



EDGEMEAD HIGH SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING PROTOCOL

Edgemean High School takes a firm stance against and a holistic approach towards all forms of bullying. In accordance with the requirement of the South African Schools' Act (ACT 84 of 1996) and all relevant provincial legislation, the School (Edgemean High School) has adopted the following Anti Bullying protocol within the framework of the School's Code of Conduct, which is also aligned with our core values. The school recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of our learners. Thus, we have developed a proactive strategy, which focuses on empowering learners through mentorship to create a safe environment, which addresses bullying behaviour.

Since there are many contributing factors to a bullying scenario, each case warrants an individual assessment and will be dealt with on its own merits. In general, we strive to follow a supportive, yet firm approach.

It is important to distinguish between bullying and other unwanted behaviour. Bullying is not synonymous with:

- Mutual peer conflict
- Fallouts within friendship groups
- Isolated incidents of negative behaviour

All of the above could however develop into bullying, which is generally defined as:
A repetitive offence that targets the well-being of an individual and is characterised by an imbalance of power between bully and victim.

There may be cases where an action and/or behaviour may not amount to bullying, but may still constitute a contravention of the Code of Conduct (e.g. fighting, intimidation etc.). Such cases will be dealt with appropriately.

1.) DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is seen as repetitive, aggressive behaviour arising from a deliberate intent to cause physical or psychological distress to others. It is important to note that bullying may be perpetrated by an individual or a group and may also be aimed at an individual or a group.

1.1.) FORMS OF BULLYING

Bullying includes, but is not necessarily limited to actions, behaviour or activities such as:

- Hurtful teasing
- Aggressive and/or threatening body language (including rolling of eyes, suggestive and/or rude signs, etc.)
- Physical contact (pushing, shoving, deliberately bumping or shouldering someone, tripping, etc.)



- Malicious gossip
- Racist, sexist, homophobic and/or any other discriminatory comments
- Exclusion
- Extortion
- Telephone, cell phone and internet abuse
- Deliberate damage to personal property
- Physical violence (hitting, biting, scratching, etc.)
- "Outing" – revealing personal information with the aim of humiliation and/or exclusion.
- Cyberbullying (includes, but is not confined to social media)

1.2.) SOCIAL MEDIA AND BULLYING

Harassment online frequently involves the following:

- Sending hurtful, cruel and/or threatening messages or pictures to a person's email account, social media account or cell phone.
- Defamation of character: Could involve sending or posting malicious gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation and/or social relationships.
- Posting or sending digitally altered photographs (and/or "memes") of someone to others, particularly pictures that portray the victim in a sexualised or harmful way.
- Posting personal information and/or embarrassing photos without the person's permission.
- Impersonation or identity theft: When someone breaks into an individual's email or social networking account and poses as the person sending messages or pictures online to damage the victim's reputation and/or social relationships.

This is not an exhaustive list of what constitutes bullying on social media.

2.) EHS's STANCE ON BULLYING

As a value-driven school, Edgemean High School embraces the values of respect, integrity, passion, responsibility and the pursuit of excellence. Bullying behaviour does not live up to our values and does not fall within the framework of our Code of Conduct. Therefore, should bullying behaviour be identified, the School will take all reasonable steps in order to address such behaviour as we strive to provide all learners (as well as staff and visitors) with a safe, welcoming learning environment.

At EHS, we believe that bullying cannot simply be explained away or its effects underplayed.

The School has adopted a "zero tolerance" stance on bullying and offenders in proven cases will be subject to the full disciplinary processes of the School. This may include SGB hearings, which may lead to suspension or expulsion.



