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SAFE SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

Bullying/Violence/Harassment/Discrimination Prevention and Intervention Measures

Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence Plan (Act respecting private education) – updated July 2022

ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOL SITUATION

School Portrait

Villa Maria is a private co-educational high school focused on student success. The student enrollment surpasses 1, 800 and we have a staff of nearly 120 teachers, student supervisors and educational professionals who provide guidance and assistance and interact with students on a daily basis. Through our educational mission, we are committed to instilling within our English and French sector students:

- academic excellence;
- a bilingual command of both languages;
- a strong science background and extensive knowledge of information technology and multimedia;
- cultural and ethical values;
- an openness to the arts and other cultures;
- self-respect, respect for others and respect for the environment;
- special attention to social values and community; and
- a strong sense of self-confidence and an ability to meet challenges.

The Educational Project

The issues of bullying, violence, harassment and discrimination have always been taken very seriously at the school and our Safe School Action Plan details our policies and processes aimed at taking actions towards prevention and dealing with any reports that come to our attention. Villa Maria promotes inclusivity and community and the development of the whole person through academic pursuit and extracurricular participation. Our Safe School Action Plan outlines the school's commitment to:

- maintain, promote and monitor a safe school for all of our students;
- provide both students and parents/guardians various avenues to report incidents of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination;
- continuously transmit and support positive messages and awareness through student groups like the Villa Maria Pride Club (LGBTQ) and Villa in Action.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Villa Maria is committed to providing a healthy and secure learning environment that allows every student to develop her or his full potential, free from any form of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.

To that end the Department of Educational Services recognizes that:

Our students, personnel members and partners are entitled to protection and safety, and to the preservation of their physical, psychological, emotional and ethical integrity.

It is our duty to ensure that everyone benefits from a safe and healthy environment, free of any form of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination based, among others, on race, colour, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap.

We subscribe to a zero-tolerance policy (i.e. zero tolerance means that certain behaviours, actions and language will not be tolerated and will be addressed promptly by the school) with regard to any problematic situation and inappropriate behaviour capable of threatening the integrity of our students, personnel members or partners.

We encourage the development of healthy relationships between people based on mutual respect, trust and the inviolability of each person.

We provide assistance, support and guidance to any person who is a victim of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of our Plan is to ensure the protection, safety, physical, psychological, emotional and ethical integrity of our students as well as the integrity of the school's personnel members and partners.

Actions occurring outside school time or on social media which, in any manner, influence student, personnel members or partner activities will be considered as having taken place during school time.

Should Villa Maria become aware of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination involving students from other schools, Villa Maria will contact the school in question in order to make said school aware of the situation so that they can, in turn, intervene accordingly.

For clarity and consistency purposes, the Plan also expressly prohibits Villa Maria students from engaging in bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination against any other person who is not a present school stakeholder, or who is a former school stakeholder, and any such incident will subject the student to the same sanction that would be applicable for violating the Villa Maria Rules, Regulations and Policies should the victim be a Villa Maria stakeholder.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

1. To promote the prevention and elimination of problematic situations and inappropriate behaviour capable of threatening the safety, the development and the integrity of the school's students, personnel members and partners.
2. To encourage communication and collaboration, as well as hold all members of the school community accountable for the fostering and maintenance of a safe, healthy, motivating, stimulating and positive environment for all.

3. To underline to the personnel members the importance of ensuring the protection and the safety of students at all times. To preserve the victims' dignity and integrity, by ensuring an obligation to behave in a manner conducive to actions that are free of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind, is of paramount importance.
4. To raise student awareness about the different forms of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination and help identify problematic situations as well as inappropriate behaviours capable of threatening the students' safety and integrity.
5. To recognize, identify, assist and support students who are the victims of problematic situations and inappropriate behaviours that threaten their safety as well as their physical, psychological, emotional and ethical integrity.
6. To allow students to participate in training programs on matters that may affect their health, their safety and their development and make them aware of what they need to do to protect themselves against certain threats.
7. To support the implementation of assistance programs within the school with a view to improve and increase the effectiveness of support measures related to bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination at school.
8. To train the personnel members in order to allow them to adequately address matters related to bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination and to properly and effectively assist and support those who are victims.
9. To provide guidance, support and aid throughout the disciplinary process to the student found responsible for bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.
10. To lead the personnel members and students to the adoption of preventive attitudes and behaviours with regard to all forms of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.

THE PLAN: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

To be relevant, meaningful and effective, the school's Plan must be aligned with the students' and personnel members' everyday experiences with regard to bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination at school, as well as, the result of an organized and concerted approach by all parties involved. As such, this Plan will be subject to yearly review in order to reflect the changing needs of Villa Maria's school community. Members of the Management Team, the personnel members, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers, all have responsibilities as far as the execution and implementation of the Plan are concerned.

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

Under the coordination of its Director, Villa Maria's Department of Educational Services is responsible for the implementation of the Plan.

In the planning and implementation of the Plan, the assistance of other personnel may be requested.

