SMUS K-12

Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy

Supporting the Social and Emotional Development of our Students: Policy and Programmes

Our Mission

Our school seeks the excellence in all of us, with passion and compassion. We are a community shaped by the pursuit of truth and goodness, providing outstanding preparation for higher learning and for life.

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Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

SMUS recognizes the need and obligation to provide a safe and supportive environment for all members of the school community who are transgender and/or gender non-conforming. The School is committed to the rights and responsibilities of all students and staff to live and learn free from fear, discrimination and harassment, while also promoting pro-active strategies and guidelines to ensure that transgender and gender non-conforming students are welcomed and included in all aspects of education and school life.

Key Terms

1. Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with an assigned gender at birth. Other similar terms include transsexual and trans. It may also be an umbrella term that includes people who are otherwise gender-nonconforming.

2. Trans*: When the asterisk is put on the end of trans*, it expands the boundaries of the category to be radically inclusive. It can be understood as the most inclusive umbrella term to describe various communities and individuals with nonconforming gender identities and/or expressions.

3. Gender Identity: A personal, deeply-felt sense of being male, female, both or neither. Gender Expression: How a person expresses his or her gender through outward presentation and behaviour. This includes clothing, hair style, body language and mannerisms.

4. Gender Dysphoria: An intense and persistent discomfort with the primary and secondary sex characteristics of one's assigned birth gender.

5. LGBTQ+: An acronym and umbrella term used to denote a community of people with varying sexual and gender identities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited, intersex, and asexual.

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Supports

In addition to the supports outlined below, specific provisions may be required to enable the full participation of students, support the expression of their identity or protect their safety. SMUS will endeavour to individualize and accommodate in a manner that meaningfully involves the student in the decision making process.

1. Staff Professional Development – SMUS will provide and support professional development opportunities in order to develop awareness, knowledge and skills and to foster understanding so that all learning environments are supportive of those students who identify as LGBTQ+.

2. All trans* students will be addressed by the names and pronouns they prefer.

3. Whenever possible, at the request of a student or the student's parent, the student's preferred name and/or gender identity will be included on class lists, timetables, student files, identification cards and communications between the school and home.

4. Students have the right to wear their uniform in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression. The school will work with individual families and students to determine what is appropriate for the student and the School.

5. With student safety and comfort at the core of the conversation, the use of washrooms and change rooms by trans* students will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the student and parents. The School has gender neutral washrooms available on all three campuses.

6. With student safety and comfort at the core of the conversation, SMUS recognizes that students have the right to access bathroom and change room facilities that corresponds to their gender identity or the group in which they are most comfortable.

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SMUS is a caring and respectful school. We strive to be open, inclusive and a culturally affirming centre of learning and community. In all our endeavours we work to ensure that students feel secure and accepted, and strive to build quality relationships between students, staff, parents and the greater community. Codes of conduct, general principles of behaviour and student rights and responsibilities are described in the handbooks at Senior, Middle and Junior School levels as well as on the SMUS website.

While conflict is considered a normal part of peer interaction and a student's academic discourse, SMUS views peer conflicts that use mean behaviour and/or bullying as unacceptable.

Our school places a strong emphasis on ethical behaviour, social responsibility and character development, so that students are equipped to understand conflict and respond to it in productive and peaceful ways. It is important to note that most of our energies are devoted to developing and shaping character rather than reforming it and wherever appropriate, we seek to rebuild damaged relationships through restorative practices.

Teachers at SMUS include character education throughout the curriculum. Practices such as empathy, inclusiveness, sharing, cooperation, leadership and of course the Pillars of Service, Honesty, Respect and Courage are highlighted continuously. Character education such as this is the foundation work for our policy supporting the social and emotional development of our students while also discouraging inappropriate responses to peer conflict such as mean behaviour and bullying.

2. Key Terms

Understanding and defining the nature of any negative interaction enables our team of educators to respond appropriately. It helps teachers and administrators identify whether the conflict is bullying or something else that requires a different response. Each type of incident is a challenge for a child and each type of behaviour demands a different response from leaders within the school.

