



Guide for Responding to **Unacceptable Behaviours**

how to apply

**Provincial School
Code of Conduct
Policy**

Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours

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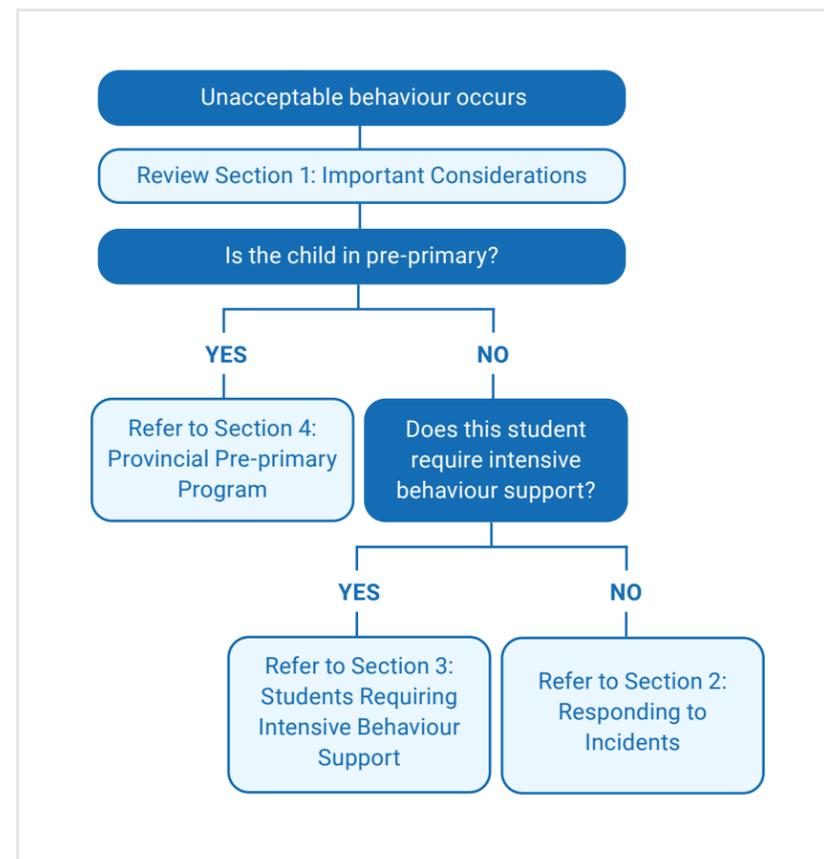
Purpose

The purpose of the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* is to achieve alignment, coherence, and consistency of response in implementing the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*. Once an unacceptable behaviour is reported, an administrator will use this guide to determine the most appropriate response to support safe learning and working environments for the whole school community. These documents continue to allow for professional judgement.

This guide is organized into four sections, intended to serve as a quick reference, to support administrators and their teams as they effectively and appropriately respond to unacceptable behaviours.

Using this Guide

The diagram below is to help determine which section of the guide to use.



Section 1: Important Considerations

This section is based on the guiding principles of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy* in five main areas:

- Trauma (Adverse Childhood Experiences)
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice
- Age and Stage of Development
- Impact of Suspension on Well-being and Achievement
- Mental Health/Well-being and Addictions

Section 2: Responding to Incidents

This section is based on sections 5.5 to 5.13 of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*, and includes:

- Incident Decision-Making Matrix
- Categories and Responses: Grades P to 6
- Categories and Responses: Grades 7 to 12

Section 3: Intensive Behaviour Support

This section is based on sections 5.14 to 5.16 of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*. It sets expectations for intensive and supportive planning for students who may not be able to consistently demonstrate expected school behaviour. This section provides guidance on how to create a safe, relational, student-centred and inclusive learning environment for these students, while ensuring they receive high-quality and evidence-informed interventions.

Section 4: Provincial Pre-primary Program

This section is based on section 5.1 of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*. It addresses the pre-primary program and describes developmentally appropriate practices that pre-primary staff utilize to promote safe working and learning environments in early learning and childcare settings through consistent, inclusive, and evidence-informed practices and proactive strategies.

Important Considerations

Overview

This section is based on the guiding principles of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy* in five main areas:

- Trauma (Adverse Childhood Experiences)
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice
- Age and Stage of Development
- Impact of Suspension on Well-being and Achievement
- Mental Health/Well-being and Addictions

Section 1: Important Considerations

Understanding the potential impact of contributing factors when a student exhibits unacceptable behaviour(s) helps to determine the appropriate response(s) and development of individualized interventions and supports to address them.

In addition to the information below, administrators may also refer to the Three Braids professional learning resources, which are part of a multifaceted approach to increase understanding, skills, and competencies related to anti-racism and anti-discrimination. These resources focus on the dynamics of racism and discrimination, intersectionality, human rights legislation and its implications, and how to recognize and respond to acts of racism and discrimination in a culturally responsive way.

Trauma (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Trauma-informed care is an approach that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma, integrates this understanding into policies and practices, and emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for students and the entire school community.

