

Student Bullying and Harassment Policy

The Keswell School is committed to providing a respectful and supportive learning environment that recognizes individual differences and promotes dignity, inclusion and community. The school adopts this policy as part of its effort to provide for a prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of bullying and harassment of students.

Inquiries about this policy may be directed at the Executive Director or their designee.

Definition:

Bullying and Harassment

Generally, bullying and harassment are defined to include conduct or threats that create a hostile or abusive environment; interferes with a student's participation in or benefit from a program or school activity, educational performance or well-being; causes fear for safety or risks substantial disruption – including off-property behavior. This includes cyberbullying (through any form of electronic communication).

A hostile or abusive environment exists when bullying and/or harassment:

- Unreasonably and significantly interferes with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or harms the student's mental, emotional, or physical health;
- Reasonably causes, or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for their physical safety;
- Reasonably causes, or would reasonably be expected to cause, physical injury or emotional harm to a student; or
- Occurs off school property and creates, or is likely to create, a risk of major disruption within the school, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation, or abuse could reach school property.

For this definition, "threats, intimidation or abuse" include both verbal and nonverbal actions (for example, slurs, jokes, insults, epithets, teasing, written words or symbols, posters, drawings, gestures, texts messages, online posts or e-mails, social exclusion, physical acts, etc.).

School property

Means any school building or structure, athletic facilities, playground, parking lot, or land contained within the property boundary line of the school, and school buses.

School functions

Mean any school-sponsored extracurricular activity or event.

Complaint and Reporting Procedures:

The following procedures are established to promote and maintain a safe, respectful and professional learning environment for all students at the School, free from bullying and/or harassment.

Students who have been subjected to bullying and/or harassment, and parent(s)/guardian(s) whose children have been subjected to such behavior, are encouraged and expected to make verbal and/or written complaints to appropriate school personnel.

- All School employees who witness bullying and/or harassment or receive a report (whether verbal or written) of such bullying and/or harassment involving students, must notify the Executive Director or the School's designee, orally within one (1) school day after the School employee witnesses or becomes aware of the bullying or harassment.
- No later than two (2) school days after making the oral report, the School employee must file a written report with the Executive Director or the School's designee.

Investigation Procedures:

The Executive Director or the School's designee will lead or supervise a prompt and thorough investigation of all reports of bullying and/or harassment.

To the extent possible the Executive Director or their designee will endeavor to keep the reporting employee's or student's concerns confidential.

During the investigation generally, the Executive Director or their designee will:

- Interview the victim, alleged offender and witnesses if any.
- Review evidence and gather all pertinent facts.
- Document the school's findings regarding the complaint.
- Document recommended follow-up actions and remedies, if warranted.

If the investigation verifies an incident of bullying and/or harassment, the Executive Director or their designee will:

- Take immediate action to ensure that any bullying and/or harassment has stopped.
- Ensure the safety of the victim student(s).
- Ensure that any person who in good faith reported the incident is not retaliated against.
- Ensure that any person who participated in the investigation is not retaliated against.
- The Executive Director or their designee is additionally responsible for reporting the final outcome of the investigation (**not** the specific nature of corrective action taken) to both the victimized student and the alleged offender, as well as their respective parent(s)/guardian(s).

Student Disciplinary Consequences and Remediation

Responses to student violations of this policy will be age-appropriate and will include both consequences and appropriate remedial actions. Consequences for a student who commits an act of bullying and/or harassment will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the student's developmental age, and the student's history of problem behaviors. All consequences will be consistent with the School's disciplinary rules and procedures.

Severe or repeated instances of bullying, and/or harassment may result in suspension or expulsion.

In cases involving reports of alleged staff-to-student bullying and/or harassment, investigation and responses will follow applicable School policies and procedures, including those outlined in the employee handbook.

Publication of this Policy

At least once during each school year, all employees, students, and parents/guardians will be provided with a written or electronic copy of this policy, or a plain-language summary of it. Additionally, the School will maintain a current version of this policy on its website at all times.