

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Background

Consistent with its mission and vision, the Board of Trustees of the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate School Division is committed to a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe, and inclusive learning and teaching environment for all students and staff, in accordance with *Policy 1: Board Mandate, Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals*.

Catholic schools share a foundational belief that all children are loved by God, are individually unique, and that the school has a mission to help each student to fulfill their God-given potential in all aspects of their persons: physically, academically, socially, morally, and spiritually.

To ensure that all members of the division's school communities work together in an atmosphere of respect for the dignity of all students, this Administrative Procedure is adopted for the safety, health and educational needs of all students, regardless of individual differences.

The Board will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination on the basis of a student's actual or perceived differences. To achieve this goal, the Board requires that its schools, staff, and students promote an inclusive community that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging in accordance with the rights that are guaranteed under the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Section 33(1) d. of the *Education Act* indicates that a board has the responsibility to ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board, and each staff member employed by the board, is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. Staff and students will not be discriminated against, as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* or the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Section 35.1(1) of the *Education Act* outlines regulations for the creation of student groups. Student groups can serve as one means to create inclusive schools and Holy Spirit Catholic School Division supports their formation and operation.

Objectives

The objectives of such groups include the following:

- To support and affirm the dignity of all students in all aspects of school life, regardless of their immutable characteristics;
- To improve understandings of the lives of all students and find ways to increase respect for the dignity of each other in ways appropriate to the school setting;

- To clarify and give definition to appropriate terms, behaviours, and actions to promote greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, the deleterious effects of bullying, harassment, and hate-motivated violence;
- To promote timely and effective responses to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment, and hate-motivated violence to ensure the maximization of safety for all pupils;
- To provide support for all students, consistent with the Catholic Faith, with respect to bullying, harassment, and hate-motivated violence; and
- To encourage students to report incidents of bullying, harassment and bias, prejudice, or hate-motivated violence safely in a manner that minimizes the possibility of reprisal or breach of confidentiality.

Procedures

1. All staff of Holy Spirit Catholic School Division will act and teach as Jesus would do, rejecting and confronting behaviours that cause harm to the student, physically, verbally or by action, based on their race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, or sexual orientation.
2. The Principal, as the school leader, operating within a Catholic framework, is responsible for promoting/maintaining a safe and caring inclusive environment for all students/families regardless of their race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, or sexual orientation.
3. Support student organizations and activities in accordance with Section 35.1 (1) of the *Education Act*. These organizations and activities are dedicated to the inclusive nature of our schools, which serve to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe school community, and are informed by the processes created by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta's (2018) *Life Framework* (see Appendix A). Among other things, these student groups:
 - 3.1 Are sensitive to the safety of those students who may be at-risk.
 - 3.2 Are comprehensive and holistic in their approach to inclusion and open to discussion of a variety of issues, including, but not limited to, bullying, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, discrimination, justice, and respectful relationships and language.
 - 3.3 If one or more students attending a school operated by the Board request a staff member employed by the Board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall:

- 3.3.1 Immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school.
- 3.3.2 Within a reasonable time from the date that the principal receives the request, designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment and the ongoing operation of the student organization or to assist in organizing the activity.
 - 3.3.2.1 The principal shall immediately inform the Board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison and, if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment and the ongoing operation of the student organization at the school.
- 3.3.3 Provide in-service for staff advisor(s) regarding the purpose for the student group, how the group can be supported and to increase their knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes in respecting diversity and understanding issues related to gender identity and/or gender expression.
- 3.3.4 Ensure that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in subsection (3), is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity, and is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities.
- 3.4 The students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization or activity, including the name “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”, after consulting with the principal.
 - 3.4.1 For greater certainty, the principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.
- 3.5 The staff advisor must be present for each group meeting or activity in its entirety.
- 3.6 All materials for use in a group, including materials for school/community awareness must be reviewed and approved by the staff liaison and administration.
- 3.7 All outside speakers invited to participate in a group must be approved by the principal.
- 3.8 Holy Spirit Catholic School Division may disclose personal information only if it is authorized to do so under legislation that governs such disclosure, which, depending on the circumstances, may include the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Education Act*, the *Children First Act*, and the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

4. School staff will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations that are inclusive, respectful and acceptable to the student, while maintaining the student's right to privacy and confidentiality at all times.
 - 4.1 Safe access to a washroom and/or change room shall be provided to any student who desires increased privacy for any reason. Where possible private washrooms shall be made available.
 - 4.2 With respect to athletics, overnight trips, change rooms and locker rooms, etc., the safety and confidentiality of all students will be paramount. All students will be afforded the necessary consideration and accommodations to meet individual needs and rights to privacy.

Legal References:

**Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA):
LIFE Framework "Living Inclusion Faithfully for Everyone"
Education Act, Sections 35.1(1) and 33(1)d
Board Policy 1: Mandate, Mission, Vision, Values and Goals;
Board Policy 14: Appeals and Hearings on Student Matters
Administrative Procedure 104: Harassment
Administrative Procedure 119: Issues Management
Administrative Procedure 130: Public Civility in Schools
Administrative Procedure 314: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe
Learning Environments
Administrative Procedure 315: Student Code of Conduct**