- **Impact of trauma:** Recognize that trauma can influence behaviour, emotional regulation, and decision-making. Behaviours that may seem defiant or disruptive could stem from a fight, flight, or freeze response cued by past trauma. In these cases, an assumption of intent could be misguided.
- **Inter-generational/historical trauma:** Consider that some students, their families, and communities have experienced harmful interactions with public education and other government institutions and organizations. Not all cultures and world views, including Mi'kmaw and Indigenous, have historically been represented and welcomed in public education. Presently, school environments do not always reflect the approach to well-being and achievement that all students, families, and communities bring forward based on their cultures and lived experiences. These cultural discrepancies can contribute to misunderstandings of behaviour and communication in the school environment.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice

Culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy is teaching that:

- connects a student's social, cultural, family, or language background to what the student is learning,
- nurtures that cultural uniqueness, and
- responds by creating conditions in which the student's well-being and achievement are enhanced.

It is important that school administrators use a culturally and linguistically responsive lens when considering a range of possible consequences. It is important that school administrators know the students as they are known, and that they know the school communities in which they work. School administrators have access to knowledgeable staff and relevant resources available to support culturally and linguistically responsive practices.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Considerations

- **Cultural misunderstandings:** Determine whether the behaviour was a result of a cultural misunderstanding or misinterpretation by staff. Broadly speaking, culture encompasses many facets including ethnicity, ability, geographic location of school communities (e.g., rural, urban), etc.
- **Cultural perceptions of discipline:** Consider how the student's and their family's cultural background views authority, discipline, and school rules.
- **Cultural communication styles:** Non-verbal communication or expressions of disagreement, for example, may be misinterpreted as disrespectful in certain cultures. Understanding these nuances can help avoid misunderstandings.
- **Implicit bias:** Ensure that the response isn't influenced by stereotypes or unconscious bias about a student's cultural background.
- **Disproportionality:** Reflect on whether students from certain cultural groups are disproportionately disciplined in the school. This can indicate systemic inequities.

Age and Stage of Development

Understanding the stages of childhood development can help set realistic behaviour expectations and the provision of appropriate support and interventions. Each child is unique, and development can vary and is influenced by culture, geography, ability, and lived experience. Understanding these stages for typically developing students can help school administrators navigate how to most effectively and appropriately respond to unacceptable behaviours.

- **Early childhood (under 7 years):** At this age, children are still developing self-control and social skills. They may struggle with impulse control and understanding social norms.
- **Middle childhood (8–12 years):** Children in this stage are testing boundaries and seeking independence. Peer influence becomes more significant, and they may engage in behaviors to fit in or gain attention.
- **Adolescence (13–21 years):** Adolescents are navigating identity formation and increased autonomy. Hormonal changes and peer pressure can contribute to more pronounced behavioural issues.

In addition to the stages of development, it is important to consider that children's and youth's continuously developing brains contribute significantly to their learning, social relationships, and how they make sense of their environment. The prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making, problem-solving, and impulse control, is the last part of the brain to mature, a process that isn't completed until around the age of 25 years old.

Impact of Suspension on Well-being and Achievement

If a consequence of an unacceptable behaviour includes a suspension, administrators should consider the following:

- **Prolonged suspensions:** Prolonged suspensions and time away from school can disrupt predictable routines and have a negative impact on the student. If a student is serving a suspension outside of the school, collaborate with families and extended communities about how students can stay engaged in learning and connected during the suspension period.

- **Explain consequences clearly:** Tailor communication about the suspension to the student's developmental level. For younger children, use simple, concrete language to explain what happened and what will happen next. Allow students the flexibility to participate in conversations when possible and preferred by the student. For older students, focus on reasoning and personal accountability.
- **Access to services:** Some students may be receiving specialized services at school including school counselling, speech-language pathology, psychology services, SchoolsPlus Mental Health Clinician counselling, etc. Where possible, explore ways to preserve access to these services during a suspension.

Mental Health/Well-being and Addictions

Students can experience a range of mental health needs and addictions that impact their well-being and achievement. Schools play an important role in supporting students to build the skills and knowledge that contribute to their overall well-being.

When responding to an incident of unacceptable behaviour, consider if the student has a diagnosed mental health condition, or may be experiencing something that negatively affects their well-being due to a variety of contributing factors including a recent loss, relapse of a substance use disorder, poor sleep hygiene, etc. Gathering information and understanding of mental health and well-being concerns can strengthen responses to unacceptable school behaviours and increase the efficacy and competency of school teams.

Responding to Incidents

Overview

This section is based on sections 5.5 to 5.13 of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*, and includes:

- Incident Decision-Making Matrix
- Categories and Responses: Grades P to 6
- Categories and Responses: Grades 7 to 12



As mentioned in section 5.12 of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*, all incidents of unacceptable behaviour must be accurately recorded in the student information system.

Section 2: Responding to Incidents

Incident Decision-Making Matrix

		Student Understanding & Developmental Stage →				
		No Understanding	Limited	Basic	Moderate	Full
Impact ↓	No Impact		1	2	2	3
	Minor	1	1	2	2	3
	Moderate	2	2	2	3	3
	Significant	2	2	3	4	4
	Severe	3	3	3	4	5

Impact

Consider impact on student, staff, or facility safety and well-being; also consider frequency of incident recurrence.

No Impact: The incident had no impact on the health, safety, or well-being of student(s) or staff, and did not interrupt school operations.

