

Toronto High School ANTI- BULLYING POLICY

(To be read in conjunction with THS Welfare Policy & DEC associated policies)

1. Rationale

Toronto High School is committed to creating a safe and caring environment in which all students can achieve success, socially as well as academically. As a school community at Toronto High School we do not tolerate bullying or harassment and explicitly prohibit harassment and victimisation of students with disabilities, and of any student who has a friend with a disability. Any bullying incident which comes to the attention of student and staff, is expected to be dealt with according to the policy and procedures outlined below. Managing the incident swiftly and consistently enforces our zero tolerance of such behaviour within the school and promotes a safe learning environment for students and staff. Unfortunately in schools sometimes, things happen that no one either wants, expects or accepts. It is what a school does about them that is the measure of the quality of the school. Our policy is at all times operational under the DEC system wide policy and procedures governing all matters of bullying, its management and eradication.

2. Definition

Bullying and harassment are often thought of separately; however both involve an ongoing issue where a more powerful person or group oppresses a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of 'difference'. These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, age, family status or economic status.

In the DEC Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy Bullying is defined as follows:

"... 3.1 Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

Cyberbullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies. Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and all forms of harassment including that based on sex, race, disability, homosexuality or transgender. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved including bystanders. Conflict or fights between equals or single incidents ARE NOT defined as bullying."

NOTIFYING ISSUES OF BULLYING IS NECESSARY SO THAT TEACHER(S) MAY ACT ON THE ISSUE.

Bullying in any school or workplace setting in society may be:

- Physical (hitting, kicking, pinching, barging, 'accidental' contact)
- Verbal (name-calling, teasing)

- Psychological (standover tactics, body language, signs, gestures or facial expressions to intimidate, exclude, silence or threaten)
- Social (social exclusion, rumours, putdowns)
- Sexual (physical, verbal or nonverbal sexual conduct)
- Extortion (involves student power-play forcing weaker students to surrender food, money or other possessions).
- Damage to property (includes breaking, ripping, hiding, defacing or stealing other people's property).
- Cyber bullying or 'E' Bullying (the manipulation of technology as a means to threaten, harass, intimidate or deliberately exclude others. This includes sending e-mails, text messages, images or involving oneself in chat rooms, blogs or other electronic social communication forums to humiliate or distress others).

Bullying may also be:

- Undertaken directly (eg face to face) or indirectly (eg via mobiles, the internet or 3rd person)
- Motivated by jealousy, distrust, fear, misunderstanding or lack of knowledge
- Connected to an element of threat
- Continuous and continuing over time
- Hidden from adults
- Sustained if people do not take action.

3. What bullying is not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

Mutual conflict

In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly in a one-sided way.

Social rejection or dislike

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

Single-episode acts

Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying. Such incidents are reported and managed through normal school processes.

Indications of those at risk of bullying may include the following:

- Isolation and lack of friends
- Unusual physical characteristics, voice/ accent or name
- Lack of school uniform or unusual physical appearance
- Volatile, sulky or tearful behaviour
- Unusual behaviour which may not be age or peer appropriate
- Persistent lateness
- Family/ community conflict
- Frequent illness and absenteeism
- Poor communication and/ or poor coordination

- Preference for adult company

Signs that may indicate a student may be being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to attend school
- Displaying personality changes
- Being frightened of travelling to and from school
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Frequently complaining of feeling unwell
- Reluctance to enter playground or attend school
- Beginning to do poorly in school work
- Having possessions destroyed or go missing
- Refusing to say what is wrong, or using improbable excuses to explain any of the above.
- Dishevelled appearance

These signs and symptoms are for the whole school community to act upon. At times, greater tolerance and understanding of others underpins the solution to bullying. Greater education around and acceptance of individual differences is essential as well. **Every one is expected to respond and report where they have concerns about what they see, hear or believe to be occurring.**

4. What bullying is

5. Procedures for reporting bullying

Step One - Classroom teacher or teacher on playground duty intervenes into any bullying incident and/or student reports of bullying for immediate investigation. All reports and incidents are taken very seriously and dealt with swiftly. The staff member is to initiate a suitable immediate consequence for the bully. (For example: brief and clear explanation/ discussion; time out from the playground; lunchtime detention; a discussion on why the student's actions were unacceptable). The teacher concerned must offer supportive advice and/ or support for the student being bullied.

Step Two - The teacher who is directly involved in the original incident or matter, records all details of the incident, secures statements from those involved and lists any interventions/ consequences on a STAR DAYFILE and notes the behaviour as 'harassment'. All statements made by students are documented and attached to a printed out DAYFILE. All names of students involved in the incident are clearly recorded, including victim(s), witnesses, bystanders and apparent aggressors.

Step Three - All reports of alleged bullying are to be investigated by the teacher, faculty Head Teacher or relevant Head Teacher on playground duty and if substantiated they are to act in a supportive and thorough manner, documenting the issue, their involvement and action on a further DAYFILE and filed in the **all** student files involved in the incident.

Step Four - If the bullying or harassment continues or escalates the situation will be investigated by a Deputy Principal, Head Teacher Welfare or Year Advisor. Follow up (with the student, other staff and parents where needed) and monitoring is documented. Students (victims, bullies, witnesses and/ or bystanders) are spoken to by Deputy Principals or Head Teacher Welfare in such matters and this is done discreetly yet promptly and thoroughly to assist in the resolution of such matters. Parent understanding and appreciation of this ensures the school remains proactive and resolute in its firm stance.

Note: *As per the DET Suspension Policy, any incident of a serious violent nature must be reported immediately to the senior executive of the school.*

6. Consequences - the bullying register and beyond

The bullying register is coordinated by the Head Teacher Welfare. Parents will be informed and regularly reminded of the register via the newsletter. Students will be informed on assembly.

