



DIGNITY FOR ALL - WHAT DO WE MEAN?

Our ‘Dignity for All’ Policy means that any form of inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated. This covers direct or indirect verbal, physical, psychological, emotional, racial or sexual harassment or bullying of any kind, or any threat of such abuse. For full definitions, read this complete Dignity for All Document. We define Bullying as:-

“Bullying is negative behaviour, which can be direct or indirect, verbal, non-verbal or physical, initiated by one or more persons against another or others in a systematic and on-going manner. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour can also be described as bullying if they are unjustified and serve to intimidate on an on-going basis.”

UPHOLDING DIGNITY FOR ALL

- Mount Sackville is a place where each person is valued.
- The School encourages high standards of behaviour so that each person is treated with dignity and respect.
- The School encourages us to respect ourselves and treat others with respect at all times.

The spirit of justice in our Mission Statement applies in this Policy:

- We have a right to work, study or engage in school activities in a positive atmosphere, free from inappropriate behaviour, harassment or bullying.
- This protection applies to us whether we are students, teachers, staff or visitors in the school.

With this right comes the responsibility to respect others. The School requires us to help each other in the following manner.

- To take full responsibility for our own behaviour.
- To be sensitive to the well-being of everyone we deal with.
- To be vigilant and to watch out for others - prevention is better than a cure.
- To be prepared to assist others - now, not later on.

- There is no place for bystanders - confide in a trusted person if you have concerns.
- We all have a duty and a responsibility to uphold this policy.
- To respect difference in others, including the vulnerability of other people.

WHO IS PROTECTED BY THE POLICY?

The School strives to foster positive relationships. However, inappropriate behaviour could occur between student with student, student with staff member (teaching or non teaching), staff with staff, parent and staff. If conflict arises, the School will take action to resolve the situation in a prompt and positive way.

The School Commitment to Action

- The School will help those who feel that they have been subjected to unfair treatment.
- All cases will be treated seriously, investigated with care and, as far as possible, confidentiality will be ensured.
- The person making the complaint will be treated with sensitivity and respect. The person against whom the complaint is made will be treated the same way too.
- Every effort will be made to solve the problem informally. If this is not possible, a formal process will be used.
- The School aims to secure a positive resolution for all of the parties involved, insofar as this is possible.

SO WHERE DOES THIS APPLY?

- This applies in the School - or anywhere staff or students represent the School.
- At any social functions, sporting events, training seminars, field trips or school trips where Mount Sackville is represented.
- In writing, on the phone, using e-mail, text messages, the internet or any communications system in any School activity.



SO WHAT TYPE OF BEHAVIOUR IS NOT ACCEPTABLE?

We need freedom from the following types of unwanted negative behaviour:

- **Verbal (slugging and name calling) Personal:** persistent, hurtful, insulting remarks or gestures, foul language.
- **Isolation or exclusion:** Leaving someone out deliberately, or the ignoring of a person by a group.
- **Damage to property:** Interfering with, vandalising, breaking, stealing or hiding personal property.
- **Financial (extortion):** Demands for money accompanied by threats.
- **On the grounds of disability:** Jokes about a person's condition, imitation and mocking. Removal of disability aids.
- **Through technology:** The phone, internet, email, mobile phone or text messages can be used to harass.
- **Physical aggression:** Pushing, shoving, and punching. Kicking, poking, tripping, messing, assault.

WHY DOES IT OCCUR?

Beware! Negative behaviour can occur for any reason or for no reason at all. It can happen to anyone! Any of the following can become a focal point for a bully:

- Physical appearance: weight, height, accent, appearance, colour of hair, stammer, lisp, disability etc.
- Academic ability or performance: whether high or low.
- Age, gender, race, ethnic origin, religion, perceived sexual orientation, family status, marital status, membership of the travelling community.

You need to be clear: It is the person behaving negatively who has the problem, not you. It may seem hard to believe, but they need help too, so the sooner you take action the better.

DOES THIS TYPE OF BEHAVIOUR REALLY HURT PEOPLE?

Whether you are a student or an adult, the effects of bullying and harassment can be very severe.

