

Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy Template

(formerly Discrimination Protection Policy 2016)

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*).

Furthermore, the [Inspector’s Order 1/16, effective September 7, 2016](#) requires that each independent school establishes and implements a harassment and bullying prevention policy.

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, FISA BC independent school member associations and their affiliated schools will ensure that children attending these schools will experience an orderly learning environment that enables every child to feel safe, accepted and respected.

Commitment to protect: Independent schools will continuously develop strategies to make students feel valued, respected and connected within the 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 the independent school's faith-values, cultural perspectives and philosophical values.

Further Policy Requirements

- One or more statements about what is
 - (i) Acceptable behaviour, and
 - (ii) Unacceptable 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;
- 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;
- A commitment that the authority will take all reasonable steps to prevent retaliation by a person against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of the policy.

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.