1. Peer Conflict

Conflict between peers is a normal and expected part of growing up. Children and adolescents will have times when they disagree with their peers and are unable to arrive at a positive solution to a problem. If a situation is one of peer conflict, these children or adolescents will likely:

  i. Usually choose to play or hang-out together.

  ii. Have equal power in the relationship.

    iii.   Both be equally upset.

    iv.   Both be interested in a positive outcome.

    v.   Be able to work things out (possibly with an adult).

Adults can respond by helping the children talk it out and to see each other's perspective. This is often referred to as conflict resolution.

2. Mean Behaviour

In an attempt to assert themselves, children and adolescents will often "try out" behaviours. This occasionally comes in the form of saying or doing mean things such as making fun of others, using a hurtful name or excluding another child in some fashion. If it is mean behaviour then usually three elements are present:

    i.   It is not planned.

    ii.   It may be aimed at any child nearby.

    iii.   The child being mean may feel badly when an adult points out the harm they have caused.

Mean behaviour should not be ignored or deemed "that's just kids being kids". Adults should respond quickly, firmly and respectfully to stop the behaviour, to let kids know their actions are hurtful and to re-direct their behaviour.

3. Bullying Behaviour

    a. Bullying behaviour has three key elements:

        i.   Power Imbalance – One child clearly has power over the other(s), which may be due to age, size, social status, etc.

        ii.   Intention to Harm – The purpose of bullying behaviour is to harm or hurt others. It is intended to be mean and is clearly not accidental.

        iii.   Repeated Over Time – Bullying behaviour continues over time and gets worse with repetition. There may be a real or implied threat that the behaviour will not stop and in fact will become more serious.

Adults must address the bullying behaviour to ensure the safety of the student who has been targeted. This process will include helping the child who has been bullying to take responsibility for their actions and to change their behaviour.

Following an incident where bullying has taken place, repairing damage takes time. It is essential that all parties feel sufficiently safe and comfortable before restorative practices to re-build relationships are put in place.

b. Four Types of Bullying Behaviour

    i.   Physical – Hitting, kicking, pushing, property damage, etc.

    ii.   Verbal – Name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, verbal abuse

    iii.   Social/Emotional – Includes behaviours intending to diminish a person's reputation or cause humiliation. For example:

- Lying and/or spreading rumours about a person

- Negative non-verbal behaviours

- Mean jokes intended to cause embarrassment or humiliation.

- Social exclusion

- Damaging another's social reputation or social acceptance.

    iv.   Cyber – Is covert or overt behaviour using digital technologies

- Harassment via mobile phone

- Taunting or humiliation via social media sites (facebook, twitter, ask.fm, etc.)

- Verbal or emotional bullying through chat rooms, instant messaging or texting.

- Posting or sending photos of another person without explicit permission.

Adapted from the Social Responsibility and Diversity Team – Vancouver School District #39

3.   SMUS Response to Mean Behaviour and Bullying

If instances of peer conflict, mean behaviour and/or bullying are reported, staff respond promptly and seriously to ensure that issues for both the victim and the offender are dealt with positively and appropriately. Interventions are tailored to meet the unique needs of the situation. Wherever appropriate, we seek to rebuild damaged relationships through restorative practices, and support students in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will prevent a recurrence. Our approach is to look for opportunities to educate where appropriate and to restore relationships when possible. This may include meetings between staff members, parents and students which could lead to meetings between students who are in conflict. Staff may seek out the help of the School Counsellors, Chaplain or Administrators during this process.

If the offence is more serious in nature or if negative behaviours continue, the School may take a more punitive approach. These actions may include but are not limited to:

- · Guidance with a warning of consequences should the behaviour continue

- · Suspension (in-school or out)

- · Expulsion

Additionally, the school may involve experts from the community and if necessary, the local police.