Their main responsibilities are:

1. To consult with an advisory committee for the revision, promotion and enhancement of the prevention and intervention measures under the Plan, the Villa Maria Rules, Regulations and Policies, the assessment of training needs and the organization of activities initiated by the students.
2. To be regarded as the primary contact for the coordination of all interventions, inquiries, witness and parents/guardians meetings and the enforcement of sanctions stemming from the application of the Villa Maria Rules, Regulations and Policies.
3. To record all complaints and ensure proper processing. To this effect, four different forms are available in order to report and follow-up on an incident. These forms are available to the entire school community via the school website: www.villamaria.qc.ca.
4. To review the Plan each year, and update it if necessary, and produce an annual status report on the situation, the interventions as well as the training and awareness activities that took place throughout the school year.

DEFINITIONS

This section has been developed to provide those involved in the school's Plan with the same terminology in order to prevent bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination at school. As a result of this section, actions and facts can be properly described. The objective is not to judge but rather to specifically define an event in order to improve intervention.

Bullying

Any repeated direct or indirect behaviour, comment, act or gesture, whether deliberate or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes.

Conflict

An [active disagreement](#) between [people](#) with [opposing opinions](#) or [principles](#).

Discrimination

Any intended or accomplished differential treatment of persons or social groups for reasons of certain generalized traits that results in some form of harm or disadvantage to the targeted persons or groups.

Harassment

Any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures, that affects a person's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful environment for that person. A single serious incident of such behaviour that has a lasting harmful effect on a person may also constitute harassment.

Social Media

Any online social networking site or other virtual tool by which individuals are able to actively engage in communication with one another that can either automatically, or with discretion, be shared with other known or unknown users. Email is a social network tool which enables access to and use of social media. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the like, blogs, chat rooms and web bulletin boards are forms of social media.

Victim

Any person who, in a given situation, is the target of an act involving bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.

Violence

Any intentional demonstration of verbal, written, physical, psychological or sexual force which causes distress and injures, hurts or oppresses a person by attacking their psychological or physical integrity or well-being, or their rights or property.

Witness

Any person or group of people that witness bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination or who may suffer from its consequences without being directly involved.

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION MEASURES UNDER THE PLAN

The school implements the following prevention and intervention measures under the Plan:

Overall

- The adoption and enforcement of our Plan.

- The accountability of all towards the success of the Plan: parents/guardians, students and personnel members of the school.

At the school level

- The examination of the Villa Maria Rules, Regulations and Policies to include bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination related problems and to adapt them to new technological realities.
- A supervision system at crucial points.
- Concerted and shared strategic actions common to all the personnel members to allow for problem detection and intervention techniques.
- A confidential platform to share information and experiences among the stakeholders of the school's educational mission.
- Information sessions, awareness and training activities for each of the following groups: parents/guardians, students and the school personnel members.

At the classroom level

- Discussion periods dedicated to bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.
- Role-playing sessions during which students are given the chance to practice intervention techniques when they witness, or are victims of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.
- Comprehension of the Villa Maria Rules, Regulations and Policies specifically targeted at bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.
- Discussions on "snitching" as opposed to reporting and asserting one's rights.
- Carrying out activities on the topics of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.

At a personal level

- Giving positive and targeted attention to student-victims and to those who have witnessed bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination as well as to the student who is found responsible for the bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.

FAMILY COOPERATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Families are instrumental in helping to prevent, detect and resolve incidents of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination. Our school will actively support and encourage families to continue to collaborate in making our school a safe and positive environment through such means as:

- organized events;
- distribution of information sheets;
- newsletters posted on the school's various platforms;
- presentations;
- individual meetings/interventions.

As such, Villa Maria will support and encourage families to:

- recognize signs of distress in their child;
- understand the difference between conflict and bullying;
- report promptly suspected acts of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination to the school administration/personnel members;
- reinforce prosocial behaviours in their child/youth;
- collaborate with school personnel members in finding solutions if their child is involved in acts of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.

CONDITIONS FOR MAKING A REPORT OF BULLYING, VIOLENCE, HARASSMENT AND/OR DISCRIMINATION

It is crucial and essential that all instances of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination be reported to the school promptly in order for the school to act accordingly. All reports and details of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination incidents will be accessible only to members of the administration.

For Administration, Personnel Members and Supervisors:

1. All personnel members will report any issues they witness in the halls, even behaviours that may be interpreted as playful.
2. The personnel member will inform the administration of the reported incident(s).
3. The personnel member will inform the administration of any communication received from a parent/guardian or other person concerning any actual or suspected situation of behaviour capable of threatening the integrity of a student.
4. The administration will take note of the information and will conduct an investigation.
5. The administration will pass on the information to the personnel member best suited to help the victim.
6. The administration will keep a record of the information through the Portal in the Student follow-up file.
7. Should a behaviour trend emerge, the administration will intervene in accordance with *An Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools*.

