**FISA Policy Revision**  October 2019

**Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy
(formerly Discrimination Protection)**

Background:

Independent schools represent a wide range of philosophical, pedagogical, and faith-based perspectives. Schools are generally independently operated by an authority, registered as a Society, with the BC Registrar of Companies, and have a governance board consisting of individuals elected or appointed by the authority.

Each authorized independent school in British Columbia is required to abide by Schedule 1 of the *Independent School Act*. It states that there are basic requirements for independent schools requesting certification as Group 1, 2, 3 or 4 classifications. Article 1 states that:

Before issuing or renewing a certificate of group 1, group 2, group 3 or group 4 classification to an authority the inspector must be satisfied that

a) no program is in existence or is proposed at the independent school that would, in theory or in practice, promote or foster doctrines of

 i) racial or ethnic superiority or persecution

 ii) religious intolerance or persecution

 iii) social change through violent action, or

 iv) sedition,

b) the independent school facilities comply with the enactments of British Columbia and the municipality or regional district in which the facilities are located, and

 c) the authority complies with this *Act* and regulations.

In addition to abiding by Schedule 1 of the *Independent School Act*, it is important that independent schools ensure that students feel connected through the relationships that are created between students, staff, and parents that are part of the school community.

Students who feel respected, accepted and connected tend to be physically and mentally healthier, and perform better academically. They tend to have fewer incidents of violent or “acting out” behaviour, be less sexually active, have a lower rate of “experimentation”, with or “use” of, drugs and alcohol (*Preventing Bullying and Ensuring Safe and Caring School Communities* – Level 1; Province of British Columbia, 2013, p 13).

Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy (for students)

Furthermore, the [Inspector’s Order 1/16](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/legislation-policy/legislation/schoollaw/k/i1_16.pdf), effective September 7, 2016 requires that each independent school establishes and implements a harassment and bullying prevention policy. The following template is designed to assist FISA member schools in the creation of a harassment and bullying prevention policy.

Rationale:The safety and wellbeing of children in independent schools is of paramount consideration. Children deserve to be protected from abuse, neglect, bullying, harm or threat of harm. Therefore, [ABC school] will ensure that children attending our schools will experience an orderly learning environment that enables every child to feel safe, accepted and respected.

Commitment to Protect: [ABC school] will continuously develop strategies to make students feel valued, respected and connected within our school community. This will include the protection of the students’ physical safety, social connectedness, inclusiveness as well as protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of their gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, while remaining consistent with [ABC school’s] faith-values, cultural perspectives and philosophical values (note: include reference to faith-values, cultural perspectives and philosophical values as appropriate to your school).

Commitment to Shield against Retaliation: [ABC school authority] will take all reasonable steps to prevent retaliation by a person against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of this policy.

Further Policy Requirements

* Include one or more statements (specific to your school) about what is
1. Acceptable student behaviour, and
2. Unacceptable student behaviour, including bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, threatening or violent behaviours

while at school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school environment;

* Include one or more statements about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour, which must be take account of the student’s age, maturity and special needs, if any.

Important: WorkSafe BC requires that all employers, including independent schools, implement procedures for responding to reports or incidents of bullying and harassment against employees. See requirements here <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/hazards-exposures/bullying-harassment>. Independent schools are encouraged to create two separate Harassment and Bully Protection policies; one which protects students per Ministry of Education requirements and a separate policy which protects employees per WorkSafe BC requirements.

Building a Positive School Community (Optional policy inclusion)

There are many strategies and activities that can be employed within a school to enable students to feel safe, accepted and respected. The following suggestions are provided to facilitate a conversation on strengthening the learning environment for children.

* Engage students in the decision-making process of policies and activities that build community
* Engage parents in the educational program and school life of their children
* Encourage parents to share their culture and expectations
* Promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families and communities
* Be proactive in connecting with students that are experiencing academic or social issues
* Communicate expectations, values and norms that support positive health and academic behaviour in the school community
* Acknowledge students by name
* Be visible within the school during class transitions, breaks, before/after school
* Find ways to acknowledge students for their contributions in the school community, including those where improvement comes only in small increments.