Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy

Approval Date: April 2025

Effective Date: September 2025

1. Policy Statement and Objective

The objective of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy* (*Code of Conduct*) is to establish and maintain safe and inclusive learning and working environments in our school communities. The *Code of Conduct* establishes expectations for acceptable behaviour of children and students and provides guidance on how schools should respond to and accurately record incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The *Code of Conduct* supports well-being and achievement by promoting respect of the rights, property, and safety of all. It establishes predictable consequences and pathways for addressing unacceptable behaviour in schools, ensuring responses are clear, consistent, timely, restorative, and equitable.

2. Definitions

Behaviour Intervention Support Plan: A plan to support students in grades P to 12, focused on proactive and preventative strategies, interventions, and supports to address behaviours of concern.

minor misbehaviour: Infrequent acts or behaviours that are undesirable but do not meet the definition or severity of unacceptable behaviour.

parent: Defined in the *Education Act* (s. 3 (p)) as "includes a guardian and a person acting in *loco parentis* to a child." *Loco parentis* refers to someone who is legally responsible for and has authority to make decisions for the child.

school community: Students and everyone whose roles or jobs place them in contact with students in school settings and school activities.

school setting: Includes all of the following:

- school property
- property immediately adjacent to school grounds
- any location hosting a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program
- school bus stop and school bus
- off school grounds, where a behaviour significantly disrupts the learning climate of the school (e.g., over the weekend, a student threatens to hurt another student at school, making others feel unsafe and upsetting learning when they come back)

student information system: The information technology platform(s) on which all student records are updated and stored, including records of incidents of unacceptable behaviour by students.

Student Planning Team: A student-focused team that collaborates on decisions regarding instruction, interventions, and evaluations needed to best support individual student programming.

unacceptable behaviour: Defined in the *Education Act* (s. 3 (zg)) as "behaviour that endangers the well-being of others, damages property or significantly disrupts the learning of others."

Unacceptable behaviours are categorized in the *Education Act* (s. 3 (zg) (i-xvi)) as follows:

- bullying/cyberbullying
- discriminatory behaviour
- illegal activity
- insubordination
- misuse of networks or online resources
- physical violence
- racist behaviour
- repeated use of tobacco or electronic cigarettes
- sexual assault
- sexual harassment
- sexual misconduct
- use or possession of alcohol, cannabis, drug-related paraphernalia, illegal drugs or weapons
- vandalism
- verbal abuse

For greater specificity in reporting and tracking, the following categories of unacceptable behaviour have been added:

- inappropriate language
- interruption of the learning environment
- physical aggression
- threatening behaviour
- unapproved mobile device use

3. Guiding Principles

The *Code of Conduct* is founded on guiding principles that ensure a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all members of the school community to learn and work. These principles—responsibility, equity, restorative and relationship-building, and clarity and consistency—guide how we promote positive behaviour and address unacceptable behaviours.

Responsibility

All members of the school community share a responsibility under the *Code of Conduct* to maintain physically safe, psychologically healthy, and supportive learning and working environments for children, students, and staff by modelling and encouraging positive, acceptable behaviour and by responding promptly, consistently, and equitably to unacceptable behaviour. Children and students are responsible for their own conduct to the extent of their developmental capacity. Understanding that there are consequences for unacceptable behaviour is an important learning for children and students, and an important aspect of responsibility. Unacceptable behaviour will result in consequences as outlined in the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours*.

Equity

Expectations and actions taken under the *Code of Conduct* will be fair and reasonable. Responses to unacceptable behaviour will be culturally and linguistically responsive and will be determined with consideration to the child/students' developmental capacity.

Restorative and Relationship-Building

Unacceptable behaviour undermines the safety and effectiveness of the school environment and has a negative impact on members of the school community and their relationships. Effective responses to unacceptable behaviour seek to produce constructive behavioural changes and to preserve, repair, and restore relationships. Restorative processes must be sensitive to individuals who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviours.

Clarity and Consistency

Clear communication, and timely and consistent application of the *Code of Conduct* in all schools and classrooms, reinforces the expectation of acceptable behaviour and the credibility of the *Code of Conduct*.

4. Application

4.1 This *Code of Conduct* applies to all pre-primary to grade 12 students enrolled in a public school, as appropriate to their age and stage of development.

4.2 The directives outlined in this policy replace the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy* (2018) and any directives in existing policies addressing code of conduct in schools.