For Students:

1. Students can report incidents of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination anonymously:
 1. by filling an incident report form via the school website;

2. directly to any member of the administration or personnel;
 3. by using the drop box in front of the offices of the Guidance Counsellors and the Family Life Educator.
2. In all cases of suspected bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination, the student reporting the incident(s) will meet with a member of the Department of Educational Services to describe the incident(s).
 3. If the member of the Department of Educational Services determines that this is indeed a case of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination, a response procedure will be applied.
 4. An investigation would follow in accordance with Villa Maria's Safe School Action Plan:
 1. the victim would be assured immediate safety;
 2. the school would communicate with the parents/guardians of the victim and of the other students involved;
 3. the delivery of appropriate intervention and support would be ensured;
 4. disciplinary measures would be applied;
 5. follow-up with students involved in the incident with the school's Administration and/or Student Services Team;
 6. parents/guardians of the victim and of the other students involved are updated continuously throughout the process.
 5. These reporting procedures will be re-evaluated at the end of each year to maintain their efficacy.

SUPERVISORY OR SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

The supervisory or supportive measures may include, but are not limited to one or more of the following:

For the victims:

- Establish a climate of trust during the investigation and intervention process.
- Provide reassurance that the incident will be addressed and that bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination is not tolerated at Villa Maria.
- Help the victim identify at-risk situations for bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination and to put strategies in place to avoid those situations.
- Inform the victim of the investigation and intervention process.
- Do an appropriate follow-up (e.g.: every week for a certain amount of time) and let the victim know that support is available from the Administration, Guidance Counsellor, Special Education

- Technician, Family Life Educator, for as long as they need such support.
- Establish an action plan to address the incident of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.
- If needed, offer the victim the possible referrals to consult an external professional (such as a social worker, psychologist or a psychoeducator) for additional support in regard to their self-esteem, self-assertiveness, improving peer relations, etc.

For the witnesses:

- Encourage the student to denounce, to seek help and/or to talk about what they are going through due to this incident.
- Reinforce their courage to speak up and recognize their actions.
- Evaluate their level of distress and direct them to appropriate services if need be (Guidance Counsellor, Special Education Technician, Family Life Educator, etc.).

For the students found responsible for the bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination:

- Consequences depending on the gravity and frequency of the bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination.
- Establish a relationship with the students.
- Individual support (social skills, emotional control, anger management skills).
- Behaviour contract.
- Action/Intervention plans.
- Meeting with police or Department of Youth Protection (DYP).

SANCTIONS FOR VIOLATING THE PLAN AND VILLA MARIA RULES, REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

The corrective measures may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Discussion with Administration, teacher or supervisor.
- Intervention program with a member of the Student Services Team.
- The loss of certain privileges including field trips and school activities.
- A written reflection.
- A behaviour contract.
- Restorative justice and restitution.
- Community work in the school.
- Communication with the parents/guardians regarding the incident.
- Meeting with the parents/guardians.

- 5 to 15 demerit points.
- In-school suspension.
- Suspension at home from 1 to 3 days:
 - o a parent/guardian must then accompany the child back to school and meet with a member of Administration or appropriate personnel member before the child may return to class.
- Immediate suspension at home of 5 days:
 - o a parent/guardian must then accompany the child back to school and meet with a member of the Administration or appropriate personnel member before the child may return to class.
- Possibility of expulsion.
- Possibility of not being re-admitted the following school year.
- If deemed appropriate and necessary by the school, authorities will be contacted (i.e. police and Department of Youth Protection).

MEASURES TO ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY

Villa Maria pledges to take the necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of all persons involved in any bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination incident. Our personnel members and student families will be reminded that they are to share information about an incident strictly on a need-to-know basis with consideration to the rights, feelings and privacy of all individuals concerned. In addition, should there be a need for disciplinary measures, the details of such measures are also deemed to be confidential. All reports of bullying, violence, harassment and/or discrimination will be kept confidential in a secure location.

REPORT FOLLOW-THROUGH

Villa Maria will take necessary steps to protect students from harm or retaliation after an incident has occurred.

The school will ensure a proper follow-up by:

1. Documenting the investigation process, interventions and communications with the parties involved.
2. Maintaining communication with families and students involved in the incident.
3. Verifying that support services are offered as required.
4. Checking in with students to ensure their well-being and to prevent escalation or retaliation.
5. Providing educational services to the wider school population if the incident reflects a larger problem within the school.

At all times, the students or the parents/guardians can contact Villa Maria's Director of Educational Services for assistance and guidance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND PERSONAL UNDERTAKING

I, the undersigned, acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Villa Maria Safe School/ Action Plan (the “Plan”), the purpose of which is to protect, preserve and promote the physical, psychological, emotional and ethical integrity of the school students, personnel members and partners, that I undertake to read the Plan diligently and consult it regularly, and to conform to it continuously.

Student Name (please print)

Student's signature

Date

Parent's/Guardian name (please print)

Parent's/ Guardian signature

Date