

Section 500: Students

Policy #512: Student Bullying & Harassment

A. POLICY

The School will not tolerate bullying/harassment behavior on school property or at school-related activities, or in any other circumstances (e.g. online) where engaging in bullying/harassment will have a negative impact on the school climate.

B. BACKGROUND

Queen Margaret's School ("The School") is committed to respecting the human rights and personal dignity of all students and staff and recognizes the need to provide a safe learning environment for children, in which the children and the adults who work with them must operate in a climate of trust, mutual respect, and understanding.

The School recognizes that the responsibility for student growth is shared among the students, their parents, faculty, and agencies and services in the broader community. As partners in this community, parents have an important role in fostering and supporting learning and acceptable conduct, as well as recognizing that the student must accept the consequences of his/her actions.

C. PROCEDURE

1. Scope

This policy applies to all QMS students.

2. Authority

It is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure this policy is followed.

3. Definitions:

Bullying is typically a form of behaviour that is repeated, persistent, and targeted directly at an individual or individuals with the intention to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Bullying intervention is a comprehensive and effective response to the bullying incident that takes into consideration all parties involved in the bullying incident. It should provide specific supports for the student who has been bullied, intervention for the student who was bullying, and strategies for responding to students who were directly observing the bullying incident.

Bullying prevention is a whole school approach that heightens expectations for a safe, caring and inclusive school climate. It includes a shared understanding about the nature and underlying causes of bullying and its effects on the lives of individual students and the school community.

Cyber bullying is the use of information and communication technologies, such as e-mail, cell phone and text messages, instant messaging, personal websites and social media, to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to or perceived to harm others.

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Harassment is activity that ignores the dignity and worth of other human beings. It is conduct that embarrasses, intimidates, demeans or humiliates. Harassment is any offensive comment, conduct or gesture which one knows (or should know) is unwelcome. Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- unwelcome physical contact;
- verbal abuse or threats;
- unwelcome invitations or requests;
- unwelcome remarks including jokes, innuendo or taunting about such things as a person's body, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, attire, ethnic or religious origins;
- the creation of an atmosphere that makes one person or a group feel demeaned.

Positive school climate is the sum total of all the personal relationships within the school and is a critical component of bullying/harassment prevention. A positive school climate also includes the participation of the school community, including parents, as well as the broader community.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual comment, look, suggestion, or physical contact made by a person who knows or ought to know that such action is unwelcome. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- any unwelcome physical contact, comment, look or request of a sexually suggestive nature;
- the display of sexually suggestive, pornographic and derogatory materials that cause discomfort for others;
- implied threats or reprisals in reaction to a rejected sexual advance;
- the promise of a benefit, privilege, or promotion in return for sexual favours;
- unwelcome sexual jokes or stories;
- unwelcome spreading of sexual rumours;
- sexting;
- unauthorized sharing of intimate images.

4. Procedures:

The School recognizes that bullying/harassment:

- adversely affects students' ability to learn;
- adversely affects healthy relationships and the school climate;
- adversely affects the school's ability to educate its students.

A. Prevention

Bullying/harassment Prevention can be achieved by reaching the following goals:

- i. the education of all students in areas of conflict resolution, awareness programs, strategies, and how to report bullying/harassment incidents safely and in a way that will minimize reprisal;
- ii. the education of school employees in the recognition of signs of bullying/harassment and intervention strategies;

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- iii. the communication of bullying/harassment prevention and intervention strategies to parents and other members of the school community as outlined in this policy;
- iv. the reporting of all suspected cases of bullying/harassment to the Head of School, Senior School Principal, Junior School Principal or any other appropriate authorities as outlined in the QMS Employee Handbook;
- v. the assistance to victims of bullying/harassment by appropriate counselling and further community referrals as needed;
- vi. the assistance to those who bully/have bullied by appropriate counselling and further community referrals as needed;
- vii. the maintenance and communication of accurate and appropriate documentation and communication of existing policies and procedures;
- viii. the establishment of a monitoring and review process to determine the effectiveness of the policies and procedures.

B. Consequences

A student who engages in the harassment of anyone in the School setting will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct in the QMS Student Handbook. Consequences will be assessed in collaboration with, and at the discretion of, the Head of School, the Senior School Principal, the Junior School Principal and the Director of Student Affairs.

Unlawful or illegal activities will be reported to the appropriate authorities and could result in legal charges.

5. Communications Process

This policy shall be communicated to all QMS students, parents and staff through the student handbooks, on the School's website, and in person.

6. Related Forms

n/a

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