Roles and Responsibilities

1.	**The School**
	The School shall identify a "safe school coordinator" to liaise with the Ministry of Education. Support positive discipline practices, effective intervention strategies and appropriate responses to student conflict.
2.	**The Directors and Assistant Directors**
	Develop, implement and review the Policy Supporting the Emotional and Social Development of our Students. Ensure teaching staff are aware of the policy and provide guidelines for reporting behaviours. Ensure the ongoing promotion of a positive school culture in a manner suitable to their respective campuses. Ensure that all students and parents are educated with respect to peer conflict, mean behaviour and bullying and have access to this policy. Provide access to relevant professional development for teachers. Manage incidents of peer conflict, mean behaviour and bullying in a consistent manner that is unique to each situation. Maintain records of peer conflict, mean behaviour and bullying in a secure location and ensure information is shared between campuses.
3.	**Staff**
	Look to foster a positive school culture. Demonstrate high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our students.

	Teach about peer conflict, mean behaviour and bullying in class, on the playground, extracurricular settings and boarding environments ensuring that it permeates our campuses. Be alert to signs of conflict between our students. Listen to children who are reporting any form of conflict, record what they say and seek to support them in a developmentally appropriate manner. Monitor incidents to detect patterns of behaviour. Report serious or repeated conflicts to a school Director or Assistant Director.
4.	**Students**
	Will work together (with an adult if necessary) to work through situations of peer conflict. Will refrain from any mean behaviour and/or bullying even at the risk of losing popularity. Will seek to act as a positive "up-stander" rather than a passive bystander in instances of mean behaviour or bullying. Report to a staff member or the online reporting tool any instances of bullying.
5.	**Parents**
	Parents will watch for signs of distress or unusual behaviour and report any concerns to the school in a manner they feel comfortable with. Have open communication with their child about their life, social relationships and decision making including their on-line behaviour and digital footprint. Advise their children to report any social concerns to an adult they trust at the School (classroom teacher, Homeroom teacher, Assistant Director or Director). Parents who have concerns that their child is the target of mean behaviour/bullying or that is involved in a peer conflict should communicate with the Assistant Director or Director immediately. Work with the School and be educated if their son/daughter is implicated in a situation of peer conflict, mean behaviour or bullying.

The BC Ministry of Education is taking strong action against bullying behaviour. Their site www.erasebullying.ca provides excellent information, resources and support for parents, students and school staff, and is also set up for our students as a tool for the anonymous reporting of bullying.

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Programmes and Practices Supporting Social-Emotional Development

Across all three SMUS campuses, our core values and beliefs of Respect, Courage, Honesty and Service are central in guiding our practices and are embedded in wide range of programmes that support student's social/emotional development, build resilience and promote positive, healthy relationships. These practices and programmes are integrated in a developmentally appropriate manner to provide for continuity and consistency between the grades. In addition, the School's focus on fostering a positive and respectful culture within our community is at the core of the anti-bullying programme. Students are provided with a myriad of opportunities to connect in meaningful with each other as well as with adults who serve as role models, mentors and advisors. By nature, pastoral care is at the forefront of what we do and much research has shown that this type of focus is the best prevention for any form of social cruelty.

Each of our three campuses has developmentally appropriate programmes designed to meet the needs of its students.

Senior School
The senior school promotes pro-social behaviour in a number of ways.

Connecting in Homeroom
- Homeroom Groups meet at least twice weekly with their Homeroom Advisor. This teacher's focus is on the pastoral care of his/her students and they serve a key role in creating a positive adult relationship with these students. Topics of pro-social behaviour are regularly discussed in this small group format.

Educating through Grade Meetings and Chapel
- Regular grade meetings take place where issues relevant to the grade can be discussed in an open forum, presentations can take place and students have a chance to engage in a positive manner.
- Chapel occurs twice weekly and messages of positive engagement and relationships are consistently reinforced.

Educating through Role Modelling
- The peer counselling programme links student leaders with those in need and provides yet another venue for positive social contact.
- The Link Leader Programme trains grade 12 students to introduce grade 9 students to the Senior School. Beginning on opening day, a small group of students new to the school is introduced to a grade 12 leader who serves as a role model and student leader for the duration of the year.

Educating with Guest Speakers
- Regular guest speakers are invited to the Senior campus on a variety of topics on pro-social and anti-bullying behaviours. Personal safety, online safety and digital citizenship are all regularly covered in this manner.

Middle School

The Middle School promotes pro-social behaviour in a number of ways.

