Public Schools Branch

OPERATIONAL POLICY

Public Schools Branch Code of Conduct	
Policy Section	*Policy Number*
Pages	*Approved Date*
Reviewed Date	*Effective Date*
Replaces:	

DRAFT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of the Public Schools Branch Code of Conduct is to establish clear expectations for acceptable behaviour that apply to all members of the school community. The Code of Conduct supports the establishment and maintenance of Safe and Caring Learning Environments by promoting respect of the rights, property, and safety of all.

1.2 This Code of Conduct establishes the framework for identifying, responding to, and addressing unacceptable behaviours in our schools. The intention is to guide all members of the school community to an understanding of the expectations of their own behaviour, as well as their responsibilities in supporting respectful behaviour of others.

1.3 This framework establishes shared philosophy, expectations, and definitions that apply to all members of the school community. It is intended to form the guiding principles for establishing role specific Codes of Conduct for Employees/Volunteers, Students, and Parents/Visitors, which would provide additional operations context relevant to those roles.

1.4 The Public Schools Branch acknowledges its role in promoting acceptable behaviours within its schools. This Code of Conduct serves as the overarching framework to establish normal behaviours that can then be applied to all members of the school community, while leaving room to provide more role specific context for: Employees/Volunteers, Students, and Parents/Guardians.

1.5 All individuals who interact with the Public Schools Branch schools or the school community are expected to comply with this Code of Conduct, whether or not their specific role has been identified within it or other Codes of Conduct. Any individual present on school premises or during school-sponsored activities is subject to the expectations outlined within this Code of Conduct.

2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1 The Public Schools Branch recognizes that school premises and school sponsored activities are places that must support and guide students in their development and promote a safe, caring, respectful and inclusive environment for learning.

2.2 A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, accepted and valued.

2.3 Public Schools Branch community members should be aware of their rights and their responsibility to respect the rights of others.

2.4 The Public Schools Branch understands that Workplace Violence, Bullying, Sexual Misconduct, Harassment, and Discrimination between any members of its community are serious issues with far reaching consequences including:

- **i.** effects on the individuals well being
- **ii.** effects on the relationships between the individual and other community members
- **iii.** effects on the ability of the school to properly educate its students

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 **Acceptable Behaviour -** All members of the school community are expected to act in ways that promote a safe, caring, positive, and inclusive environment. This includes and is not limited to:

- **i.** following applicable laws, regulations, and policies
- **ii.** following school policies and classroom routines
- **iii.** demonstrating honesty, integrity, and respect for others
- **iv.** treating everyone with dignity
- **v.** helping those in need and resolving conflicts peacefully and respectfully
- **vi.** using positive language and supporting a productive learning environment

3.2 **Administrator –** A Principal or Vice Principal of a school.

3.3 **Bullying -** Unwelcome or aggressive behaviour that typically occurs as a repeated pattern, but which also may occur as a single serious incident that has a harmful and lasting effect. It can be carried out by an individual or group. It involves a real or perceived power imbalance, where the person or group engaging in the behaviour uses physical strength, social status, numbers, or other forms of influence to assert power over others. It may be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect, and results in physical, emotional, social, or psychological harm, including damage to personal property. Bullying can take many forms, including:

- **i.** Physical (e.g. pushing, tripping, hitting)
- **ii.** Verbal (e.g. name-calling, insults, threats, sexist, racist, homophobic, or transphobic comments)
- **iii.** Social/Relational (e.g. spreading rumours, intentional exclusion, public humiliation)
- **iv.** Cyberbullying (e.g. harassment or harm through digital platforms)
- **v.** Property-related harm

Bullying frequently occurs in the context of real or perceived differences and may be rooted in bias or discrimination, including but not limited to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, religious discrimination, or ethnic discrimination. It can also be based on body size, appearance, abilities, identity, or other characteristics, with perceptions often influenced by stereotypes perpetuated in broader society.

3.4 **Cyberbullying -** Bullying that involves the use of technology in a manner intending to cause harm to another's wellbeing. It includes, but is not limited to:

- **i.** Forwarding or sharing of hurtful, hateful, or embarrassing messages, images and/or videos via email, texting, social media, or other forms of electronic communication.
- **ii.** The use of communication to mock, threaten, or impersonate an individual.
- **iii.** The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.
- **iv.** Encouraging others to participate in these behaviours as well.