Minor Impact: The incident caused minor harm, damage, and/or interruption and may involve one student or staff member.

Moderate Impact: This incident caused moderate harm with possible need for assistance and may impact more than one person.

Significant Impact: This incident caused a disruption of class or school operations or serious harm and may impact multiple individuals (debrief should be considered).

Severe Impact: This incident caused a disruption or cancellation for the whole school or serious harm to student(s) or staff and/or required outside interventions (debrief is required).

Student Understanding & Developmental Stage

Consider intentionality, neurotypical processing, age/stage of development, and frequency.

No Understanding: Student does not understand the consequences of their actions.

Limited Understanding: Student has limited understanding of the behaviour's potential for harm.

Basic Understanding: Student understands harm but acted without fully reflecting on impact (need for further coaching).

Moderate Understanding: Student has clear intent to harm or attract attention through actions (repeated offences).

Full Understanding: Student has premeditated actions without regard for harm to persons or school facilities (repeated offences).

Categories and Responses: Grades P to 6



Have you reviewed Section 1: Important Considerations?



Responses and consequences in the following tables are suggestions. The administrator has discretion to vary response and consequences based on context.

Page #	Categories of Unacceptable Behaviours
12	Bullying/cyberbullying
13	Discriminatory behaviour
14	Illegal activity
14	Inappropriate language
15	Insubordination
15	Interruption of the learning environment
16	Misuse of networks or online resources
17	Physical aggression
17	Physical violence
18	Racist behaviour
19	Repeated use of tobacco or electronic cigarettes
20	Sexual assault
20	Sexual harassment
21	Sexual misconduct
22	Threatening behaviour
22	Unapproved mobile device use
23	Use or possession of alcohol, cannabis, drug-related paraphernalia, illegal drugs, or weapons
24	Vandalism
24	Verbal abuse

Bullying/cyberbullying

As defined in the *Education Act*, “bullying” means behaviour, typically repeated, that is intended to cause or should be known to cause, whether directly or indirectly, fear, intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, distress or other harm to another person’s body, emotional well-being, self-esteem, reputation or property, and includes assisting or encouraging such behaviour in any way.

“Cyberbullying” means any electronic communication through the use of technology including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, computers, other electronic devices, social networks, text messaging, instant messaging, websites, and electronic mail, typically repeated or with continuing effect, that is intended to cause or should be known to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, distress or other harm to another person’s health, emotional well-being, self-esteem or reputation, and includes assisting or encouraging such communication in any way.

NOTE: When responding to potential bullying/cyberbullying, key elements to consider are the intent to harm, the imbalance of power, and the repetition of the behaviour.

Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach and model positive behaviours build classroom awareness social-emotional learning (SEL) individual/group work and activities check-ins with the student, reinforcing positive behaviour and providing additional guidance as needed small-group social skills sessions, focusing on empathy, emotional regulation, and positively making friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR detention 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days 5 suspension: 5 to 10 days

Discriminatory behaviour

Discriminatory behaviour is the inequitable, unfair, or differential treatment of one person from another based on a person belonging to a particular group.

Discriminatory behaviour includes any discrimination based on race, culture, ethnicity, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental abilities, mental illness, age, nationality, Mi’kmaq or Indigenous ancestry, socio-economic status or appearance.

Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advice and suggestions from community members, Elders, advocates, and community leaders develop classroom expectations that emphasize kindness, respect, and inclusion teach and reinforce expectations for respectful behaviour, fairness, equality, and the harmful effects of discrimination provide age-appropriate lessons on recognizing and addressing stereotypes and biases work collaboratively with staff, students, and community members on the underlying issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days 5 suspension: 5 to 10 days

Illegal activity	
Committing any act, or inciting others to commit any act, involving a serious civil wrong or crime.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include lessons on honesty, integrity, and responsibility as part of social-emotional learning (SEL) monitor classroom dynamics to identify and address potential cues for inappropriate behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days
Inappropriate language	
Using, or inciting others to use, language that is offensive, demeaning, and has an impact on the school environment.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reinforce classroom rules and expectations encourage the use of more appropriate school language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges 2 detention 3 suspension: in-school 4 suspension: less than 3 days 5 suspension: 3 to 5 days

Insubordination	
Behaviour that disregards directives or established expectations in the class or school environment or disregards direct instructions provided by staff.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond calmly and avoid power struggles when a student exhibits initial signs of non-compliance, using a neutral tone and offering a reset opportunity incorporate lessons on communication and conflict resolution to help students navigate challenging situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR detention 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days 5 suspension: 5 to 10 days
Interruption of the learning environment	
Behaviour that intentionally distracts or interrupts the learning environment.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use posters, timers, or other visual reminders about appropriate behaviour teach specific alternatives for interruptions, like jotting down thoughts to share later give the student a structured role, like discussion leader or note-taker, to channel their energy constructively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days 5 suspension: 5 to 10 days

Misuse of networks or online resources	
Unauthorized access or misuse of networks, online resources, and/or e-communications under the Nova Scotia Public School Programs Internet Access and Use Policy .	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate how to use online resources responsibly during lessons and reinforce positive examples provide step-by-step guidance for online tasks to keep the student focused use locked browsers or specific links for assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days 5 suspension: 5 to 10 days

