

SAFETY IN
SCHOOLS

WHAT YOU
NEED
TO KNOW

YOUR DUTIES TO
RESPOND
AND REPORT

Understanding Your Responsibilities

As part of the ongoing effort to make Ontario's schools safer for students and staff, the government has implemented measures to help prevent and address inappropriate and disrespectful behaviours, such as bullying, discrimination and harassment.

The Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act (Bill 157), the *Accepting Schools Act* (Bill 13) and the *Provincial Code of Conduct*, outlined in Ministry of Education Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM) 128, all detail the roles and responsibilities of various school board staff in ensuring that Ontario's schools are safe and welcoming spaces for everyone.

As a teacher, it is important for you to know your responsibilities, and those of other school staff, when it comes to reporting and responding to incidents that have a negative impact on the school climate.

Teachers who do not comply with their responding and reporting obligations are at risk of being disciplined by their employer and/or reported to the College of Teachers for professional misconduct. Serious cases could result in further discipline by the College of Teachers.

The key requirements

Staff

- Staff who work directly with students are required to **respond** to incidents that have a negative impact on school climate.
- Staff includes principals, vice principals, teachers, educational assistants, early childhood educators and other non-teaching staff, such as those involved in social work, child and youth work, psychology and other related disciplines.
- Staff must **respond**, unless doing so would cause immediate physical harm to themselves, a student or any other person.
- Staff are to **report** to their principal incidents that can or will lead to suspension and/or expulsion using the Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part I.

Principals

- Principals are required to **investigate** any incident reported by a board employee that could lead to a student being suspended or expelled, including bullying.
- Principals are required to **communicate** with teachers and, where appropriate, other board employees who reported the incident, to inform them about the results of the investigation into the incident.
- Principals are to **contact** the parents of victims of these types of incidents unless in his/her opinion the reporting would put the victim at further risk.
- Principals are required to **notify** the parents of a student who has harmed another student about the incident, and invite the parents to discuss the supports that will be provided for their child.
- Principals must **provide** training and information to teachers and other school staff on an annual basis about bullying prevention and promoting positive school climates.

School Boards

- School boards are required to **inform** students, parents, teachers and other school staff, and other members of the school community of the terms of the *Provincial Code of Conduct* and their school board codes of conduct.

Parents, Volunteers, Community Members

- Parents, volunteers and community members may also **report** incidents that have a negative impact on the school climate.
- While on school premises or at school-related activities and events, parents, volunteers and community members must **abide** by the provincial and local school board codes of conduct.

What types of incidents must be reported and/or responded to?

Examples of inappropriate and disrespectful behavior include racist, sexist or homophobic comments, graffiti, vandalism, bullying or cyberbullying, as well as any other activities or behaviours that can lead to suspension or expulsion or are contrary to the provincial or local code of conduct.

Behaviours that must be considered for suspension or expulsion must be reported.

Student behaviours that can lead to suspension include:

- Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person
- Possessing alcohol or illegal drugs
- Being under the influence of alcohol
- Swearing at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority
- Committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the pupil's school or to property located on the premises of the pupil's school
- Bullying and cyber-bullying
- Any other activities for which a student may be suspended as identified in school board policy

Student behaviours that will lead to suspension and possible expulsion include:

- Possessing a weapon
- Using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person

- Committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner
- Committing sexual assault
- Trafficking in weapons or illegal drugs
- Committing robbery
- Giving alcohol to minors
- Using an object to threaten or intimidate another person
- Causing injury to any person with an object
- Being in possession of, or be under the influence of, or providing others with, alcohol or illegal drugs
- Inflicting or encouraging others to inflict bodily harm on another person
- Engaging in hate propaganda and other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias
- Any other activities where, under the policy of the board, the principal must suspend a pupil and conduct an investigation to determine whether to recommend to the board that the student be expelled

Whether these behaviours occur at school, at a school-related activity, or off school property, they must be reported if they will have a negative impact on the school climate.



Responding

Responses may include:

- Identifying the behaviour
- Asking the student(s) to stop the inappropriate behaviour
- Explaining why the behaviour is inappropriate and disrespectful
- Asking the students to change their behaviour in future
- Any other process as identified in the progressive discipline continuum

Responding when incidents take place can prevent their escalation and repetition.

Reporting

All school board employees are required to report in writing to their principal any incident that must be considered for suspension or expulsion using the **Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part 1**. Filling out the form is essential to providing an accurate record of student behavior.

Don't have a copy of the Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part 1? Speak to your principal or the OECTA staff representative in your school.

Make a copy of the form for your records. On your copy, for confidentiality purposes, the names of students should be removed. The reporting form will have a numeric identifier attached.

For discipline to be effective and schools to be safe, teachers and administrators need a clear and detailed record of **all** unacceptable behaviour.

Reporting will help ensure that all students receive appropriate supports or interventions. It will also enable schools to address parents' questions and concerns about their children's behaviour or victimization.

To learn more,
visit **catholicteachers.ca**

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**Counselling and
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