

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

A. PURPOSE

Instituto Thomas Jefferson Zona Esmeralda expects all staff members in our school, as well as external providers, to recognize that when a student is at risk of being bullied, actions will be taken to prevent and reduce the risk of harm.

We acknowledge that student protection is of utmost importance in our school; students are in the best position to identify risk situations and seek help for themselves or others. For these reasons, the school has implemented the KiVa program to prevent, reduce, and eliminate bullying within the school community.

1. Scope and Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Provide a safe and positive environment that promotes student growth and learning.
- Outline the systems and procedures in place to ensure students' safety within the school.
- Raise awareness among all staff members and parents regarding issues related to bullying.
- Ensure effective communication between staff and parents concerning bullying situations.
- Establish clear procedures for staff members or external providers who identify a bullying situation.
- Ensure clarity for all stakeholders—including students, parents, and guardians—regarding the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Student: A student is considered to be any learner enrolled at Instituto Thomas Jefferson Zona Esmeralda, regardless of age, as well as visiting minors.

Collaborator: Any individual employed by Instituto Thomas Jefferson Zona Esmeralda, regardless of their position or role.

A. SCOPE

The KiVa Anti-Bullying Policy will be endorsed and signed by the General Director. This policy shall be adopted and implemented across all levels of the organisation.

B. DEFINITIONS

Bullying (or School Harassment) is a situation that occurs between students.

In order to determine that a bullying situation is taking place, the following elements must be considered:

- There is an imbalance of strength and power and/or a situation of vulnerability.
- It occurs exclusively between students.
- It takes place within the school environment.
- One or more students are repeatedly and over a prolonged period exposed to negative actions by one or more students within the school, with the intention of causing harm and making power over another student or the student's vulnerability evident.

Bullying may present in the following forms:

- **Verbal:** insulting, humiliating, spreading rumours, or using hurtful language to harm a peer.
- **Physical:** hitting, pulling, pinching, biting, pushing, spitting, or engaging in behaviours intended to embarrass a peer in front of others.
- **Psychological:** threatening, manipulating, blackmailing, or persistently intimidating a peer, including threats of harm should the student seek help or report the situation.
- **Social exclusion:** deliberately ignoring or excluding peers from friendships, social interaction, or school activities.
- **Cyberbullying:** posting comments or images on social media, sending text messages or emails containing offensive or mocking content, or revealing private information about a student; creating fake profiles or misusing passwords to harass or impersonate a peer; taking, publishing, or distributing photographs or videos of harassment or abuse against peers through any digital or electronic means.

Bullying places the students who experience it in a position of vulnerability in relation to those who carry out the aggression, preventing them from defending themselves effectively. Students who have experienced or are experiencing bullying may present, among other symptoms, low academic performance, depression, anxiety, loss of appetite, stress, or may lie in order to avoid attending school. In severe cases, these conditions may lead to alcohol or drug use, eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia, self-harm, or even suicidal ideation.

It is important to recognise that the behaviour of students who engage in bullying is often the result of external situations affecting them outside of school. These may include physical, psychological, emotional, or sexual violence, neglect, labour exploitation, lack or excess of behavioural boundaries, or parental divorce or separation. For this reason, under no circumstances should students who engage in bullying be stigmatised as “problem children”, “bad”, “ill-mannered”, or labelled in any other negative way. Like the affected student, they require comprehensive support and protection to prevent harm to their health and wellbeing.

Bystanders to a bullying situation may also form part of the problem. Two types of bystanders are identified: passive and active.

- **Passive bystanders** are students who witness a bullying situation but do not report it to any adult, staff member, or parent. They do not take any action to attempt to stop the bullying, regardless of whether or not the victim is their friend.
- **Active bystanders** are those who approve of or support the actions of the student engaging in bullying, without being the initiators of the behaviour themselves. They join in once the bullying behaviour has already begun.

If a bullying situation occurs and the passive or active participation of other students is confirmed, these bystander students may be subject to disciplinary consequences and personalised follow-up through KiVa procedures (see the document titled *Handbook & Policies*).

Within our school, the following situations are **not** considered bullying:

- Isolated, non-recurrent issues with one or more peers.
- Conflicts between students that are developmentally expected for their age and stage of growth.
- Isolated, non-recurrent physical or verbal aggressions with one or more peers.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES

General Director

The General Director acknowledges responsibility for ensuring that the organisation understands and follows the guidance provided in this document.

1. General Director, Section Leadership, and Personalised Education Department

The General Director, Section Directors, and the Personalised Education Department shall seek to:

- Ensure that this policy is implemented across all levels of the school and followed by all collaborators.
- Allocate sufficient time and resources to promote the prevention of bullying.
- Allocate sufficient time and resources to promote the timely reporting of bullying situations.
- Ensure that the school culture facilitates the reporting of concerns and that reports are handled promptly and appropriately.
- Ensure that the school remains a safe and protected environment, providing spaces free from violence.

D. Procedures

In the event of a potential bullying situation, students must be encouraged to report the situation to a trusted adult and, preferably, to immediately inform a collaborator. If a student witnesses another peer being bullied, they must report the situation to a trusted adult in order for appropriate follow-up to take place.

When a student reports a bullying situation affecting themselves or another peer, anonymity will be maintained as far as possible in order to safeguard the student's integrity and wellbeing.

Students must be encouraged to defend themselves against any form of violence by establishing clear and firm boundaries, without resorting to violence against those who offend them. As the school seeks to promote assertive conflict resolution aligned with its values, any student who responds to physical or verbal aggression in a violent manner may be subject to disciplinary consequences.

When the school receives a report (in person or anonymously) of a potential bullying case, the matter must be referred to the KiVa Team and its Coordinator, as well as to the relevant Section Director. This team will be responsible for conducting the appropriate investigation and follow-up, and for reporting relevant information to the parties involved.

Information related to the follow-up and/or consequences of a bullying situation will only be shared with the family of the student concerned, the KiVa Team, and the Section Directorate. In order to safeguard student wellbeing, under no circumstances will information regarding follow-up or consequences be shared with other adults and/or students.

Following the decisions made by the KiVa Team and the Section Directorate in relation to a bullying case, the relevant actions and/or consequences will be implemented. These actions may include disciplinary measures.

Where necessary, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the General Director will be involved in the decision-making process.

Reviewed by:
Charles John Kelly General Director
Elsa Islas Molinar Designated Safeguarding Lead