Physical aggression	
Physical aggression is contact that includes behaviours such as shoving, pushing, and scuffling, but not violently hitting or striking others.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proactively set and teach clear expectations for appropriate behaviour verbal redirection intervene calmly with a clear, direct reminder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR detention 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days
Physical violence	
Using force or inciting others to use force to injure a member or members of the school community.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reinforce expectations and teach conflict resolution strategies focusing on respect, safety, and non-violence restorative circles focus on repairing relationships and school culture through collaborative and equitable approaches parent/guardian involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Racist behaviour	
<p>Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or group based on their racial or ethnic identity, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.</p> <p>Racism is the belief that different racial or ethnic groups possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, often used to justify the perception of one group as superior or inferior to another. This includes harmful stereotypes and misconceptions, which contribute to systemic discrimination and marginalization.</p>	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice and suggestions from community members, Elders, advocates, and community leaders • develop classroom expectations that emphasize kindness, respect, and inclusion • educational resources, such as articles, videos, or interactive activities on racism, bias, and inclusivity • classroom discussions and curriculum integration where teachers facilitate guided conversations about bias, discrimination, and the impact of words • require the student to complete an educational lesson or guided reflection on racism, bias, and inclusivity • student-led initiatives, such as peer discussions, anti-racism activities/workshops, or an awareness campaign • monitor the student's interactions during transitions (e.g., lunch, unstructured activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days 5 suspension: 5 to 10 days

Repeated use of tobacco or electronic cigarettes	
<p>Smoking of tobacco, e-cigarettes, or other prohibited use of tobacco, inside any school building, facility, or vehicle, or on any school property, including school-related activities.</p>	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on promoting positive, healthy behaviours • provide a brief, age-appropriate explanation of the dangers of tobacco and e-cigarette use • a reflective writing activity or a conversation with a counsellor about making healthier choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR detention 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days

Sexual assault	
Sexual assault is any sexual touching or contact without consent.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adjust class schedules or restrict access to certain areas to ensure student safety parent/guardian involvement consent and healthy relationships education, requiring the student to complete a curriculum on consent, boundaries, and the impact of sexual violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days
Sexual harassment	
Sexual harassment is any objectionable, coercive, or irritating comment, communication, action, or attention of a sexual nature that is directed to a person or persons by someone who knows, or ought reasonably to know, that such actions are unwelcome; action or communication with a sexual connotation or component that creates an intimidating, demeaning, or offensive work or school environment, even if it is directed to no person in particular.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adjust class schedules or restrict access to certain areas to ensure student safety incorporate age-appropriate lessons on consent, boundaries, respectful communication, and the consequences of harassment consent and respect education; require the student to complete an educational lesson or guided reflection on consent, boundaries, and appropriate communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Sexual misconduct	
Sexual misconduct includes any behaviour of a sexual nature or connotation that is deemed inappropriate or unacceptable at school or during any school-related activity.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adjust class schedules or restrict access to certain areas to ensure student safety incorporate age-appropriate lessons on consent, boundaries, respectful communication, and the consequences of sexual misconduct monitor the student's interactions during transitions (e.g., lunch, unstructured activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Threatening behaviour	
Refers to deliberate actions, gestures, words, or other expressions that are intended to intimidate, scare, or coerce another person.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reinforce the school’s expectations around respectful behaviour provide explicit instruction on how to express frustration, anger, or disagreement constructively teach conflict resolution skills and/or communication skills encourage reflection on how their behaviour impacts individuals and the wider school community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days
Unapproved mobile device use	
Unauthorized use of a mobile device during school hours or school activity.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reminder and reinforcement of school cell phone policy explain why the school has mobile device rules involve parents/guardians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR detention 2 suspension: in-school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days

Use or possession of alcohol, cannabis, drug-related paraphernalia, illegal drugs, or weapons	
Use or possession of drugs or alcohol, or being under the influence, inside any school building, facility, or vehicle, on any school property, including school-related activities.	
Possessing or inciting others to possess or use a weapon—which includes anything used, designed to be used, or intended for use in causing death or injury to a person, or to threaten or intimidate a person, including replicas of weapons—while on school property or while attending a school-related activity.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach the health, legal, and social consequences of substance use organize activities or programs that encourage positive behaviours, like sports, clubs or peer leadership opportunities build strong relationships between students and staff to create a sense of belonging incorporate lessons on the dangers of weapons, alternatives to violence, and the importance of making safe choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 7 days 5 suspension: 7 to 10 days

Categories and Responses: Grades P to 6

Vandalism

Damaging, attempting to damage, or inciting others to damage the personal property of a member of the school community, property owned or operated by the RCE/CSAP or any other property while attending a school-related activity.

Suggested Responses

- restitution: develop positive ways to restore or repair damages or make reparations in some way (e.g., repairing the damage or doing community service cleaning vandalised area)
- connect with supportive adult or mentor

Suggested Range of Consequences

- 1** loss of privileges
OR suspension: in-school
- 2** suspension: less than 3 days
- 3** suspension: 3 to 5 days
- 4** suspension: 5 to 10 days

Verbal abuse

The use of words to harm, demean, manipulate, or control another person.