3.5 **Discrimination -** Any adverse treatment based on personal characteristics such as, but not limited to, disability, age, ancestry, class, education, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation.

DRAFT

3.6 **Employee** – For the purpose of this policy, an employee is any individual working at school premises or at a school-sponsored activity.

3.7 **Harassment -** Any unwarranted, offensive behaviour that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. It included any comment, conduct, gesture or display that demeans, intimidates or causes embarrassment to another person.

3.8 **Local Code of Conduct Statements -** statements in addition to this Code of Conduct which are specific to local circumstances relevant to a specific school that are developed by the Administrator(s) through engagement with the school community.

3.9 **Minor Misbehaviour -** Infrequent acts or behaviours that are undesirable but do not meet the definition or severity of unacceptable behaviour.

3.10 **Parent** – For the purpose of this policy, parent includes a legal guardian, and any person in a custodial role for a student.

3.11 **Progressive Discipline** – An approach that makes use of a continuum of prevention programs, preventative actions, interventions, supports, consequences, and strategies which promote accountability and build upon positive behaviours.

3.12 **Restorative Justice -** An approach to discipline and an alternative to punitive responses to wrongdoing which brings together persons harmed with persons responsible for harm in a safe and respectful space, while promoting dialogue, accountability, and a stronger sense of community.

3.13 **School Climate -** The environment, values, and relationships found within a school. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Equity, inclusion, and respect are critical components embedded in the learning environment of a positive school climate.

3.14 **School Community -** The collective group of individuals who are connected to and interact within a school environment. This includes students, teachers, administrators, staff, bus drivers, volunteers, parents, guardians, caregivers, neighbours of the school, visitors and local community organizations.

3.15 **School Premises** – A building or property under the management or operation of an education authority that is used in whole or in part for the instruction of students.

3.16 **School-sponsored Activity** – Any activity, whether conducted on or off school premises, that is sponsored, recognized or authorized by an Administrator or the Public Schools Branch.

3.17 **Student** – a person enrolled in an education program with the Public Schools Branch or required to attend under the Education Act.

3.18 **Threat -** A use of words or actions which is either expressly or implied, designed to instill fear in another person. Threats may include but are not limited to notes, pictures, gestures, telephone calls, electronic messages, or personal property violations.

3.19 **Unacceptable Behaviour -** Behaviour that endangers the well-being of others, damages property, or significantly disrupts the learning of others. Unacceptable behaviours include:

- **i.** Bullying/cyberbullying
- **ii.** Discriminatory behaviour
- **iii.** Illegal activity
- **iv.** Inappropriate language
- **v.** Insubordination
- **vi.** Interruption of the learning environment
- **vii.** Misuse of networks and/or online resources
- **viii.** Physical aggression
- **ix.** Physical violence
- **x.** Racist behaviour
- **xi.** Repeated use of tobacco or vaping products
- **xii.** Sexual assault
- **xiii.** Sexual harassment
- **xiv.** Sexual misconduct

DRAFT

xv. Threatening behaviour
xvi. Unapproved personal mobile device use
xvii. Use or possession of alcohol, cannabis, drug-related paraphernalia, illegal drugs, or weapons
xviii. Vandalism
xix. Verbal abuse

3.20 **Violence -** Any physical interference with another person which has or might reasonably have the effect of impairing another person's health, welfare or safety.

3.21 **Visitor -** A person who is on school premises and/or viewing school sponsored activities or in the course of providing required work, but does not include parents assisting their own child in the school. A visitor is considered a member of the school community while engaging with other members of the school community and as such is subject to the required Codes of Conduct.

3.22 **Volunteer** – A person who undertakes, without pay, a designated task that supports a school-sponsored activity.

4.0 APPLICATION

4.1 The Code of Conduct applies to the entire school community, including:

i. On school premises;
ii. On school buses;
iii. At school-sponsored activities or events;
iv. On PSB property;
v. In other circumstances that could have an impact on the school climate (e.g. online); and
vi. In virtual learning environments.