On the **first STAR referral** for harassment/bullying the student's involved will be notified, counselled and parental/caregiver contact will be made.

On the **second STAR referral** for harassment/bullying consequences may include: letter to parents detailing the incident and warning of possible suspension if a third incident occurs. The student completes the *Level 2 Anti bullying Booklet* and takes it home to discuss and have signed by parents. The student may also be referred to the Head Teacher Welfare who may instigate further intervention from the School Counsellor or Deputy Principal (for example: possible referral to peer mediation; community service within the school or isolation, including removal from the playground during break times, offer of alternate break activities etc).

On the **third STAR referral** for harassment/bullying the student is referred to the relevant Deputy Principal responsible for the year group for more serious interventions which may include after-school detentions, isolation or suspension, where appropriate. If suspended, the student is to complete the 'New Beginnings' work booklet whilst out of school and submit it at the return from suspension interview with the Deputy Principal. The Year Adviser is notified for follow up with the victim and bully. A programme of short term monitoring is established. A short term staff mentor scheme may be established. Police Liaison intervention is arranged if need be.

7. Support for students being bullied

Support for students being affected by bullying at Toronto High School is paramount to ensuring a successful resolution for all parties involved. Support for students may include:

- Discreet interview and supportive investigative approach and/ or interviews.
- Follow up from the Head Teacher Welfare, Year Adviser or other appropriate staff to establish if the bullying has ceased and offer continued support and guidance for both the student and parents
- Counsellor support for victims and bullies. This may include skilling victims and bullies in social and communication skills appropriate to the circumstances.
- Teacher/ Student mentor program. Students are able to nominate a staff member who they feel comfortable speaking with on a regular basis.
- Internal school wellbeing programs such as the boys/ girls education groups. Pastoral Care programs are aimed at developing self confidence, improving self esteem and developing appropriate skills to deal with and identify bullying.
- External programs such as No Limits, Woodrising Counselling Services and Kids Helpline are all community based initiatives to provide positive support, opportunities and education for students on bullying related issues and to develop personal strength and resilience.

- All teaching and non-teaching staff are informed of any concerns regarding suspected bullying or reports of bullying. This is via email, staff meetings, welfare meetings and executive meetings. This not only informs staff but allows all staff to monitor the student behaviour and relationship. This ensures situations are not dealt with in isolation.

8. For parents and caregivers

Listen to your child. Remain open-minded. Ask questions gently. Reflect on what has been done so far. Help your child understand what will be done according to the school's anti-bullying policy. Discuss bullying with your child(ren) and establish that it is not an acceptable practice regardless of how trivial they think the problem may seem.

- As a parent or caregiver, **NEVER** try to deal with the bullies yourself.
- **NEVER** telephone or message or add to online social networking forums involving the perceived bully.
- **NEVER** visit another child's parent/guardian or visit the house of another child.
- **NEVER** approach the alleged bully outside school time, at the immediate end of school or in the community (eg. Local shopping centre) or arrange for others to approach them.
- **NEVER** encourage a physical response. Suspension will result for ANY student who becomes physical in line with the DET Suspension Policy.

Each of these interventions - however well intentioned - typically makes matters worse or more difficult to resolve. They can also backfire badly to sometimes involve Police action directed at the parent or caregiver. Working with and through the school is the most successfully proven method of quicker and greater harmony and resolution. Patience and persistence is required in matters of significant volatility.

Once you have a clear picture of the situation and some idea about how you and the child would prefer to handle the situation, initially contact the school (through your son/ daughter's Year Adviser). It should be noted that instances of cyber bullying are unfortunately becoming increasingly common through technology - usually initially outside of regular school hours. If such behaviour occurs online inside of school hours, utilising school based DEC email systems, there are clear protocols and consequences which will be strictly enforced by the school.

Cyber bullying includes bullying others through personal internet sites, internet chat rooms, social networking websites, text messages, mobile phone calls, mobile phone photographs, home phone calls, electronic imagery, film and the like. We encourage you as parents and caregivers to supervise this interaction as best you can and involve the relevant telecommunication agencies or police if this need arises. Police should be involved in any out of school hours matters. Parents and children need to attend the local Police station to make statements and give reports to Police. The school cannot do this for you on your behalf, but will cooperate fully with the local police in any investigation or follow up. (Outside of normal school hours cyber bullying **MUST** be linked to actions within school times for school policies to be enforced)

The absolute proof of the person responsible for 'cyber bullying' is often problematic for us all granted the numerous variables possible (eg. not seeing who types what, deliberate sabotage of others' e-mail accounts, sharing or theft of e-mail account passwords, edited transcripts of electronic conversations, etc) but the instant removal of your child's interaction and 'visiting' of these known 'cyber bullying' avenues is recommended. Appropriate school action will be taken in

accordance with relevant DEC policies and procedures if and when it becomes a matter at school. If not, it remains a matter external to the school's jurisdiction.

9. Bullying – the role of bystanders

Bullying is a difficult problem that only gets worse when it is ignored. Research clearly demonstrates that bystanders play a significant and pivotal role in the management and addressing of bullying.

- Bystanders are present most of the time (around 85%), where adults are rarely present.
- Most young people feel uncomfortable but very few know what to do to stop it happening.
- Bullying behaviour is reinforced where people watch but do nothing.
- When bystanders do intervene, the bullying is more likely to stop quickly most of the time.

The solutions involve not only students but also school staff and parents. Members of the whole school community may be involved in bullying, may be being bullied or know that bullying is happening.

ALL members of our school community (staff, parents, community members and students) can EACH be part of the problem – or part of the solution.

Together we can continue to make our school a safe, caring and happy place.

NOTIFY – VERIFY – ACT

This policy was last ratified by the School Executive in....