Suggested Responses

- model positive communication
- provide explicit instruction on how to express frustration, anger, or disagreement in a constructive way
- provide closer supervision during transitions (e.g., lunch, unstructured activities) or group activities and increase opportunities for positive interactions with adults

Suggested Range of Consequences

- 1** loss of privileges
OR suspension: in-school
- 2** suspension: less than 3 days
- 3** suspension: 3 to 5 days
- 4** suspension: 5 to 7 days
- 5** suspension: 7 to 10 days

Categories and Responses: Grades 7 to 12



Have you reviewed Section 1: Important Considerations?



Responses and consequences in the following tables are suggestions. The administrator has discretion to vary response and consequences based on context.

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35	Physical aggression
35	Physical violence
36	Racist behaviour
37	Repeated use of tobacco or electronic cigarettes
38	Sexual assault
38	Sexual harassment
39	Sexual misconduct
40	Threatening behaviour
40	Unapproved mobile device use
41	Use or possession of alcohol, cannabis, drug-related paraphernalia, illegal drugs, or weapons
42	Vandalism
42	Verbal abuse

Bullying/cyberbullying

As defined in the *Education Act*, “bullying” means behaviour, typically repeated, that is intended to cause or should be known to cause, whether directly or indirectly, fear, intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, distress or other harm to another person’s body, emotional well-being, self-esteem, reputation or property, and includes assisting or encouraging such behaviour in any way.

“Cyberbullying” means any electronic communication through the use of technology including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, computers, other electronic devices, social networks, text messaging, instant messaging, websites, and electronic mail, typically repeated or with continuing effect, that is intended to cause or should be known to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, distress or other harm to another person’s health, emotional well-being, self-esteem or reputation, and includes assisting or encouraging such communication in any way.

NOTE: When responding to potential bullying/cyberbullying, key elements to consider are the intent to harm, the imbalance of power, and the repetition of the behaviour.

Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and teach schoolwide rules against bullying, including definitions, examples, and consequences incorporate lessons on empathy, respect, and conflict resolution into the curriculum teach students how to recognize and report bullying behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Discriminatory behaviour

Discriminatory behaviour is the inequitable, unfair, or differential treatment of one person from another based on a person belonging to a particular group.

Discriminatory behaviour includes any discrimination based on race, culture, ethnicity, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental abilities, mental illness, age, nationality, Mi’kmaq or Indigenous ancestry, socio-economic status or appearance.

Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advice and suggestions from community members, Elders, advocates, and community leaders teach and reinforce expectations for respectful behaviour, fairness, equality, and the harmful effects of discrimination work collaboratively with staff, students, and community members on the underlying issues provide group sessions focused on empathy-building, bias awareness, or respectful communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Illegal activity	
Committing any act, or inciting others to commit any act, involving a serious civil wrong or crime.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate clear, age-appropriate policies about illegal behaviour and its consequences • discuss peer pressure and strategies for resisting it • involve families to gain insight into potential contributing factors and collaborate on support strategies • advice and suggestions from community members, Elders, advocates, and community leaders • implement increased monitoring during unstructured times (e.g., transitions, lunch) to prevent further incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Inappropriate language	
Using, or inciting others to use, language that is offensive, demeaning, and has an impact on the school environment.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach communication skills and the importance of using respectful language • include lessons on emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and effective communication skills • provide targeted instruction in emotional regulation, impulse control, and effective communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR detention 2 suspension: in school 3 suspension: less than 3 days 4 suspension: 3 to 5 days

Insubordination	
Behaviour that disregards directives or established expectations in the class or school environment or disregards direct instructions provided by staff.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporate lessons on self-regulation, communication, and conflict resolution to help students navigate challenging situations build strong relationships between students and staff to create a sense of mutual understanding respond calmly and avoid power struggles when a student exhibits initial signs of non-compliance, using a neutral tone and offer a reset opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days