- Those targeted by a bully can feel isolated and rejected.
- Classmates or colleagues may be aware but avoid support through fear of reprisal.

This is just a brief summary, but some of the effects of inappropriate behaviour over time can include:

- Visible signs of anxiety and stress, reduced concentration, lack of motivation or energy.
- Poor or deteriorating school work or work, anxiety about going to school work (or increased absenteeism).
- Loss of confidence or self esteem, changes in eating pattern - lack of appetite or comfort eating.
- Increased likelihood of alcohol, drug or substance abuse, aggressive behaviour, depression, changes in sleeping pattern, bedwetting, nightmares, sweats.
- Exacerbation of personal symptoms of stress such as skin or respiratory conditions, stomach and bowel disorders, changes of mood and behaviour, panic attacks.

If you feel that that any inappropriate behaviour has caused you to suffer any of the above,

OR

If you notice worrying changes in someone else's behaviour - **CONFIDE, GET HELP!**

GETTING PREPARED-BEFORE YOU TAKE ACTION:

Think about the behaviour that you find offensive - are you clear that there is an issue?

- Note the key facts for yourself - What happened? Who did what? Where? When?
- Who else was there?
- It is important that you are clear on the facts, so be as specific as you can - with dates, times, details, including details of the person(s) involved and any person(s) who might have seen or noticed what was happening.

Talk to any Dean, Tutor or Teacher and get support.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

STAGE 1

- The person offending may be totally unaware of the difficulties they are causing.
- With planning and assistance, bringing the matter to their attention may be all that is required
- We recommend that you seek advice from a contact person you trust and get their advice.

The person assisting you will want to go over the facts, confidentially. Then with their advice, you might:-

- a) Decide to have a private word with the person themselves when the facts are clear. You need to plan when and where you might do this: Make it clear that their behaviour is unwelcome, that you want it to stop, that the situation must be resolved. Finish the conversation. Note in writing what happened for reference.

OR

STAGE 2

- b) However, with the help or intervention of the contact person it is more likely that you would make the person causing the offence aware of the situation within a reasonable period.

They will be asked for their account of the events and will be asked to ensure that any inappropriate behaviour stops immediately.

1. Should the matter not be resolved the contact person would refer it to the Deputy Principal.
2. The Deputy Principal will try to resolve the issue informally within a reasonable period of time.

If your contact person has serious concerns, they may refer the matter to the Deputy Principal from the start.

If the problem has arisen with one of your teachers, the same two steps are available to you. If the issue involves one or other of these staff members, you could also contact the Deputy Principal for advice.

1. As in a) above, clarify the facts and request a word in private with the Teacher.

OR

2. As in b) above, through the assistance of a contact person, make them aware of the difficulty.

STAGE 3

- Where the previous stages have not resolved the problem, or if a complaint is very serious, either the School or the person offended may wish to apply what is called a Formal Process.
- The Formal Process starts with the facts of the case. Written accounts would be needed from both parties, then they would be interviewed, normally by a small panel of people.
- The panel would be set the task by the Principal of dealing with a Formal Investigation and then reporting back with their findings.

If there has been a problem, the School will seek an acknowledgement, an apology and a resolution. There will be follow up and support for both the target and the person who offends. The School may apply sanctions according to the School's Code of Discipline, where appropriate.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN INVESTIGATION?

- If the person's behaviour has been misinterpreted, or if they were unaware of the impact of their behaviour, the investigation would have clarified matters and the case would be closed.
- If the complaint is a valid one, prompt action will be taken to stop the inappropriate behaviour. The sanctions applied will depend on the seriousness of the case and the Code of Behaviour will apply.
- If a case arises, no matter what the outcome, the ongoing relationship between individuals will be monitored over a number of months.
- Persons who behave inappropriately will be expected to take responsibility for their actions; however the school would support them and their families' measures to prevent any reoccurrence.
- Retaliation against anyone who makes a complaint or assists in a case is a SERIOUS offence.
- There will be follow-up to monitor the situation.

Responsibility lies with the Principal and the Board of Management to ensure that this policy is implemented fully.

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