4.2 Where role-specific Codes of Conduct exist, they are to be interpreted in a manner that is consistent with this foundational Code. In situations where an individual's role is not clearly identified, the expectations set out in this Code of Conduct continue to apply.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 **The Public Schools Branch** is expected to:

i. Establish a process that clearly communicates the Code of Conduct to all members of school communities.
ii. Ensure consistent implementation of the Code of Conduct in all schools, including reinforcement of the importance of reporting incidents by all staff.
iii. Create and maintain role specific Codes of Conduct for those members of the school community where additional guidance is necessary.
iv. Provide annual professional development on the Code of Conduct and preventative and proactive behavioural supports and interventions to prevent occurrences of unacceptable behaviour.
v. Ensure staff are accurately recording, tracking, and reporting incidents of unacceptable behaviour in school settings.
vi. Develop plans for addressing emerging issues or trends related to unacceptable behaviour/school violence.
vii. Monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour in all schools through regular trend analysis to identify areas requiring more attention and support.
viii. Provide alternative arrangements for the education of any student who has been suspended for more than 10 school days.

DRAFT

ix. Provide strategies and resources to support plans for students in need of intensive behavioural supports.
x. Provide training to school staff on how to accurately record incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
xi. Model acceptable behaviours.

5.2 **<u>Administrators</u>** are expected to:

i. Show care for the school community and commitment to well-being and student achievement in a safe, inclusive, and accepting learning and working environment.
ii. Implement the Code of Conduct at their school.
iii. Communicate the Code of Conduct regularly and meaningfully to children, students, staff, parents, and other members of the school community.
iv. Implement positive behavioural interventions and supports to establish clear school-wide expectations.
v. Participate in professional development and be familiar with the Code of Conduct and positive behaviour interventions and supports.
vi. Attend to the health, comfort and safety of the students.
vii. Monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour/school violence at their school to identify areas requiring strategic response.
viii. Report, investigate, and accurately document incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
ix. Provide appropriate supports to those who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviour.
x. Model acceptable behaviours.

5.3 **<u>School staff</u>** are expected to:

i. Empower students to be positive, engaged members of their classroom, school, and community.
ii. Establish classroom routines and manage behaviours in a way that supports children and students with developing new behaviours and strategies to reduce unacceptable behaviour.
iii. Participate in professional development and be familiar with the Code of Conduct.
iv. Report and accurately document incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
v. Attend to the health, comfort, and safety of students under the employee's supervision.
vi. Address student behaviours in the course of their daily work and while supervising children and students in other areas of the school.
vii. Maintain professional and appropriate boundaries in all interactions
viii. Communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents.
ix. Be sensitive to those who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviour.
x. Model acceptable behaviours.

5.4 **<u>Students</u>** are expected to:

i. Be positive, engaged members of their classroom, school, and community.
ii. Attend school regularly and punctually.
iii. Show respect for the rights, property, and safety of themselves and others.
iv. Communicate needs and accept personal responsibility for their actions and behaviours.
v. Refrain from, report, and not tolerate bullying or bullying behaviour directed towards others in the school.
vi. Demonstrate appropriate behaviour that contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.
vii. Respect all school policies and classroom routines.

DRAFT

5.5 **<u>Parents, guardians, and caregivers</u>** are expected to:

- **i.** Maintain open, honest, and respectful communication with school staff.
- **ii.** Support their child's teacher(s) in their efforts to provide an education for their child.
- **iii.** Ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time.
- **iv.** Demonstrate respect for all members of the school community.
- **v.** Support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment.
- **vi.** Become familiar with the Code of Conduct.
- **vii.** Encourage and assist their child in following the Code of Conduct.
- **viii.** Assist school staff in dealing with behaviour issues involving their child.
- **ix.** Contribute to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.
- **x.** Model acceptable behaviours in all interactions, including when advocating for the student and exercising their rights as guardian.

6.0 STANDARDS OF ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

6.1 Respect, Civility, and Responsible Citizenship

All members of the school community **must:**

- **i.** Respect and comply with all federal, provincial, and municipal laws.
- **ii.** Follow the policies and procedures of the Department of Education and Early Years and the Public Schools Branch.
- **iii.** Treat one another with dignity and respect.
- **iv.** Communicate respectfully and in good faith with the education authority and education interest-holders.
- **v.** Respect and treat others equitably, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability.
- **vi.** Respect the rights of others.
- **vii.** Demonstrate honesty and integrity.
- **viii.** Show proper care and respect for school property and the property of others.
- **ix.** Take steps to assist those in need.
- **x.** Seek help from school staff to peacefully resolve conflicts.
- **xi.** Avoid swearing, especially towards those in positions of authority.
- **xii.** Respect the need of others to work in an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching.