Interruption of the learning environment	
Behaviour that intentionally distracts or interrupts the learning environment.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use varied teaching strategies to maintain student engagement and minimize opportunities for disruption offer group sessions focused on self-regulation, conflict resolution, or social skills provide flexible seating options or a separate work area to help the student focus without disrupting others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Misuse of networks or online resources	
Unauthorized access or misuse of networks, online resources, and/or e-communications under the Nova Scotia Public School Programs Internet Access and Use Policy .	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hold classroom discussions or advisory sessions about the importance of online safety, privacy, and respectful communication incorporate lessons on digital citizenship, responsible internet use, online etiquette, and the consequences of misuse into the curriculum create small-group sessions focused on online safety, decision making, or digital etiquette 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Physical aggression	
Physical aggression is contact that includes behaviours such as shoving, pushing, and scuffling, but not violently hitting or striking others.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach all students strategies to resolve disagreements constructively facilitate a structured conversation with the student(s) involved to address the conflict, repair harm if needed or develop strategies for more positive interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR detention OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days
Physical violence	
Using force or inciting others to use force to injure a member or members of the school community.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach students techniques for managing disagreements constructively offer small-group sessions focused on teaching students how to recognize cues and manage their anger constructively work closely with the student’s family or community support to create a consistent plan for addressing violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Racist behaviour	
<p>Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or group based on their racial or ethnic identity, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.</p> <p>Racism is the belief that different racial or ethnic groups possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, often used to justify the perception of one group as superior or inferior to another. This includes harmful stereotypes and misconceptions, which contribute to systemic discrimination and marginalization.</p>	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice and suggestions from community members, Elders, advocates, and community leaders • develop classroom expectations that emphasize kindness, respect, and inclusion • educational resources, such as articles, videos, or interactive activities on racism, bias, and inclusivity • classroom discussions and curriculum integration where teachers facilitate guided conversations about bias, discrimination, and the impact of words • require the student to complete an educational lesson or guided reflection on racism, bias, and inclusivity • student-led initiatives, such as peer discussions, anti-racism activities/workshops, or an awareness campaign • monitor the student’s interactions during transitions (e.g., lunch, unstructured activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Repeated use of tobacco or electronic cigarettes	
<p>Smoking of tobacco, e-cigarettes, or other prohibited use of tobacco, inside any school building, facility, or vehicle, or on any school property, including school-related activities.</p>	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide age-appropriate education about the dangers of nicotine use, including its effects on young, developing bodies • teach stress management techniques, refusal skills, and methods for avoiding situations that may cue cravings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 loss of privileges OR detention OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days

Sexual assault	
Sexual assault is any sexual touching or contact without consent.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adjust class schedules or restrict access to certain areas to ensure student safety parent/guardian involvement consent and healthy relationships education, requiring the student to complete a curriculum on consent, boundaries, and the impact of sexual violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days
Sexual harassment	
Sexual harassment is any objectionable, coercive, or irritating comment, communication, action, or attention of a sexual nature that is directed to a person or persons by someone who knows, or ought reasonably to know, that such actions are unwelcome; action or communication with a sexual connotation or component that creates an intimidating, demeaning, or offensive work or school environment, even if it is directed to no person in particular.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adjust class schedules or restrict access to certain areas to ensure student safety incorporate age-appropriate lessons on consent, boundaries, respectful communication, and the consequences of harassment consent and respect education; require the student to complete an educational lesson or guided reflection on consent, boundaries, and appropriate communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Sexual misconduct	
Sexual misconduct includes any behaviour of a sexual nature or connotation that is deemed inappropriate or unacceptable at school or during any school-related activity.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adjust class schedules or restrict access to certain areas to ensure student safety incorporate age-appropriate lessons on consent, boundaries, respectful communication, and the consequences of sexual misconduct monitor the student's interactions during transitions (e.g., lunch, unstructured activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Threatening behaviour	
Refers to deliberate actions, gestures, words, or other expressions that are intended to intimidate, scare, or coerce another person.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach all students strategies to resolve disagreements constructively facilitate a structured conversation with the student(s) involved to address the conflict, repair harm if needed, or develop strategies for more positive interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days
Unapproved mobile device use	
Unauthorized use of a mobile device during school hours or school activity.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use age-appropriate language to clearly reiterate school cell phone policy discuss the impact of their behaviour on the learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 confiscation of device OR loss of privileges OR detention OR suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days

Use or possession of alcohol, cannabis, drug-related paraphernalia, illegal drugs, or weapons	
Use or possession of drugs or alcohol, or being under the influence, inside any school building, facility, or vehicle, on any school property, including school-related activities.	
Possessing or inciting others to possess or use a weapon—which includes anything used, designed to be used, or intended for use in causing death or injury to a person, or to threaten or intimidate a person, including replicas of weapons—while on school property or while attending a school-related activity.	
Suggested Responses	Suggested Range of Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach the health, legal, and social consequences of substance use organize activities or programs that encourage positive behaviours, like sports, clubs or peer leadership opportunities build strong relationships between students and staff to create a sense of belonging incorporate lessons on the dangers of weapons, alternatives to violence, and the importance of making safe choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 suspension: in-school 2 suspension: less than 3 days 3 suspension: 3 to 5 days 4 suspension: 5 to 10 days 5 suspension: 10 or more days

Categories and Responses: Grades 7 to 12

Vandalism

Damaging, attempting to damage, or inciting others to damage the personal property of a member of the school community, property owned or operated by the RCE/CSAP or any other property while attending a school-related activity.

Suggested Responses

- meet with the student to discuss the incident and the seriousness of vandalism
- notify parents/guardians to discuss strategies to prevent future incidents

Suggested Range of Consequences

- 1** suspension: in-school
- 2** suspension: less than 3 days
- 3** suspension: 3 to 5 days
- 4** suspension: 5 to 10 days
- 5** suspension: 10 or more days

Verbal abuse

The use of words to harm, demean, manipulate, or control another person.

Suggested Responses

- model positive communication
- provide explicit instruction on how to express frustration, anger, or disagreement in a constructive way
- provide closer supervision during transitions (e.g., lunch, unstructured activities) or group activities and increase opportunities for positive interactions with adults

Suggested Range of Consequences

- 1** suspension: in-school
- 2** suspension: less than 3 days
- 3** suspension: 3 to 5 days
- 4** suspension: 5 to 10 days
- 5** suspension: 10 or more days

Intensive Behaviour Support

Overview

This section is based on sections 5.14 to 5.16 of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*. It sets expectations for intensive and supportive planning for students who may not be able to consistently demonstrate expected school behaviour. This section provides guidance on how to create a safe, relational, student-centred and inclusive learning environment for these students, while ensuring they receive high-quality and evidence-informed interventions.

