

School proposal targets bullying

Parents would have to be told

By DANIELA SIMUNAC

Parents whose children are victims of bullying or sexual harassment at school would have to be kept in the know under legislation introduced at Queen's Park yesterday.

The Keeping Our Kids Safe At School Act would require school staff to report serious incidents involving students to the principal, who would then have to inform parents.

If passed, the bill would be the first of its kind in the country that would require school staff to intervene and address inappropriate behaviour among students.

Up until now, school boards have only encouraged open lines of communication.

Barb Sonier, the Thames Valley District school board's superintendent of safe schools, welcomed the proposed change.

"It does provide a clear direction to staff," she said. "They don't have to be discretionary about it (reporting); they can simply do it."

Sonier said most of the board's teachers and principals report incidents of bad behaviour, but the bill would provide some consistency throughout the system and across boards.

The legislation would also apply to all incidents of gender-based violence, homophobia, and inappropriate sexual behaviour among students.

"It's really important that we don't hide from these issues. We need to address them," Sonier said.

Education Minister Kathleen Wynne said in a news release the legislation is part of an ongoing effort to make schools safer.

Daniela Simunac is a Free Press reporter.

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