Educating through student advisory

- Teacher Advisor Groups (TAG) meet on a daily basis with extended meeting times throughout the term.
- Each member of a TAG shares a common SMUS house to promote school spirit and an integrated approach to school and community service.
- Advisors provide 1:1 support to students. The advisor focuses on the pastoral care of his/her students and serves a key role in creating a positive relationship with these students and their families.
- Multi-grade groupings promote peer support
- Families are connected to one advisor with siblings placed in the same TAG

Educating within classrooms

- Full Middle school events (weekly chapel and assembly both of which highlight the pillars and character education).
- School Based Team meetings which reflect on the success and struggle of individual students.
- Grade meetings with the school administration which allow further opportunity to engage in discussions of positive relationships.

Modeling and learning within extra-curricular leadership opportunities

- WEB programme (Where Everybody Belongs) trains Grade 8 students to mentor and welcome Grade 6 students through their first year
- Student Ambassador programme trains Grade 8 students to welcome new Grade 7 and students to the school
- Grade 6 Girls and Boys club where Grade 8 students work to engage and mentor Grade 6 students
- Peer Coaching program provides access to Senior School Peer Counsellors and provides middle school students opportunities to build social and emotional connections with strong role models in our community.

Educating through guest speakers

- speakers and workshops for teachers/parents and students to promote positive digital citizenship and online safety

Junior School

The Junior School promotes positive emotional and social development in a number of ways:

The Virtues Programme
- This programme teaches our students virtues that encourage caring, compassion, respect, kindness and the development of character. A school noticeboard is used to celebrate a different virtue each month and students provide ideas about ways they demonstrate that particular virtue. This is a proactive programme that aims to prevent bullying behaviours by teaching the students positive qualities.

The Wits Programme
- This programme build social competence, promotes problem solving and teaches our students strategies on how to deal with challenging interpersonal situations (including bullying). W= Walk away, I= Ignore, T= talk it out, S=seek help. Children learn problem solving skills to help them determine whether a problem is a "fly-by" or a "keeper", so that they can use their "WITS" effectively in situations involving conflict.

The Buddy Programme
- All younger children in the school are connected with a buddy In an older grade. These cross-age pairings build understanding, shared meaning and enhance children's empathy towards each other.

Connecting in Homeroom
- Each student has a Homeroom teacher who tends to their daily academic, social and emotional needs, and who integrates character development and social-emotional learning throughout the curriculum. This teacher is likely the first person to offer support to a student who Is experiencing difficulties; that teacher will then decide whether to seek advice / support from the administration or school counsellor.

Assessing Student Needs in School Based Teams
- Teachers can refer a student who is experiencing difficulty to the School Based Team (SBT); the student's needs are then discussed by a team of professionals that will include the Counsellor, an Administrator, Homeroom Teacher, and any other specialist teachers who would like to provide input. A plan to support the student is then created and monitored.

Educating within the Classroom
- Each grade has timetabled a life skills block. In these classes the teacher delivers a curriculum that addresses topics such as bullying, friendship development, resilience and pro-social skills. Life skills such as problem solving to resolve a conflict or self-regulation in order to manage their emotions help the student regulate and monitor their feelings and emotions.

- The Junior School has a Counsellor that support to students and parents in situations of conflict, grief, separation, relationship building and social skills development. The counsellor is available to speak with families, leads parent education sessions, provides materials, links families to additional resources as needed.
- Once per week all Junior School students attend Chapel. This multi-denominational service is used to teach the students about positive social behaviours, virtues, etc.

Educating in the Extra-Curricular Setting
- At each recess, the Junior School has at least two teachers patrolling the playground and sports field. They are there, not only to ensure student safety, but also to provide support to students experiencing social difficulties. The teachers will help the students to use the skills they have developed in class and in the programmes taught in Life Skills (WITS, etc). If social difficulties arise, the playground supervisors will make the appropriate intervention.
- The school offers many sports teams and these are an important means to develop social skills (confidence, resilience, emotional self-regulation, impulse control, sportsmanship). The Junior School Sports Teachers play an important role in mentoring and teaching students appropriate behaviours.

References

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"Greater Victoria School District Policy and Regulations". Greater Victoria School District Regulation 4305, 2016. Web. 23 October. 2016.