Section 3: Intensive Behaviour Support

When to Use Intensive Behaviour Support

Following the review of an unacceptable behaviour incident referral in the student information system, administrators, in consultation with staff and families, may make the determination that the student is not able to meet expected school behaviour. The “Incident Response for Intensive Behaviour Support” table will be used to formulate an appropriate response.

Contributing Factors

There are several contributing and intersecting factors that result in students not being able to consistently demonstrate expected school behaviour. Administrators, in consultation with Student Planning Teams, will consider potential contributing factors including intellectual or developmental disability, mental health needs, or other impactful lived experiences (e.g., trauma, adverse childhood experiences), or diagnosis.

It is understood that behaviour is contextual and therefore it cannot be separated from a student’s lived experience and current state. Furthermore, educators bring their own histories, values, and worldviews to the understanding of behaviours.

It is recognized that for some students, knowing that there will be a consequence—even a punitive one that is undesired by a student—will not prevent the behaviour unless the underlying cause is addressed. It is important to start with the understanding that behaviours are a form of communication and students may not understand, or may misinterpret, situations and they may not be able to appreciate the impact of their actions.

Student Planning Teams

Student Planning Teams, which include students where possible, parents/caregivers, community partners, and other specialists as required, will help administrators in making the determination of when students are not able to demonstrate expected school behaviour.

Incident Response for Intensive Behaviour Support



Have you reviewed Section 1: Important Considerations?

Impact	Description	Response
Minor	<p>The behaviour results in limited disruption and/or poses limited risk to the environment, health, or safety.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: verbal or repetitive behaviours that interfere with learning, and refusal to follow instructions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> document in the student information system the behaviour and proactive and preventative supports provided, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> predictable routines visual schedules co-creating behaviour expectations structured breaks
Moderate	<p>The behaviour results in moderate disruption and/or poses a moderate risk to the environment, health, or safety.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: threats of injury, light pushes, moderate destruction, and fleeing nearby</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a Behaviour Intervention Support Plan, which will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be responsive and individualized (evidence-informed and data-driven) include requirements for reporting and review include roles and responsibilities of classroom teachers (or Learning Support Teacher) and, as appropriate, specialists and paraprofessionals and external agencies focus on transition planning <u>may</u> require consideration of a time-limited alternative learning environment and/or adapted schedule
Severe	<p>The behaviour results in significant disruption and/or poses a significant risk to the environment, health, or safety.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: fleeing off school campus, classroom evacuation, significant destruction of property, and physical violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a Behaviour Intervention Support Plan, which will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be responsive and individualized (evidence-informed and data-driven) include requirements for reporting and review include roles and responsibilities of classroom teachers (or Learning Support Teacher) and, as appropriate, specialists and paraprofessionals and external agencies focus on transition planning <u>will</u> require consideration of a time-limited alternative learning environment and/or adapted schedule

Behaviour Intervention Support Plan

Student Planning Teams develop Behaviour Intervention Support Plans for students exhibiting moderate or severe behavioural challenges.

When developing a Behaviour Intervention Support Plan, in response to an incident, consider if:

- there is information in the student information system (e.g., diagnosis, referrals, individual plans, meeting notes)
- this is a recurring behaviour
- the recurring behaviour has not responded to previous interventions

A key feature of the Behaviour Intervention Support Plan is the use of data-driven processes to help identify and respond to the underlying causes of the behaviour. School teams will receive training on the development of the plan and how to collect, utilize, and report on data through the lens of the considerations outlined in this guide and with a focus on support, recognizing behaviour as communication.

Alternative Learning Environments/Adapted Schedules

Student Planning Teams may determine that in some cases, for students' safety, well-being and achievement, there is a need to include alternative learning environments and/or adapted schedules as part of the plan. These approaches will be included in the Behaviour Intervention Support Plan, will be time-limited, and will require regular monitoring and reporting in the student information system. Plans will include incident reporting and behaviour tracking expectations as part of the intervention planning process.

Alternative learning environments may include a learning centre or small-group setting. An adapted schedule may include a few days at home after a significant incident, or may involve a short-term schedule change when transitioning to a new school or classroom, or when there are adjustments in medication or other health care intervention.

When there is a break from the common learning environment, including alternative locations or adapted schedules, plans must consider the overall impact on families and adhere to the guiding principles of Nova Scotia's [Inclusive Education Policy](#). The following principles are particularly relevant when considering alternative locations or adapted schedules:

- 4.2 Every student, including those with special needs, should receive full-day instruction every day, with flexibility based on the student's individual strengths and challenges.
- 4.3 Every student should be taught within a common learning environment (e.g., a classroom) with students of similar age within the community school, with flexibility that is based on, and responsive to, the student's individual strengths and challenges.