6.2 Safety

All members of the school community **must not:**

- **i.** Engage in racist and/or hate propaganda and other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias.
- **ii.** Engage in bullying behaviours, including cyberbullying.
- **iii.** Commit sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct.
- **iv.** Traffic in weapons or illegal drugs.
- **v.** Commit robbery or theft.
- **vi.** Be in possession of any weapon, including firearms.
- **vii.** Threaten or intimidate another person.
- **viii.** Cause injury to any person with an object.
- **ix.** Possess or be under the influence of alcohol, cannabis (unless for medical purposes), or other illicit substances.
- **x.** Provide alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, electronic cigarettes, or other illicit drugs to others.
- **xi.** Inflict or encourage others to inflict bodily harm on another person.

DRAFT

xii. Commit an act of vandalism that causes damage to school property, to property located on the premises of the school or to the property of a member of the school community.

xiii. Record, take or share non-consensual photographs or recordings of members of the school community.

7.0 SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

7.1 Social media is not an appropriate method for voicing complaints against the school and / or members of the school community. **All members** of the school community are expected to refrain from behaviour of this nature and use the appropriate complaint resolution processes.

7.2 All members of the school community must demonstrate responsible digital citizenship by using technology and online communication in a safe, respectful, and ethical manner. This includes respecting the dignity of others online, evaluating information sources critically, considering privacy while online, and contributing positively to online environments.

8.0 RESPONDING TO UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

8.1 The expectations of acceptable behaviour and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour will be routinely communicated to the school community. Preventative and proactive behavioural support strategies will be implemented and communicated to ensure that school communities share a common understanding of acceptable behaviour in all school-related settings.

8.2 Staff will routinely address minor misbehaviours that may not themselves constitute unacceptable behaviour. However, repeated minor misbehaviours may reach the level of unacceptable behaviours if frequent in nature.

8.3 Unacceptable behaviours are to be addressed in a prompt, consistent, and equitable manner. When responding to unacceptable behaviours, staff should:

i. Prioritize the safety and security of students, staff, and other members of the school community.

ii. Take incidents of school violence seriously and respond accordingly.

iii. Respect the privacy and confidentiality of students and families.

iv. Identify and implement reasonable, equitable, and timely responses that:
- Seek to produce constructive behavioural changes.
- Support students in taking responsibility for their actions.
- Assist students with developing new skills and strategies to reduce the reoccurrence of unacceptable behaviour.
- Consider students' developmental capacity, the intent of the unacceptable behaviour and the impact of the unacceptable behaviour on the school, those that experience harm, and other students.
- Are proportional and progressive, up to and including consequences that may include in-school or out-of-school suspensions.

v. Accurately report the incident and response.

vi. Communicate with members of the school community impacted by the incident and provide reassurance that threats to school safety have been addressed without compromising privacy.

vii. Debrief members of the school community impacted by the incident.

DRAFT

9.0 PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

9.1 In the event of a breach of the Code of Conduct, consequences are aligned with the principles of progressive discipline. This approach engages the entire school community in implementing a continuum of interventions, supports, and corrective measures to address inappropriate behaviour and reinforce positive behaviour.

9.2 Progressive discipline is designed to ensure that consequences are fair, corrective, and supportive, rather than solely punitive. This method helps to understand the impact of behaviour and provides opportunities to learn from actions, encouraging better choices in the future.

9.3 The Public Schools Branch recognizes that a response to student behaviours will take into account

- **i.** the student's age;
- **ii.** the student's history (disciplinary history, personal history, recent trauma, etc.);
- **iii.** the student's ability to be accountable for their behaviour;
- **iv.** the student's intention behind the action;
- **v.** the student's ability to control their behavior; and
- **vi.** the student's ability to understand the consequences of their actions.