2.1.) REPORTING OF BULLYING

As a school we urge teachers, pupils and parents to work actively at being role models and to take action when bullying is witnessed. We urge all stakeholders in the school (learners, parents and staff) to follow the following steps when reporting bullying:

- (i) Bullying needs to be reported to the relevant Grade Head and/or the Counselling Department. The Grade Heads and Counsellors work together and may have to liaise with each other regardless of who the incident is first reported to.
- (ii) The Grade Heads will manage any disciplinary action that may be necessary and at their discretion, may escalate the matter to the Head of Discipline.
- (iii) Once reported, the individuals will be called in separately, to gather more information about the alleged bullying.
- (iv) Mediated sessions with both the victim and the alleged bully may be arranged by the Counselling Department.
- (v) Support will be provided to victims of bullying, as well as education and remedial support for the bully, in order to prevent recurrences of incidents of bullying.
- (vi) If the bullying persists, parents will be contacted and be included in the support process. Outside organisations and support services will also be recommended.
- (vii) Necessary disciplinary procedures will follow, depending on the severity of the bullying offence. This will take place at the discretion of the Grade Head and/or the Head of Discipline in consultation with the School's Discipline Council where necessary.

2.2.) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS

SCHOOL:

If the bullying behaviour occurs on school grounds and during school hours, the School is ultimately responsible for dealing with the incident once it is reported or witnessed. Teachers should respond to bullying in their class and deal with it in a proactive way. However, the School cannot and may not take responsibility for any bullying (in any form) which takes place after school hours and/or off school premises even if both victim and bully are learners at EHS. Should the bullying manifest itself at school, while representing the school or when identifiable as a learner of EHS, the School may and will take action.

LEARNERS:

Learners are ultimately responsible for reporting incidents of alleged bullying (to both the School and his/her parents) as soon as possible. The School cannot take any action if we are not aware of the incidents taking place and we cannot follow-up unless the alleged bullies are identified. Learners also need to be mindful of how their actions could be contributing to a bullying culture in school. Any learner who reports a case of bullying may request to remain anonymous.

PARENTS:

We trust our parents to instil values in their children and to model the right behaviour at home. Parents are also asked to follow the correct procedure when reporting bullying (see point 2.1. (i) above) and should refrain from confronting or contacting alleged bullies directly. Communication between parents is, however, encouraged. If bullying occurs after school hours and/or online, it is the parents' responsibility to follow the necessary procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of their child. Legal action can be taken by going to the local police to report severe incidents of bullying and protection orders can be arranged by a court. The school may not be involved in any legal action however.

3.) INTERVENTIONS

The school has launched a learner-driven anti-bullying group known as the Anti-Bullying Committee (ABC). Their goal is to create awareness and support to both the victims of bullying, as well as the perpetrators. The group consists of volunteers from Grade 8-12 with representatives from each Grade forming the core ABC leadership committee. This is part of both our preventative and supportive approach and aims to empower bystanders to respond in accordance to our school's values.

Bullying is also addressed as part of the LO curriculum. The Counselling Department also facilitates Parent Information Evenings (PIE) once a term in which we try to inform and empower our parents on relevant adolescent-related topics, such as bullying.

4.) BELA COMPLIANCE AND POLICY INTEGRATION

In alignment with the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill and the Western Cape Education Department's (WCED) School Safety Guidelines, Edgemean High School reaffirms its commitment to maintaining a safe, supportive learning environment. The School Governing Body (SGB) is responsible for overseeing the implementation and annual review of this Anti-Bullying Protocol to ensure continued compliance with national and provincial legislation.

All reported incidents of bullying will be documented in a confidential register maintained by the Head of Discipline and reviewed termly to identify behavioural trends and inform preventative strategies. This protocol forms part of Edgemean High School's broader School Safety and Security Framework and should be read in conjunction with the School's Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy.

Through continued collaboration between staff, learners, parents and the SGB, the school seeks to promote a culture of respect and accountability consistent with the values and legislative expectations set out by the WCED and BELA Bill.



5.) CONCLUSION

Edgemean High School will continue to review its values, responses and attitude to what constitutes bullying. Parents, teachers and learners are welcome to contact the school regarding further ideas and strategies about our anti-bullying protocol.

6.) HELPFUL RESOURCES:

www.westerncape.gov.za/general-publication/how-handle-bullying
www.childlinesa.org.za/children/for-children/issues-affecting-you/bullying
www.cjcp.org.za/uploads/2/7/8/4/27845461/issuepaper13-cyberbullying-saimpact_responses.pdf
www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/bullying

Signed: _____
Chairperson: EHS SGB

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: 02/03/16