5. Policy Directives

Pre-primary

5.1 The provincial pre-primary program is delivered in schools and is part of the school community. All pre-primary programs will adhere to developmentally appropriate practices outlined in administrative procedures and Section 4 of the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours*.

Communication

5.2 The expectations of acceptable behaviour and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour will be routinely communicated to the school community. Preventative and proactive behavioural support strategies will be implemented and communicated to ensure that school communities share a common understanding of acceptable behaviour in all school-related settings.

Acceptable Behaviour

5. 3 All members of the school community are expected to act in ways that promote a safe, caring, positive, and inclusive environment. This includes and is not limited to:

- following applicable laws, regulations, and policies
- following school policies and classroom routines
- demonstrating honesty, integrity, and respect for others
- treating everyone with dignity
- helping those in need and resolving conflicts peacefully and respectfully
- using positive language and supporting a productive learning environment

Minor Misbehaviours

5.4 Staff will routinely address minor misbehaviours without completing incident referrals. Repeated minor misbehaviours may reach the level of Unacceptable Behaviour if frequent in nature.

Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours

5.5 Unacceptable behaviours will be addressed promptly, consistently, and equitably.

5.6 When responding to unacceptable behaviours, staff will:

- prioritize the safety and security of students, staff, and other members of the school community
- take incidents of school violence seriously and respond in accordance with the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours*
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of students and families
- refer to the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* and associated administrative procedures to identify and implement reasonable, equitable, and timely responses that
  - seek to produce constructive behavioural changes
  - support students in taking responsibility for their actions
  - assist students with developing new skills and strategies to reduce the reoccurrence of unacceptable behaviour
  - consider students' developmental capacity, the intent of the unacceptable behaviour and the impact of the unacceptable behaviour on the school, those that experience harm, and other students
  - are proportional and progressive, up to and including consequences that may include in-school or out-of-school suspensions
- accurately report the incident and response through the provincial student information system

- communicate with members of the school community impacted by the incident and provide reassurance that threats to school safety have been addressed without compromising privacy
- debrief members of the school community impacted by the incident

Suspensions (applies only to P–12 students, per the *Education Act*)

5.7 An administrator may consider suspending a student, out of school, for up to 10 school days, if the administrator believes the student has engaged in unacceptable behaviour while in a school setting. This policy's *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* provides a matrix to determine which incidents merit suspension.

5.8 Where the severity of an incident merits, an administrator may recommend to their RCE/CSAP that a suspension be extended for a period greater than 10 days. Decisions regarding extended suspension must comply with the *Education Act* (s. 29).

5.9 The student or the student's parent(s) may request a review of the suspension by the RCE/CSAP within five school days of receiving the notice of suspension. The RCE/CSAP will then complete the procedural review in accordance with the process outlined in the *Education Act* (s. 30).

5.10 Any student who is suspended for more than five days will have a plan for re-entry into the school setting. This plan will be developed in collaboration with the student and their parent(s). As part of the re-entry process, relevant information will be shared as required, while respecting the privacy, dignity, and confidentiality of students and families.

Responses Specifically Forbidden

5.11 The following consequences are prohibited for all children and students:

- corporal punishment
- attributing collective responsibility, including group punishment
- reducing or not awarding marks or assigning extra schoolwork, projects, or assessments

Recording of Incidents

5.12 All unacceptable behaviours must be accurately recorded in the student information system.

5.13 At least quarterly, each RCE/CSAP will provide to the Minister a disaggregated statistical report on behavioural incidents that have occurred in schools within the RCE/CSAP over the past year.

Students who Require Intensive Behavioural Supports

5.14 When it has been determined that a student is not able to consistently demonstrate expected school behaviour, intensive supports will be identified, and a Behaviour Intervention Support Plan will be developed.

The plan will include the supports required and the most appropriate pathway(s), including possible alternative learning settings, or adapted schedules.

Programming and services will be individualized and provide for the duration and intensity required to support skills acquisition with flexible access to additional levels of support. Family, along with applicable interagency and community partners, will be essential participants during design, monitoring, and evaluation of any Behaviour Intervention Support Plan. Ongoing connection and engagement with the school will be incorporated into the Behaviour Intervention Support Plan.

Safety of students, staff, and the learning environment shall be considered in all plans.

5.15 When a Behaviour Intervention Support Plan is developed and implemented, Section 3 of the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* will provide guidance on where behaviours are reported and documented.

