying. They will also be kept informed of the outcome of any investigations and disciplinary procedures implemented by St. Michael's in relation to the Bullying;
- (d) a formal written report of the occurrence, investigation and disciplinary procedure will be placed in the student records of both the Victim and the Bully;
- (e) St. Michael's may require that the Parents of a Bully attend at St. Michael's for a meeting with the Principal to discuss the occurrence;
- (f) where it is the Bully's first occurrence of Bullying, the Bully may be subject to discipline by St. Michael's, which may include, but is not limited to, any of the following specific or combined forms of discipline:
 - (i) an apology in writing to the Victim;
 - (ii) a verbal apology to the Victim;
 - (iii) detentions after school for a period of time to be determined by St. Michael's;

- (iv) banning from activities at St. Michael's for a period of time to be determined by St. Michael's
- (v) exclusion from interaction with other Students at St. Michael's for a period of time to be determined by St. Michael's;
- (vi) suspension from St. Michael's for a limited period of time to be determined by St. Michael's;
- (vii) permanent expulsion from St. Michael's; and
- (viii) reporting of the occurrence to the Police.
- (ix) Where the occurrence is the Bully's second occurrence of Bullying, St. Michael's reserves the right to immediately and permanently expel the Bully from St. Michael's.