Provincial Pre-primary Program

Overview

This section is based on section 5.1 of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*. It addresses the pre-primary program and describes developmentally appropriate practices that pre-primary staff utilize to promote safe working and learning environments in early learning and childcare settings through consistent, inclusive, and evidence-informed practices and proactive strategies.

Section 4: Provincial Pre-primary Program



Have you reviewed Section 1: Important Considerations?

Understanding Positive Behaviour Guidance

Early learning and child care programs play a pivotal role in shaping the foundation of young children's development. Positive behaviour guidance is essential in helping children learn appropriate behaviour, understand and manage emotions, and develop social skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. Children feel understood and valued when educators create nurturing and supportive learning environments. Positive behaviour guidance strategies are founded on early learning principles and practices outlined in [Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework](#).

Understanding Challenging Behaviours

What is considered unacceptable or challenging behaviour for older children may be developmentally appropriate responses for children under 6 years of age. Such behaviour must be seen as a child's communication of an unmet need and often related to lack of impulse control or self-regulation skills.

Responding to challenging behaviours in the early years requires consideration of the child's cultural and linguistic background, environmental stressors (noise, light, smell, etc.), the child's strengths and needs assessment (programming considerations), possible history of trauma (attachment disruptions, intergenerational, pre-migration experiences etc.), and age and stage of development. Educators use these considerations to provide play-based learning experiences that focus on building the child's capacity for communication and social-emotional learning and teaching replacement skills that are appropriate and effective for the child.

Understanding Serious Incidents

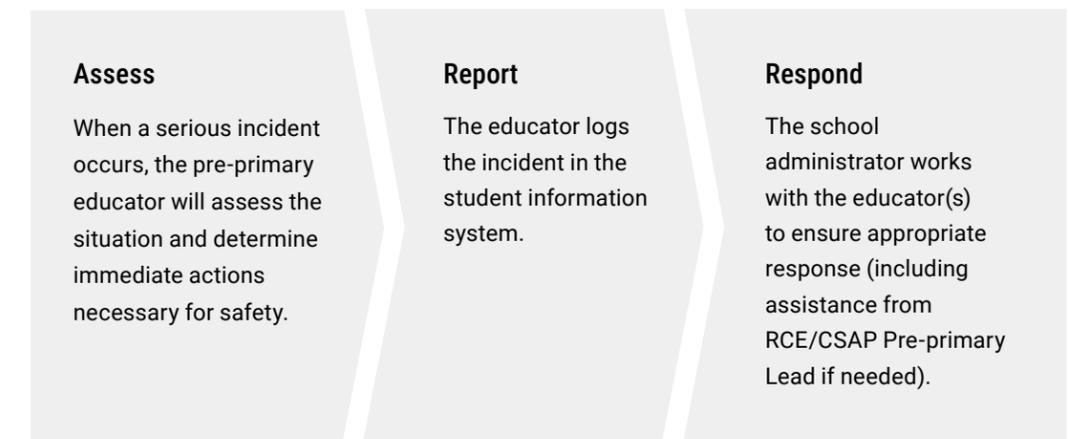
Serious incidents:

- pose a significant risk to the health or safety of children, educators, and/or the learning environment
- have a significant impact on the learning of the whole group (e.g., when the group is consistently relocated to another part of the school due to safety concerns) or interfere with optimal learning and engagement in pro-social interactions with peers
- may be a one-time event or the result of persistent challenging behaviours that are unresponsive to positive behaviour interventions
- may be unintentional, or stem from children's limited understanding of the behaviour's potential for harm

Examples include:

- significant destruction of property
- physical violence causing injury that requires medical attention
- fleeing off school campus

Responding to Serious Incidents



NOTE: A Pre-primary Lead, employed by Regional Centres for Education (RCE) or the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), is responsible to provide pedagogical expertise and build the capacity of school administration to effectively lead the pre-primary program at their site.

The school administrator will ensure that the team works collaboratively to implement developmentally appropriate responses, such as, but not limited to:

- reinforcing clear, consistent, and developmentally appropriate program expectations
- teaching and modeling pro-social behaviours (e.g., friendship skills, self-regulation)
- making adaptations to the learning environment (e.g., visual schedules, predictable routines, planning for transitions)
- developing and implementing a Routine-Based Plan (documented in the student information system) that outlines routine goals and outcomes that a child is learning and includes corresponding strategies implemented in the naturally occurring routine of the pre-primary environment
- connecting the family to mental health or behavioural/early intervention services

For children who demonstrate persistent challenging behaviours and/or require more intensive interventions, responses may also include:

- establishing a child's planning team that collaborates on decisions regarding strategies, interventions and evaluations needed to best support the child. The team includes educators and family, and if applicable, interagency and community partners (e.g., early intervention specialists)
- developing and implementing a Positive Behaviour Support Plan (documented in the student information system) to support behaviour change using proactive/preventative strategies and environmental adaptations

Prohibited Responses

Responses to challenging behaviours and serious incidents that are prohibited for children in pre-primary programs:

- suspensions
- corporal or physical punishment
- harsh, degrading, or coercive methods for speaking to children or reacting to them emotionally or physically, including threatening
- confining or isolating a child
- deprivation of a child's basic needs such as food, water, or clothing
- use of food as reward or punishment for responding to incidents of undesired behaviours or desired actions