5.16 Behaviour Intervention Support Plan development may require Student Planning Teams to use alternative learning environments and/or adapted schedules to support safety, the student's well-being and achievement. These interventions will be time limited and will require regular monitoring and reporting in the student information system.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- establish and periodically review the *Code of Conduct* and associated procedures and guidelines in consultation with RCEs, CSAP, and school community
- monitor implementation and compliance with this policy in collaboration with RCEs and CSAP
- communicate the *Code of Conduct* and associated procedures and guidelines to RCEs and CSAP
- analyze disaggregated incident reporting data and share data with RCEs and CSAP on a quarterly basis
- identify trends and develop strategies to address systemic concerns related to unacceptable behaviour/school violence
- support RCEs and CSAP as needed with respect to professional development that aligns with this policy

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- establish a process that clearly communicates the *Code of Conduct* to all members of school communities
- ensure consistent implementation of the *Code of Conduct* in all schools, including reinforcement of the importance of reporting incidents by all staff
- provide annual professional development on the *Code of Conduct* and preventative and proactive behavioural supports and interventions to prevent occurrences of unacceptable behaviour
- ensure staff are accurately recording, tracking, and reporting incidents of unacceptable behaviour in school settings
- at a minimum, report quarterly to the Minister, disaggregated data on incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- develop plans for addressing emerging issues or trends related to unacceptable behaviour/ school violence
- monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour in all schools through regular trend analysis of disaggregated incident reporting to identify areas requiring more attention and supports
- provide alternative arrangements for the education of any student who has been suspended for more than 10 school days
- provide strategies and resources to support plans for students in need of intensive behavioural supports

- provide training to school staff on how to accurately record incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- develop and provide professional development that aligns with this policy
- model acceptable behaviours

Administrators

- show care for the school community and commitment to well-being and student achievement in a safe, inclusive, and accepting learning and working environment
- implement the *Code of Conduct* at their school
- communicate the *Code of Conduct* regularly and meaningfully to children, students, staff, parents, and other members of the school community
- implement positive behavioural interventions and supports to establish clear school-wide expectations
- participate in professional development and be familiar with the *Code of Conduct* and positive behaviour interventions and supports
- monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour/school violence at their school to identify areas requiring strategic response
- report, investigate, and accurately document incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- provide appropriate supports to those who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviour
- model acceptable behaviours

Teachers/Educators

- empower students to be positive, engaged members of their classroom, school, and community
- establish classroom routines and manage behaviours in a way that supports children and students with developing new behaviours and strategies to reduce unacceptable behaviour
- participate in professional development and be familiar with the *Code of Conduct*
- report and accurately document incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- address student behaviours in the course of their daily work and while supervising children and students in other areas of the school
- communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents
- be sensitive to those who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviour
- model acceptable behaviours

Support Staff

- empower students to be positive, engaged members of their classroom, school and community
- participate in professional development and be familiar with the *Code of Conduct*
- accurately report and record incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- address student behaviours in the course of their daily work and while supervising students in other areas of the school

- support behaviours within the scope of their role in a way that helps students develop new behaviours and strategies to reduce unacceptable behaviour
- be sensitive to those who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviour
- model acceptable behaviours

School Advisory Councils

- advise their school administrator(s) and RCE/CSAP on the *Code of Conduct* when reviewed
- review and advise their school administrator on summary reports of incidents of unacceptable behaviour at their school to identify areas requiring strategic response
- reinforce the importance of student voice as appropriate (e.g., Student Success Survey and student consultations)

Students

- be positive, engaged members of their classroom, school, and community
- show respect for the rights, property, and safety of themselves and others
- communicate needs and accept personal responsibility for their behaviour
- demonstrate appropriate behaviour for the school environment
- respect school policies and classroom routines

Parents

- maintain open, honest, and respectful communication with school staff
- support their child's teacher(s) in their efforts to provide an education for their child
- demonstrate respect for all members of the school community
- support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment
- become familiar with the *Code of Conduct*
- encourage and assist their child in following the *Code of Conduct*
- assist school staff in dealing with behaviour issues involving their child
- model acceptable behaviours

7. Procedures/Related Documents

- *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours*

8. References

Nova Scotia. 2019. *Education Act*. SNS, c. 1.
https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/education.pdf.

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- School Advisory Councils
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