9.4 Schools are expected to implement a range of interventions and support tailored to the needs of the individual student and the situation. These may include, but are not limited to:

- **i.** Conversations with a teacher, support staff, or administrator
- **ii.** Attendance, performance, or behaviour agreements
- **iii.** Time-outs
- **iv.** Reflection assignments
- **v.** Parental involvement in addressing the issue
- **vi.** Loss of privileges for specific school activities
- **vii.** Peer mediation
- **viii.** Individual or group counselling
- **ix.** Behavioural assessments
- **x.** Detentions
- **xi.** Restitution for damage or stolen property
- **xii.** Participation in community service
- **xiii.** Restorative justice practices

9.5 The aim of progressive discipline is to foster an environment where students are supported in their growth, both academically and personally, through fair and transparent processes. All disciplinary actions will be carried out in alignment with the Code of Conduct and relevant PSB policies and procedures.

9.6 The Public Schools Branch offers guidance on the process of progressive discipline through its Incident Response Guides found in *Safe and Caring Learning Environments Procedure 605.1.* Incidents of unacceptable behaviour that fall within this guidance should be addressed by the processes outlined within these guides.

10.0 SCHOOL SPECIFIC CODES OF CONDUCT

10.1 Schools are to adopt this Code of Conduct as their own School Code of Conduct. However, schools may also utilize Local Code of Conduct statements in a supplemental capacity. Local

DRAFT

Code of Conduct statements may take into account any local circumstances which may apply to a particular school.

10.2 Any Local Code of Conduct statements must be consistent with this Code of Conduct as well as the requirements of any governing legislation, Board policies and/or Board procedures.

10.3 Local Code of Conduct statements must be developed cooperatively with the school community.

11.0 REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BREACHES

11.1 All members of the school community share a responsibility to uphold this Code of Conduct. This responsibility is reflected by a duty to report violations in a manner that promotes accountability, understanding, and respect.

11.2 Role specific reporting requirements will be outlined in the applicable Code of Conduct document, however the following generalized reporting requirements can be assumed to apply to all members of the school community, unless otherwise specified:

- **i.** Promptly report any conduct that would be viewed by a reasonable person as a violation of this Code of Conduct
- **ii.** Report concerns in good faith only, based on observed behaviour or information received
- **iii.** Cooperate fully with any subsequent investigation that stems from the report
- **iv.** Refrain from personal retaliation against any individual who makes a report
- **v.** Avoid intervening in a violation of this Code of Conduct when intervening would be unsafe
- **vi.** Maintain confidentiality throughout the reporting and investigation process by only disclosing the information necessary to complete legal and investigative processes

11.3 Whenever appropriate and safe, individuals should first attempt to address unkind behaviours directly with the person responsible in a constructive and respectful manner. This is done to foster personal accountability and resolution before concerns are escalated.

- **i.** Where an individual does not feel comfortable or a direct resolution is not possible or inappropriate the point of first reporting can default to a trusted member of school staff.

11.4 Where the situation presents an immediate risk (ongoing violence or imminent harm) individuals should prioritize safety and report the incident immediately to the nearest member of school staff without attempting direct resolution.

11.5 Responses to unacceptable behaviour must take into account the student's age, maturity, individual circumstances and frequency of misconduct. The specific circumstances of the situation and of the student must be taken into account when determining appropriate responses to unacceptable behaviour.

11.6 Failure to meet applicable reporting requirements under this Code of Conduct or any other role specific codes may itself constitute a breach of conduct.

12.0 FAILURE TO ADHERE

12.1 Failure to adhere with any aspect of the Code of Conduct will result in reasonable, firm, and progressive consequences. Where practicable, disciplinary action is restorative rather than merely punitive.

DRAFT

12.2 Repeated or severe unacceptable behaviour may result in increased severity of subsequent consequences. It is also important to consider factors such as age, development, and lived experience.

12.3 Special considerations may apply to students with diverse needs if these students are unable to comply with a code of conduct due to having a disability or challenge of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, or behavioural nature.

12.4 The administrator has a responsibility to inform other parties of serious breaches of the Code of Conduct when they occur. These parties may include: staff, parent(s) of student offender(s), parent(s) of student victim(s), education authority officials, police and/or other agencies as required by law, and/or all parents. Prior to issuing any communication, the right to privacy and confidentiality of those directly involved must also be considered.

DRAFT